Nicholson School of Communication and Media

DIG 6551: Theory & Practice of Interactive Storytelling
Spring 2019

Instructor:	Dr. Anastasia Salter	Section Number:	0M77
Office:	TCH 236-B / CMB 173-I	Credit Hours:	3
Phone:	N/A	Meeting Days:	Thursday
E-Mail:	anastasia@ucf.edu	Class Meeting Hours:	6:00 – 7:50 PM
Office Hours:	Tuesday 10-12 TCH Thursday 4-5:30 CMB	Class Location:	CMB Room O305

I. Course Description

In this course, we'll engage with the making and critique of interactive works ranging from "Choose Your Own Adventure" comics to electronic literature and interactive fiction. Drawing on readings including Janet Murray's *Hamlet on the Holodeck,* Scott Rettberg's *Electronic Literature*, Merritt Kopas's *Videogames for Humans*, and Amaranth Borsuk's *The Book*, we'll consider historical and current questions of interface, linearity, and interactivity. Students will work towards submission-ready creative or critical work, based on their professional goals. This course is divided into three units:

- **Choose Your Own Adventure.** In this unit, we will read and critique printed nonlinear narratives, using Ryan North's work as an inspiration and considering the history of design approaches to hypertextual play in print. Throughout, we will work with both paper-based narrative design and use Twine as a prototyping tool.

- **Interactive Fiction.** In this unit, we will learn object-oriented approaches to interactive fiction using Inform 7. Students will make small, contained game experiences using the tool and thinking about narrative puzzles, riddles, environmental design, and interaction with objects. Students will play and critique both hypertextual and parser-driven interactive fiction.

- **Narrative Games.** In this unit, we will consider narrative games, with particular attention to adventure games and quest-driven narratives. Students will use Adventure Game Studio to build small narrative experiences, working with systems for developing simple visual environments and character interactions and conversations. Examples will include games across genres, including visual novels, walking simulators, and casual games.

Every week, plan on bringing the textbooks from any readings completed in preparation for that class, as well as the completed exercises as assigned to share. In addition to the course materials, students will be expected to consume and critique a range of media and may need to buy or borrow additional texts.

Prerequisites: Graduate student standing

II. Course Objectives or Student Learning Outcomes

- Understand the history and future of the "book"
- Play and critique a range of interactive storytelling exemplars
- Develop an understanding of object-oriented narrative design
- Prototype interactive storytelling experiences in a range of genres
- Explore and apply theoretical frameworks of electronic literature
- Iterate a final theoretical or creative project towards publication

III. Required and Optional Texts and Materials

All texts are available through the bookstore or Amazon:

- *The Book.* Amaranth Borsuk.
- *Videogames for Humans.* Merritt Kopas.
- *Hamlet on the Holodeck, Updated.* Janet Murray.
- *Romeo and/or Juliet*. Ryan North.
- *Electronic Literature*. Scott Rettberg.

IV. Grading and Late Work

Assignments in this course are graded as follows:

Final Project:	35 points
Critiquing Exercises (3 at 10pts):	30 points
Making Exercises (3 at 10pts):	30 points
Academic Verification:	5 points
Total Grade:	**100 points**

You can access your grades and feedback at any time using the Grade Book function of Webcourses. All assignments will be submitted through Webcourses. Plan on checking the site at least twice a week for updates and assignment information. If you miss a class, a summary of what you missed will be posted along with slides and any other materials in the corresponding week's announcements.

No late work will be accepted in this course without a documented emergency. You can resubmit through Webcourses at any time up to the deadline, but work submitted after the close of the assignment will not be graded. There is no extra credit work available in this class. Grades will be available through Webcourses and updated weekly.

V. Course Policies

Attendance Policy: As this is a graduate course, attendance and participation is expected; however, if a class is missed, an overview will be available online, and students should reach out to a peer for supplementary notes. As the course is mixed mode, some meetings might be entirely virtual, and students are expected to check in and review online materials weekly.

Email: Students can send messages through Webcourses or email at any time, and will receive a response within one business day. UCF policy requires you to use your UCF email account to communicate. Assistance with code debugging is not available through email: for help with debugging, please bring your code to office hours. For general project questions, use the project forums.

Webcourses: All assignments will be submitted through Webcourses. Plan on checking the site at least twice a week for updates and assignment information. If you miss a class, a summary of what you missed will be posted in the corresponding week's announcements.

Laptop Usage: Lab computers are available, but you are also welcome to bring your own supplementary devices. Headphones and other noise-making devices are not permitted during lecture.

You will be required to have access to a computer appropriate for interactive storytelling development. Lab computers will have the required software available.

