Digital Literature

English 563 | SDSU | Spring 2015
Professor Jessica Pressman

T/Th 12:30-1:45 Adams Humanities 1112	Course Website: http://jessicapressman.edublogs.org
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
What happens to literature and its study when text moves from page to screen? This course examines works of digital literature (literature created on the computer to be read on the computer) to understand how this emergent literary form affects the way we read, study, and understand literature. The course situates digital literature within literary history but also considers digital literature as a new form whose art "object" possesses computer-driven aesthetics— such as speed, animation, and multimodal semiotics— that produce decisively different literary effects and reading practices.

We will examine a varied collection of digital literature and genres including hypertext, interactive fiction, kinetic poetry, and augmented reality literature. Our study will be bolstered by readings in theory and criticism by Katherine Hayles, Lev Manovich, and others. Moving between creative and critical works in print and digital formats, we will strive to understand the state of this new literary field and its relation to print literature and traditional methods of literary study.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
This is a literature course: it focuses on analyzing literary works. This is also a writing-intensive course. You will sharpen your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills by applying them to multimodal, multimedia literature. The result will, hopefully, be an expansion of these abilities as well as your appreciation of literature as an evolving, emergent cultural form.

- To understand born-digital literature as part of literary history
- To be able to apply traditional (print-based) close reading practices to digital, multimodal, screen-based works
- To practice medium-specific analysis of digital literature in the form of a final, critical, and web-based essay

*No previous programming knowledge is required for the class; however, all students should be advised that they will be required to engaged with new media technologies.

ASSIGNMENTS
Participation in class: 15%
Weekly Blog Responses to a Writing Prompt: 25%
Midterm Essay (Close Reading Electronic Literature): 25%
Final Web-based Essay Project: 35%

Participation 15%: The success and productivity of the seminar depends upon the participation and preparation of each individual for each meeting. Together, we will collaboratively explore the subject of the class in depth, working together to pursue questions, analyze texts, and proffer critical connections and conclusions. In order to do so, you must **come to class ready to participate**. A full participation grade (an A grade) requires you to
1) attend *all* class meetings
2) come read to participate—meaning, ready to *talk and listen*

This means that you must allocate enough time before class to not only read the work but also prepare to discuss it. You are expected to both talk *and* listen during each session.

3) Your participation grade also includes a mandatory **conference**. You are required to meet with me at least once during the quarter, particularly in preparation for your final web-essay.

Weekly Blog Responses 25%:
As this is a class on digital literature and media, we will employ the technology of the Web to stimulate and extend our in-class discussions. You will be given a blogspace in which to explore ideas, collect notes, present assignments, and extend the boundaries of our seminar in an online portfolio. You will be required to post short (300-500 words=1 page, single-spaced) **thoughtful, analytical, and grammatically correct** responses about the weekly reading to your blog by **6pm on the Monday before class**.
-*NO credit for late postings*.
-You must also read and comment on at least one classmate's blog each week, before Thursday's class meeting.
-Grading rubric for blog posts is available on our website.

Midterm Essay (Close reading of a work of digital literature) 25%: This short essay (1500-1700 words= 5-6 pages) is an opportunity to explore a single work of digital literature through an in-depth analysis and to practice the kind of multimodal explication. The essay will be posted to your blog and must include certain elemental aspects of web-design (hyperlinks, images, mouse-over, pop-up, etc) that will be made explicit with the assignment details. The essay must close read a work from our syllabus. You should use at least *one creative work* and *one critical text*. This essay will be posted to your blog under a new page, title "Midterm Essay."

Final Web-based Project 35%:
The course culminates in a final essay (2,000-2,500, 8-10 pages, double-spaced) which is an electronic text; it will be presented as a website whose interface, aesthetic, and navigational elements support the intellectual claims of the argument.

This final essay will push you to implement your learned critical methodology of medium-specific analysis in a creative-critical way.

Options:
1) A thesis-driven close reading at *least two creative works* of digital literature (at least one from our syllabus, and not examined in your midterm), and must use *at least 3 critical sources* (at least 1 must be from our syllabus).
2) A creative work of digital literature accompanied by a short (3 pg.) critical analysis and close reading of your composition.
3) A curated exhibition of electronic literature that includes an analytical introduction and rationale in the form of an overview or viewing guide for the collection you create.

REQUIRED WORKS
Available at iTunes:
Samantha Gorman and Danny Cannizarro, *Pry* (2014), for ipad or iphone at iTunes.

READING SCHEDULE
In order to create a critical context for reading the literature, each week will pair works of electronic literature with critical essays (which are denoted by ~). **You should plan to read the creative work one time through *before* our first discussion (on Tuesday) and then return to *reread* it before our second discussion (and after we have read and discussed the critical essay).** All readings are available from our website, unless otherwise noted.

