

Course: Issues in Multimedia Authoring, an Ethics & Aesthetics  
"Humanities" [Alternatively, this could be taught as a  
"knowledge" humanities with a bit more technical  
content.]

Instructor: Mr. Keith Douglas

Expected enrollment: ~35

### Introduction

Welcome to Issues in Multimedia Authoring! This course is a B-block humanities course for those in the fine arts, communications, and other related fields. It is a bit unusual since it focuses on computerized media, though there will certainly be topics that are common to other media. It will stress philosophical, cultural, literary, technological, and historical approaches to understanding this fascinating field. Through a series of lectures, readings, class discussions and student presentations we shall spend this semester hopefully gaining a better understanding of issues raised by and concerning multimedia.

### Evaluation

Class Participation: 10%

You are expected to come to class having read the readings for a given class and to prepare to discuss it intelligently. You are also expected to discuss with presenters their presentations. It is possible to earn more than 10/10 on this section.

Quizzes: 15% (lower one 5, higher 10)

Quizzes will take 5-10 minutes of two of the classes. The one you score worse on counts for 5 points; the better one for 10 points. These will be short answer and multiple choice questions on the readings and previous lectures. Note that Quiz 1 is in the **fourth** class! Stay sharp! Quizzes are held at the start of class, and arriving late may compromise your ability to do well. Arriving after the quiz has been collected will result in a mark of **zero**.

Take home exams: 2 x 25%

Twice during the term you will be assigned take-home essay exams. Each of these will have 6-8 detailed questions on the readings and lectures. You will be asked to write 500 or so words on two or three of the topics. Note that these are due quite promptly. One of your goals in coming to lecture is to make good notes and come to understand the material so that doing the take home exams is a matter of simply synthesizing the material. Late exams will be penalized 10 marks (out of 100) per day (including handing it in after class on the same day it is due). Your grade will be reduced to **zero** once the ones handed in on time are returned.

Your exams will be graded as follows:

Presentation: 15%  
Correctness: 60%  
Examples: 25%

Presentation includes spelling, legibility (use a good font and layout!), grammar, etc. Correctness is just that: have you successfully answered the question asked in a complete and correct way. Note that in some cases this does not entail simply saying back to me what I said in lecture. You may well be asked to respond critically to either lecture or a reading, in which case your ability to argue for your case is vital. The portion of the grade awarded to examples concerns the vividness, as well as the pertinence, of your examples. Since this is a course about **multimedia**, using non-textual examples is welcome and even encouraged. Be sure to describe how they do function to illustrate your views. This too counts for this portion of the grade. Be sure also to include screen captures or other reproductions of such examples if you choose to use them.

Oral Presentation: 25%

Any time after week 10, after the first exam, you should see me in office hours to briefly discuss your presentation topic. Any topic related to this course is fair game. Please clear the topic with me; that is one of the goals of our meeting. Failure to do so will penalize you at least 10 points out of 100 on your oral; it also runs the risk of being on an unsuitable topic, in which case you run the risk of failing the oral. You will speak for 5 minutes and be prepared to discuss and debate the topic with your classmates and your instructor. Feel free to make use of any presentation technologies you have access to. Your presentation will be graded as follows:

Interest: 15%  
Depth of research: 35%  
Engaging the audience: 15%  
Answering questions: 15%  
Effort: 10%  
Take-away: 10%

Interest reflects the novelty of your topic. Picking a topic that is not one you have already answered on an exam is a good way to get high interest points. You can get high points here by picking a question on an exam you did not answer when it was assigned. Depth of research involves clearly going beyond your assigned materials for this course. Take-away will grade what you hand out to the audience to remember what you said. I do

not expect a verbatim copy of the presentation. Instead, a one page summary might be useful, or a picture of an important example, or various other things depending on your topic. We can discuss what would be suitable when you come to see me about your topic. Students who choose to speak during the beginning of the time for presentations will generally be graded more leniently than those towards the end of the semester, as I realize the "unfairness" of having had less time to prepare.

### Required Materials

A course pack contains all required readings, a copy of this syllabus, some study questions, and some advice on writing papers and presentations.

Further books are available to be (partially) photocopied by your instructor should you wish to consult them.

### Further References

The following is a list of books that were excerpted and referenced to create your course pack.