- Adventure Game Studio (PC only)
- Inform 7
- Twine 2
- Adobe Photoshop

Backups: You are required to maintain your own backups. If you lose your project, you will be responsible for completing it on time: file loss is not an acceptable excuse for missing deadlines in the industry or in this class. Dropbox is recommended to ensure all projects

Deployed Active Duty Military Students: A deployed active duty military student who feels the need for a special accommodation due to that unique status should contact their instructor to discuss the circumstances.

Religious Observances: Students are expected to notify their instructor in advance if they intend to miss class to observe a holy day of their religious faith. If the holiday conflicts with a major class assignment, alternate arrangements will be made.

VI. Exam Policy

As this is a graduate course, the final project will serve as the summative work for the course.

VII. Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Rules of Conduct at <http://osc.sdes.ucf.edu/process/roc>. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in

1. Unauthorized assistance: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise unless specifically authorized by the instructor of record. The unauthorized possession of examination or course-related material also constitutes cheating.
2. Communication to another through written, visual, electronic, or oral means: The presentation of material which has not been studied or learned, but rather was obtained through someone else's efforts and used as part of an examination, course assignment, or project.
3. Commercial Use of Academic Material: Selling of course material to another person, student, and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the university and the instructor. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, Instructor's PowerPoints, course syllabi, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, handouts, etc.
4. Falsifying or misrepresenting the student's own academic work.
5. Plagiarism: Using or appropriating another's work without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.
6. Multiple Submissions: Submitting the same academic work for credit more than once without the express written permission of the instructor.
7. Helping another violate academic behavior standards.

For more information about Academic Integrity, students may consult The Center for Academic Integrity <http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/assets/FVProject.pdf>.

For more information about plagiarism and misuse of sources, see "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices" <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9>.

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating

Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, *The Golden Rule* <http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/docs/goldenrule.pdf>. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and when necessary respond to academic misconduct. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, suspension or expulsion from the university,

and/or a "Z Designation" on a student's official transcript indicating academic dishonesty, where the final grade for this course will be preceded by the letter Z. For more information about the Z Designation, see <http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/zgrade>.

IIX. Course Accessibility Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need disability-related access in this course should contact the professor as soon as possible. Students should also connect with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/> (Ferrell Commons 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone 407-823-2371). Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodations requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student.

IX. Campus Safety Statement

Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise during class, everyone needs to work together. Students should be aware of their surroundings and familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In case of an emergency, dial 911 for assistance.
- Every UCF classroom contains an emergency procedure guide posted on a wall near the door. Students should make a note of the guide's physical location and review the online version at <http://emergency.ucf.edu/emergency_guide.html>.
- Students should know the evacuation routes from each of their classrooms and have a plan for finding safety in case of an emergency.
- If there is a medical emergency during class, students may need to access a first-aid kit or AED (Automated External Defibrillator). To learn where those are located, see <http://www.ehs.ucf.edu/workplacesafety.html> (click on link from menu on left).
- To stay informed about emergency situations, students can sign up to receive UCF text alerts by going to <my.ucf.edu> and logging in. Click on "Student Self Service" located on the left side of the screen in the toolbar, scroll down to the blue "Personal Information" heading on the Student Center screen, click on "UCF Alert", fill out the information, including e-mail address, cell phone number, and cell phone provider, click "Apply" to save the changes, and then click "OK."
- Students with special needs related to emergency situations should speak with their instructors outside of class.
- To learn about how to manage an active-shooter situation on campus or elsewhere, consider viewing this video (<https://youtu.be/NIKYajEx4pk>).

XI. Final Exam Date and Time

As this is a mixed mode course, the final project is submitted online by 11:59 PM on April 23rd.

XII. Course Schedule

Readings for each week should be completed before lecture and will be referenced during class.

Lecture	Reading (due before lecture!)	Assignment Due
1/9: Introduction	**Review all materials in Week One: Virtual Class**	**Academic Activity Verification**
1/16: Choose Your Own Adventure	**Read:** The Book as Object, *The Book* **Play:** *Romeo and/or Juliet* (complete at least one traversal)	**Introduce yourself in the discussion forum**
1/23: Imagining the Book	**Read:** The Book as Content, *The Book* The Book as Idea, *The Book* **Play:** 80 Days, Meg Jayanth / inkle, 2014	**Critique Exercise One: CYOA novel**
1/30: Twines and Hypertextual IF	**Read:** The Book as Interface, *The Book* Genres of Electronic Literature, *Electronic Literature* Combinatory Poetics, *Electronic Literature* **Play:** Sea and Spar Between, Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland, 2012	
2/6: Twines and Hypertextual IF	**Read:** Hypertext Fiction, *Electronic Literature* Introduction /Rat Chaos / Fuck That Guy / Anhedonia, *Videogames for Humans* **Play (select one):** With Those We Love Alive, Porpentine, 2014 Birdland, Brendan Patrick Hennessy, 2015 Human Errors, Katherine Morayati, 2018 SPY INTRIGUE, Furkle, 2015 **Share in Class: CYOA Short Stories**	**Making Exercise One: CYOA short story**
2/13: Interactive Fiction	**Read:** Interactive Fiction, *Electronic Literature* SABBAT / Horse Master / Nineteen, *Videogames for Humans* **Play (select one):**	