Part I: An Introduction to Electronic Literature

Week 1: Welcome
January 22: Introductions

Week 2: Introduction to Digital Literature
January 27: Ingrid Ankerson and Megan Sapnar, "While Chopping Red Peppers" (2000)
      J.R Carpenter, "EntreVille" (2006)
January 29: ~N. Katherine Hayles, "Electronic Literature: What is it?" Section 1: "A
      Context for Electronic Literature"
      ~ Section 2: "Genres of Electronic Literature"
      ~Section 3: "Electronic Literature is not Print" (2007)

Part II. The History of Electronic Literature
Week 3: Hypertext
February 3: Deena Larsen, *Disappearing Rain* (2000)
      ~Robert Coover, "The End of Books" (*New York Times*, 1992)

February 5: Deena Larsen, *Disappearing Rain* (2000

Week 4: Kinetic Poetry
February 10: Brian Kim Stefans, "The Dreamlife of Letters" (2000)
      Ingrid Ankerson and Megan Sapnar "Cruising" (2001)
      ~Christopher Funkhouser, "Digital Poetry: A Look at Generative, Visual, and
      Interconnected Possibilities in its First Four Decades" in *A Companion to Digital
      Literary Studies*, ed. Susan Schreibman and Ray Siemens. Oxford: Blackwell,
      2008
February 12: Explore *PoemsthatGo.com*
      Braxton Sodeman, "mémoire involuntaire no. 1"

Week 5: Interactive Fiction
February 17: Emily Short, *Galetea* (2000)
      ~Nick Montfort, "Riddle Machines: The History and Nature of Interactive
      Fiction." *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*, ed. Susan Schreibman and Ray
      Siemens. Oxford: Blackwell (2008).
February 19: Andrew Plotkin, S*hade* (2000)

Week 6: Flash & Speed Reading
February 24: William Poundstone, "Project for the Tachistoscope [Bottomless Pit]"
      (2005)
      ~Lev Manovich "Generation Flash" [PDF]
      ~Mark Marino: "Critical Code Studies" (2006)
      http://electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/codology
February 26: William Poundstone, "Project for the Tachistoscope [Bottomless Pit]"
      (2005)

Week 7: Flash & Speed Reading
March 3: Young-hae Chang Heavy Industies, *Dakota* (2002)
      ~Jessica Pressman, "The Strategy of Digital Modernism: Young-hae Chang
      Heavy Industries' *Dakota"* *(Modern Fiction Studies*, 2008)
March 5: Young-hae Chang Heavy Industies, *Dakota* (2002)

Week 8: The Latest: *Pry*
March 10: Samantha Gorman and Danny Cannizarro's *Pry* (2014)
March 12: Samantha Gorman and Danny Cannizarro's *Pry* (2014)
~Jhave Johnston's review of *Pry* for *Los Angeles Review of Books* (2015)

*~Midterm Essay Due~ Friday, March 13 @ midnight. Posted to your blog under page
titled "Midterm"*

Week 9: The Latest: *Pry*
March 17: No class meeting; midterm evaluation exercise online
March 19: Samantha Gorman and Danny Cannizarro's *Pry* (2014)

Extra Credit: Electronic Literature Reading event: Samantha Gorman and Danny Cannizarro read <u>Pry</u> (3/19, Time and location TBA)

Week 10: Augmented-Reality Literature
March 24: Caitlin Fisher's "Circle" (2011)
      ~Summary of project at <u>http://iloveepoetry.com/?p=2572</u>
      ~Jeff Donaldson. "Glossing over Thoughts on Glitch. A Poetry of Error"
      (ArtPulse Magazine)
March 24 : Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse, *Between Page and Screen* (2012)
      [on reserve in library]

--Spring break—

Week 11: Social Computing & Site-Specific Installations
April 7: Amy Hoy and Thomas Fuchs, "Twistori"
      Mark Hansen and Ben Rubin's *Listening Post* (2001)
      ~"<u>Listening Post Ten</u> Years On : Revisiting the Technical Achievements
      of *Listening Post* Ten Years" in *NmediaC: The Journal of New Media and
      Culture* (Winter 2013-14: Volume 9, Issue 1)
April 9: ~Rita Raley, "TXTual Practice" in *Comparative Textual Media* [PDF]
      Cityspeak, a project from Obx Labs (Vimeo video documentation)
      Urban_diary, rude_architecture (Gesa Glück, Tobias Neumann, and Friedrich von
      Borries),
      TXTual Healing

Week 12: Your selections
April 14: Reading TBD
April 16: Reading TBD

Final Project Proposal Due—Friday @ midnight. Posted to your blog under "Final Project" page

Week 13: Building Projects
April 21: Peer Review of Proposals
April 23: Building projects

Week 13: Building projects
April 28: Building projects
April 30: Building projects

Week 14: Conclusion
May 5: Building projects
May 7: Concluding Discussion

Final Project and Presentation Due: Finals week during Final Exam Session