*Bridging the Digital Divide*

*Computers as Theatre*

*Discrete Mathematics with Applications*

*Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace.*

*Human Values and the Design of Computer Technology*

*Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality*

*The Mythical Man Month*

*Theoretical Foundations of Multimedia*

*Verilog Styles for Synthesis of Digital Systems*

*Visual language: global communication for the 21st century*

### Schedule

<b>Class</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>In/Out</b>
1	Introduction	None	Syllabus (O)
2	History I: Nelson	P&J pp.	
3	History II: Berners-Lee	P&J pp.	
4	Ownership of Media	Spinello pp.	Quiz 1 (I)
5	Aesthetics	Douglas pp.	Quiz 1 (R)
6	Reactions to Interfaces	Friedman pp.	
7	Technology & Testing *	Douglas pp.	
8	Writing a good exam	Douglas pp.	Exam 1 (O)
9	Projects and Planning	Brooks pp.	Exam 1 (I)
10	Limitations of Computers *	Epp pp.	
11	Visual Languages	Horn pp.	
12	Accessibility	W3C pp.	
13	Theories of Communication I *	Tannebaum pp.	
14	Theories of Communication II	Tannebaum pp.	
15	Multimedia and Fun	Murray pp.	Quiz 2 (I)
16	Changing Notion of "Texts"	P&J pp.	Quiz 2 (R)
17	Understanding HCI I	Laurel pp.	

18	Understanding HCI II	Laurel pp.	
19	Being Obsolete?	Douglas pp.	
20	Bridging the Digital Divide	Servon pp.	
21	Social Impact Statements	Friedman pp.	
22	Other Cultures and MM	Douglas pp.	
23	Other Cultures and MM II	Douglas pp.	Exam 2 (O)
24	Tutorial	Douglas pp.	Exam 2 (I)
25	Presentations		
26	Presentations		
27	Presentations		
28	Presentations		
29	Presentations		
30	Presentations		

(Lectures marked with a \* are particularly technical. Missing these might prove especially difficult.)

A brief summary of each lecture follows

1. Introduction to the course. Instructor self-introduction. Course outline and evaluation. Scope and examples of multimedia. Introduction to perspectives taken. Class self-introductions: name, field of study, career interests.
2. History of multimedia: Nelson's hypertext proposal.
3. History of multimedia: Berners-Lee and The World Wide Web
4. Quiz I. Ownership. Copyright. Spinello. Some concerns. iTunes vs. (the original) Napster. Parts and wholes in software.
5. What role does aesthetics play in HCI? Value judgments. Art and technology. Exaptations and "skinning". Cost of ownership. Product life cycles and testing. Brief remarks on Laurel.
6. When the Interface Is a Face: Sproull, Subramani, Kiesler, Walker, and Waters in Friedman.
7. Testing, some further considerations. State spaces and likely user choices. More on the user vs. the designer vs. the programmer.
8. How to do well on your take home exam. Grammar and spelling. Referencing. Tying in your own experience. Examples and illustrations. Style.
9. The Mythical Man Month. Working together, working apart. Ethics of collaboration and of "Robinson Crusoe". Talking to the boss. Whistle-blowing.
10. Limitations of computers. Models of computer power. Finite automata. Turing machine or program. The (recursive) unsolvability of the halting problem.
11. What is a visual language? History of visual languages. What do they communicate that words cannot. Chinese saying. Pitfalls and dangers.
12. Web pages as a case study in accessibility. Deciding on a user standard. W3C standards of accessibility. Examples: color, standardized markup. Prudence vs. legality vs. ethics.
13. Theories of communication: Tannebaum on Shannon/Weaver. Details of the process. How it relates to concerns about bandwidth, picking formats, etc. Semantic vs. syntactical

information.

14. Theories of communication: Tannebaum on Schram. Semantic information and rhetoric.

15. Quiz II. Multimedia and computer games. Aesthetic experience. Murray's categories. Illustrations.

16. What is a text? Does hypermedia challenge our notion of "text"? Landow and Delany using Derrida. Criticisms.

17. To the future via the past. Brief discussion of who and what Aristotle was. Aristotle's four "causes"; 6+1 categories for understanding theatre.

18. Applying Aristotle to HCI: Laurel. Examples.

19. The technological and human side to the obsolescence process.

20. A different form of accessibility: sociocultural accessibility. Cost. Attitudes towards technology. Digital Democracy. Public vs. private initiatives. Local vs. nonlocal solutions.

21. Social Impact statements: Shneiderman and Rose from Friedman.

22. Other cultures and MM I: Raven and the non-linear web page.

23. Other cultures and MM II: Your own experiences. A great chance to rack up some class participation points. Brief discussion of exam II.

24. Tutorial. If it is necessary to have any "overflow time" it belongs here. Students bring in outlines or notes about presentations and work in groups to develop their ideas.

Instructor will assist students having trouble finding topics, as everyone has to sign up for a date and commit to a topic this day. Students may use this as their time to see the instructor to get a topic approved. Instructor will have extra books on hand to lend to students in class for research purposes.

25 Students 1-6 present

26 Students 7-12 present

27 Students 13-18 present

28 Students 19-24 present

29 Students 25-30 present

30 Students 31-36 present. Wrap up.