	Endless, Nameless, Adam Cadre, 2012 Zozzled, Steph Cherrywell, 2019 Spider and Web, Andrew Plotkin, 1998 Toby's Nose, Chandler Groove, 2015	
2/20: Building Parser Games	**Read:** Kinetic and Interactive Poetry, *Electronic Literature* Network Writing, *Electronic Literature* Scarfmemory/ Removed / for political lovers, *Videogames for Humans* **Watch:** Inform 7 Tutorial	**Critique Exercise Two: Interactive Fiction**
2/27:	**Read:** Divergent Streams, *Electronic Literature* Your Lover / Detritus / There Ought to Be a Word, *Videogames for Humans* **Play:** At least 2 entries in IF Comp 2019	
3/5: Playing IF	**Read:** Negotiation / reprogram / Mangia, *Videogames for Humans* **Play:** 18 Cadence, Aaron Reed **Share in Class:** One-room Parser Interactive Fictions	**Making Exercise Two: Parser Interactive Fiction**
3/12: Spring Break	**No Class**	
3/19: Adventure Games	**Read:** Sacrilege / Robot Horse / Electro Primitive, *Videogames for Humans* Part I, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* **Play:** the adventure game chosen for your critique (in consultation with professor)	
3/26: Learning AGS	**Read:** Message / Depression Quest / Even Cowgirls Bleed, *Videogames for Humans* Part II, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* **Watch:** AGS Tutorial Episodes	**Critique Exercise Three: Adventure Game**

4/2: Thinking Mobile	**Read:** 3x3x3 / Eden / Eft to Newt, *Videogames for Humans* Part III, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* **Play (choose one – use your mobile / app store):** Florence, Annapurna, 2018 Thomas Was Alone, Mike Bithell, 2012 Year Walk *or* Device 6, Simogo, 2013 Reigns: Her Majesty, Leigh Alexander, 2018	
4/9:	**Read:** Dining Table / I'm Fine / Player 2, *Videogames for Humans* Part IV, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* **Play or Watch (choose one – Steam or Humble Bundle):** Everybody's Gone to the Rapture Dear Esther What Remains of Edith Finch A Short Hike **Share in Class:** Adventure Games	**Making Exercise Three: Adventure Game**
4/16:	**Read:** Interview with Samantha Gorman **Play or Watch:** The Under Presents	
4/23	**Final Exam Week:** Project submitted by 4/23 at 11:59PM	

XIII. Assignments

Skills Survey
Due Date: January 10th

As of Fall 2014, all faculty members are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete the following academic activity no later than January 10th. Failure to do so will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid. For this class, you are required to complete a short skills survey. Access your Webcourses@UCF (Canvas) course site following the directions below.

- Go to the myUCF portal (https://my.ucf.edu) and select the Webcourses@UCF button on the left side of the screen.
- Log in with your NID and NID password, then access each course by selecting it in the "Courses" drop-down menu at the top of the page.
- Find the "Skills Survey" under quizzes and complete all questions

Critique Exercises
1. CYOA Novel (check your local library, complete at least 3 traversals)
2. Interactive Fiction (with approval of professor)
3. Adventure Game (with approval of professor)

Students will select three works for original analysis. This analysis should be a short (1500 - 2000 words) essay and should be submitted with detailed citation information for the work under examination (using the model of the essays in *Videogames for Humans* as a model.) Students may use any formal citation style appropriate for their disciplinary background, including MLA, APA, or Chicago.

Each assignment should include:
- A clear thesis statement
- Contextual information positioning the excerpt relative to the genres and theories of interactive storytelling discussed in the unit
- Strong use of outside sources (primarily from course texts) to support the analysis

Creative Projects

Each project is an individual creative task using the specified platform to build an expressive work in dialogue with theoretical readings. While each project will have its own rubric with specific requirements, all projects share a focus on developing students' skills at using procedural platforms to craft interactive narratives.

Final Project

For the final project, students will select a competitive venue (such as an interactive fiction competition, student games showcase, conference proceedings, or academic journal) and refine either a creative or critical project towards submission.