

GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

**GSEM 110g, Section 35276R, Seminar in The Arts(GE-A)  
Spring 2019**

**Literature in the Digital Age**

Mark C. Marino, MFA, Ph.D.

[mcmarino@usc.edu](mailto:mcmarino@usc.edu)

**Office: JEF 259 / Office Phone: (213) 740-1980**

**Office Hours: MWF 10-10:40, WF 12-1, F 9-10:50 and by appointment**

Blackboard Course site: <http://moodle.markcmarino.com/>

and Moodle: Course Key: MMarinoGSEM19

Course Description

In the age of computers, writing and reading are undergoing complex transformations and evolutions. Digital platforms have opened new possibilities for literature itself, creating new genres of reading experiences that combine the collaboration of readers, writers (including programmers, visual artists, and musicians), and computational system. These innovative works combine text, audio, visuals, interactivity, and algorithmic processes to create new modes of art, extending and reimagining previous forms. This course is designed as a survey of new forms of born-digital literary art, offering students an opportunity to explore new genres and works and to develop new literacies by creating works of their own. This is a creative writing class for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

As students attempt to make new forms of creative art, you will also engage in multimodal reading, acquiring modes of analysis suited to these digital art forms. Just as digital objects require the interoperation of many systems and contributors, so too does their analysis require the interoperation of critical approaches and scholars. Students will learn to combine approaches involving visualization, code analysis, as well as traditional literary analysis techniques to develop readings of these complex works. Included in these techniques will be an introduction to Critical Code Studies, a means of close reading computer source code to enhance an understanding of a work of digital literary art.

Nonetheless, while these many modes of analysis can facilitate readings, it is difficult to understand digital literature without trying to make it. Throughout the course, students will engage in creative exercises trying to make works in new forms, including bots, poetry generators, interactive fiction, and netprov. Although the course will introduce students to various software and a bit of code, this class requires no prior knowledge of programming, just an adventurous spirit.

Learning Objectives:

1. Analysis: To increase your ability to analyze digital works, by introducing not only the terminology but also a sense of the forms and new approaches of analysis, that combine close reading, attentiveness to form, and broader social context.

## GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

2. Making: To expand your understanding of the creative process by exposing you to a wide range of digital works and by giving you opportunities to create in new and varied forms.

3. Connectivity: To deepen your appreciation of the connection between these digital works and the cultural contexts from which they emerge and with which they engage.

4. Context: To enrich your discernment of creative production by introducing you to theories, histories, and aesthetics of digital literature across history and culture.

5. Engagement: To introduce you to a vibrant international electronic arts community that you can enjoy, explore, and contribute to.

### Course texts and Materials:

*Women Tech Lit*, Mencía

*Electronic Literature*, Rettberg

*Reading Project*, Pressman, Marino, Douglass

*Between Page and Screen*, Borsuk and Bouse

*Icebound Compendium\**, Garbe and Reed,

\* & download Windows app or use in lab

*Command Lines*, Douglass (online)

*Electronic Literature Collections*, Vol. 1-3 (online)

Additional readings from online sources.

### Course Requirements

This course requires: 1 analytical essay, 1 collaborative analytical essay, 1 presentation, weekly quizzes, weekly creative assignments, 1 final exam, and 1 final creative project with an author's statement. You will also be asked to participate actively, including leading discussions and presenting your work.

Technology: This course will require exploration of digital works on computers. While we will examine some code, prior knowledge of programming is not a requirement.

### Grade calculation:

**10% Quizzes**

**15% Weekly Exercises**

**15% Paper #1**

**20% Paper #2**

**20% Final project**

**15% Final Exam**

**5% Participation**

## GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

### Expectations and Policies

- **Attendance**

Although I expect you to be in every class, if necessary, you can miss three class periods over the course of the semester with no penalty. There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences, so plan accordingly. This means that it doesn't matter to me if you miss class because you are sick, overslept, had to travel, etc., but after three missed classes your grade will suffer. So if you oversleep a couple of times at the beginning of the semester, and then get legitimately sick at the end, you will still be penalized for the days you missed because of illness. As per university policy, you will not be penalized for absences for religious holidays and university-sponsored events with proper documentation.

For every class period you miss beyond these three, two percentage points will be deducted from your final grade. More than 9 absences may result in failure of the course.

If you need to miss a class, please email me in advance and make sure you get in touch with a classmate and ask about what you missed and also check Moodle for any handouts or materials. It's also very good practice, not just for this course, but for others, to come to office hours and discuss what you've missed.

If you email me whatever is due on the day that you are absent before class that day, you can still receive credit for that work. If you don't, you will not receive credit. Because we are reading sections of novels over the course of several class periods, you need to keep up with the reading even if you miss class.

Lateness, no matter if it's one minute or ten minutes, is distracting and disruptive to the entire class. Please don't be late. Three lates will count as an absence.

- **Office Hours**

Come to them to discuss readings, ideas, your writing, etc. In addition to my formal office hours, I am sometimes available other times if you email me to make an appointment. I prefer to meet in person, but if that can't happen I am available via Skype and Google Hangout.

- **Laptops/Cell Phones**

Because this is a course in digital literature, laptops will be needed for every class. If you do not have one, you can check one out from Ahmanson Information Commons at Leavey Library. In fact, you will need them often and for every quiz. However, I expect that you will use these for class content only. Please keep phones silent during class.

- **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

USC highly values academic integrity and plagiarism undermines this integrity. A plagiarized assignment will receive an "F" and may result in failure of the course. We will discuss in class what constitutes plagiarism, but just remember: if you're not sure, cite it or ask me.

- **Mandated Reporting**

As per university policy, I am a mandated reporter, which means if I suspect that a student who is under 18 is experiencing abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, I am mandated by law to report it to USC's Department of Public Safety and the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services. I am also a responsible employee under Title IX, which means I must immediately report all known information about suspected prohibited conduct to the Title IX Office. Prohibited conduct encompasses

## GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

harassment and discrimination, and is defined in more detail here:  
<https://policy.usc.edu/student-misconduct/>.

### Additional Support

- **The Writing Center**

The Writing Center (located in THH 216) offers writing workshops and half-hour, one-on-one appointments with trained consultants. The staff is there to help you at *any* stage of the writing process, including the beginning – you don't need a full draft to utilize their support. You can make appointments via their website:

<http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>

- **Students with Disabilities:**

Any student requesting accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification can be obtained from DSP; please make sure that this letter is delivered to me as soon as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and can be contacted at (213) 740-0776.

### **Support Systems:**

- *Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

- *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

- *Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

- *Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu)

- *Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.

[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu)

- *Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

- *Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

- *Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

- *USC Emergency Information*

## GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

- USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

### **Schedule of Readings and Assignments\***

(\* Because electronic literature varies with each reading, page counts are estimates that assume you have made an effort to read the work thoroughly, which at times means reading the work more than once.)

Week	Reading	E-Lit works	Writing/Tools
1	Intro		
Jan 7		Step-Works (5 pages) &	
Jan 9	<a href="#">Electronic Literature: What is it?</a> Hayles (35 pages)  WomenTechLit, Forward, Introduction (i-xxi) and “The Legacy of Judy Malloy” (367-396)  Electronic Literature (1-19)	<a href="#">Uncle Roger</a> (20 pages)	
Jan 11		Arriving Simultaneously in Multiple Far-Flung Systems (25 pages)	Create a chant-style poem using Stepworks
2	Bots		
Jan 14	<a href="#">“An Introduction to Twitterbots with Tracery”</a> , Graham  <a href="#">“Looking Behind the Text-To-Be-Seen,”</a> Lampi (92 pages)	@MagicRealismBot @IAM_SHAKESPEARE @str_voyage @thinkpiecebot @slogatron @NRA_Tally (8pages)	Reading Quiz
Jan 16		Assorted other bots @Every3Minutes @holidaymoviebot @tinyprotests @JuntaControlPR (8 pages)  StoryFace (10 pages)	

GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

Jan 18			Create Twitter bot using Cheap Bots Done Quick <a href="http://www.crystalcodepalace.com/traceryTutorial.html">http://www.crystalcodepalace.com/traceryTutorial.html</a>
3	Poetry		
Jan 21 no class	<p>“Critical Code Studies,” Marino (10 pages)</p> <p>“<a href="#">Reading Culture through Code</a>,” Marino (30 pages)</p> <p>“Generous Poetry Generators”, Marino (3 pages)</p>	Taroko Gorge and variants (30 pages)	Reading Quiz
Jan 23	<p>“Generative Activity in Art and Literature”, WTL, (155-164)</p> <p>Electronic Literature (20-53)</p>	House of Dust adaptation (Knowes, Tenney, Whalen)	
Jan 25			Create poetry variation of Taroko Gorge
4	Poetry		
Jan 28	<i>Reading Project, Pressman et al. Introduction, Ch. 1, 2.</i>	Project for Tachistoscope (20 pages)	Reading Quiz
Jan 30		First Screening	
Feb 1			Create a small poem fragment using one tool from Workbench <a href="http://workbench.gtrlabs.org/">http://workbench.gtrlabs.org/</a>
5	Poetry		
Feb 4	<p><i>Reading Project, Ch. 3 and 4.</i></p> <p><b>Jessica Pressman Skype</b></p>	<p>256 ppg (variations)</p> <p>Dakota (10 pages)</p>	Reading Quiz
Feb 6			Paper #1 Due
Feb 8			Create a string of tools using Workbench
6	Interactive Fiction		
Feb 11	<i>Command Lines, Douglass (166-200 )</i>	Galatea (25 pages)	Reading Quiz

## GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

Feb 13		With Those We Love Alive, No World Dreamers; Howling Dogs (40 pages)	
Feb 15			Create a micro fiction using Ink
7	Interactive Fiction		
<b>Feb 18 No class</b>			
Feb 20	<b><i>Command Lines,</i> (1-60)</b>	<b>Birdland (30 pages)</b>  Gatekeeper (10 pages)	<b>Reading Quiz</b>
Feb 22			Continue micro fiction using Ink
8	Interactive Fiction		
2/25	<i>Command Lines,</i> (126-155)	Shade (35 pages)	Reading Quiz
2/27		The Intercept First Draft of the Revolution (35 pages)	
3/1			Write short IF in Twine
9	Netprov		
3/4	“What is Netprov,” Wittig (4 pages)  “The Riderly Text” Heckman (10 pages)  Poetic Tweets, WTL, (319-329)	Air-B-N-Me Thermophiles in Love, #1wknotech, I Work for the Web, OneStarReviews, Sootfall (approx. 75 pages)	Reading Quiz
3/6			Paper #2
3/8			Prep for netprov
10	Netprov		
3/18	“Occupy the Emotional Stock Exchange,” Wittig (14 pages)	All-Time High (15 pages) Tempspence, (25 pages) Speidishow (15 pages)	Reading Quiz
3/20		Monstrous Weather (50 pages)	
3/22			Participate in netprov
11	Apps and Web		

## GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

	stories		
3/25		Pry (50 pages total)	Reading Quiz
3/27		Game, Game, Game, and Game Again; Sydney's Siberia, This is How You will Die; A Nervous System (50 pages)	
3/29			Initial pitch for Final project
	12 Virtual Reality & Augmented Reality		
4/1	<i>Electronic Literature</i> (54-118)	VVR (10 pages)  Icebound Compendium (30)	Reading Quiz
4/3		Dreamcatcher (20 pages)	
4/5			Create schedule for final project
	13 Student Projects		
4/8	"Between Page and Screen" and R(e)orienting Poetics and Lived Spaces", WTL, (165-177; 331-352)  Electronic Literature (118-151)	<i>Between Page and Screen</i> (20 Pages)  <i>TENDAR</i>	Reading Quiz
4/10		Loss of Grasp How to Rob a Bank (30 pages)	Submit proposals for final project
4/12			
	14 Student Projects		
4/15	<i>Electronic Literature, Ch.7, (152-200)</i>	118th North, 34 West (10 pages)	Reading Quiz
4/17	"Code as Ritualized Poetry" (20 pages)  "Latin American Electronic Literature", WTL, (55-73)	LA Flood Project (20 pages)  Transborder Immigrant Tool (15 pages)  Arbol con Patas (5 pages) & Golpe de Gracia (15 pages) other E-Lit from Latin America	Create a location in our collaborative locative narrative project



## GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

		(TBA)	
4/19			
15	Student Projects		
4/22	"The Evolution," WTL, (211-216)	Prisom (approx. 25 pages)  Inanimate Alice (episodes 6 & 7) (45 pages)	Student Projects & reflections Due
4/24	"Notes on the Composition, WTL (177-188)	"Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl" (20 pages)	
4/26			
5/116	Take Home Final Exam Due		

### Assignments:

#### Major Assignments:

- 1) **Individual Analysis of Electronic Literature**
- 2) **Collaborative Analysis:** In a group of 3, analyze another work form the ELC using 3 different approaches
- 3) **Final project:** Create a small work of electronic poetry, fiction, or netprov and write an artists' statement which position this work among works and concepts we have studied throughout the semester.
- 4) **Final Exam:** A take home exam that asks students to synthesize the major ideas from the course across multiple works we have examined together.

#### Creative Exercises

Every week, students will create a small work in a different form of electronic literature, including digital poetry, interactive fiction, netprov, and locative narrative. These exercises will be relatively small but will give you a chance to explore the many forms available as you make your way toward your final creative project.

## GSEM in Arts: Digital Literature

### **Weekly Quizzes**

Quizzes measure engagement with texts. A quiz will be given once a week on that week's readings to make sure you are not only keeping up with the work but that you are understanding them. I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

### **Paper 1: Individual Analysis of Electronic Literature**

Analysis of a work from the Electronic Literature Collections, Volumes 1-3.

In a short essay, analyze a work of electronic literature. Primarily answer the question: how does this work develop a literature tradition from the world of performance, print, or orality?

### **Paper 2: Collaborative Analysis:=**

To approach complex works of electronic literature, critics must work together. Following the model of Reading Project, students will join in groups to read one work from ELC, vol. 1-3 using 3 distinct approaches. In their writing, students will explain the way their approach impacted their interpretation as well as how their approach complemented the other approaches.

### **Discussion Leading**

This is a seminar-style class, which means that students are active participants in the discussion. To encourage that, students will lead discussion of one of the readings during the semester. Rather than lecturing, students will also be in charge of leading discussion.

### **Final Creative Project**

Creative Project and artists statement.

To understand digital writing more deeply, students will create a short work of electronic literature and reflect on what that creative work taught them about these emerging forms of writing

### **Final Exam**

This essay examination will ask you to synthesize the critical readings we have been exploring by applying them to works of digital literature that we have been examined throughout the semester.