ENG 6800: Introduction to Texts and Technology

Section 0001, Course # 90373, 3 credit hours
Fall 2011, M 7:30-10:20pm, CNH 203

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Overview

This course will introduce you to some of the basic concerns, concepts, and methods in the emerging interdisciplinary scholarship of Texts and Technology. Although we will discuss various approaches to T&T, we will focus on the impact of "new media" on our concepts and practices of literacy/electracy, including pedagogical, artistic, workplace, and leisure-based communicative practices. We will explore how shifting relationships among media and our use of them shape our views of texts, writing, authors, users, identity, community, and other elements of our lives as communicators.

In addition to engaging with theoretical content from a variety of scholars working in T&T-related fields, we will also learn applied programming skills this semester that will aid in our understanding and application of digital theories and methodologies. Specifically, we will learn how to build interactive projects on the World Wide Web using the PHP scripting language. Fundamental to a deep understanding of new media theory and practice is knowledge about the underpinnings of digital computing (especially Web-based technologies). As such, we will be learning and applying foundational techniques in computation such as iteration, conditional logic, randomness, and algorithm design. We will also study how to apply programming techniques for functions such as text parsing, data analysis, repetition, and interactive design. These skills will further aid you as you consider applied digital components for your dissertation or other scholarly projects.

The bulk of your "writing" in this course will be done in digital form through interactive projects. You will write a traditional project proposal for your final project, but for most of your assignments, you will develop your own scholarly digital projects using programming techniques learned in the course. By the end of the course, you will have the knowledge to a) plan and design a workflow for an interactive digital project using functional or object-oriented programming techniques and databases, b) select the appropriate data structures, functions, and/or objects to employ in your project, c) determine the best technical and rhetorical means by which to deploy your project to an audience, and d) document and assess your project within a scholarly context.

We will use a course website (http://dm.ucf.edu/~rmcdaniel/courses/eng6800/) to extend our inquiry online, share work with others, and keep track of our collective work. This website will contain copies of our major assignments, example code and tutorials, and links to student projects.

Bi-weekly programming quizzes and our discussion boards will be deployed on our official Webcourses site (https://webcourses.ucf.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct). Webcourses is additionally available from the "Online Course Tools" of your MyUCF panel. Students are encouraged to make use of the "Questions for the Instructor" forum thread for any questions about assignments or course materials. They can also use the "General Student Discussion" forum thread to interact with classmates.   For general help with Webcourses or logging into your account, see http://learn.ucf.edu/.

Course Objectives

- Learn about the diverse work in T&T, both theoretical and applied, and form a working definition of this scholarly area and the practices it can inform.
- Engage in scholarly conversation about the course texts and concepts they take up, in the process

improving interpretation, writing, design, and argumentation skills.
- Understand and apply media programming techniques to develop scholarly textual and interactive projects for the World Wide Web.
- Solve problems using interactive media tools and resources.
- Explore ideas and juxtapositions of critical theory and technology for use in your thesis, your publications, or future project coursework.
- Use new media to better understand and teach the ways these media rearticulate communication forms and processes.

Required Texts

The following books (available at the UCF Bookstore) are required. See the schedule for the dates on which these readings are due.

- Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*
- Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*
- O'Gorman, Marcel. *E-Crit: Digital Media, Critical Theory, and the Humanities*
- Norman, Donald A. *The Design of Future Things*
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *My Mother was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*
- Turkle, Sherry. *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*
- Lessig, Lawrence. *Code Version 2.0*
- Landow, George P. *Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization*

Recommended Text

I would recommend that those without much/any programming experience pick up a beginner's guide to PHP and MySQL. One such book is listed below.

- Harris, Andy. *PHP5/MySQL Programming for the Absolute Beginner*

If you already have experience with another programming language or feel comfortable with web scripting and databases, then this book is probably not necessary.

As a class, we may also read additional selections (available as .pdf files on our WebCourses site). Technical tutorials may also be assigned at certain points throughout the semester.

Assignments and Grading

Major Assignments	Percentage of Overall Grade
1) Roundtable Presentation	20%
2) Bi-Weekly Programming Quizzes	10%
3) Digital Project 1	10%
4) Digital Project 2	15%
5) Final Project Proposal	10%
6) Final Digital Project	20%
7) Class Participation	15%

Grading Criteria and Grading Awareness Policy

For major assignments, I will use a detailed numeric rubric for grading. Points will generally cap at 100 points. Rubrics will be provided ahead of time. Plus/minus grades are used in this course. It is your responsibility to continually check your grades as they are posted/returned. If you ask about a grade more than 14 calendar days

after it has been posted or returned I will not answer questions about the grade or honor any changes to the grade.

*Email Policy

This is the best way to contact me. I do my best to answer all emails within 48 hours and I can generally respond much sooner. I will send occasional emails about the course to your officially registered @knights email address stored in MyUCF. It is your responsibility to check your @knights email frequently throughout the semester. When sending me email, please include the course prefix and course number in the subject line of your email. For example, for this course your subject line should include the text *eng6800* in all email you send me regarding this class. Due to aggressive spam filters, I may not receive any email that arrives without this formatted subject line. I would prefer that you email me directly to rudy@ucf.edu rather than using the Webcourses built-in mail system. However, I will also try to check that account. It just may not be as frequently.

Late Assignment and Incomplete Policy

Late assignments will not be accepted in this course unless you have a documented medical emergency or supernatural experience. If there is an emergency in your life you should come talk to me about it as soon as possible – do not wait until the end of the semester to tell me about a situation that has happened four weeks prior. In that case, I can't do anything to help you complete your work. There will be no makeup quizzes or assignment extensions for leisure travel, vacations, or other non-emergency situations. You can always turn in an assignment early. Computer failure is also not a satisfactory excuse for not turning in your project. Consider automated, cloud-based backup services like Carbonite or Dropbox. You need to make frequent and numerous backups of your data throughout the semester. See UCF policy 4-401 for the makeup of authorized UCF events or co-curricular activities. http://policies.ucf.edu/. I will not grant extensions or incompletes.

Technology Policy

Outside class, students are required to have access to word processing software and a Mac or PC computer with access to the Internet. During class, students may find use in working with technology to take notes, experiment (during appropriate class discussions), show examples, etc. It is expected that these technologies will not be used during class for purposes outside the scope of discussion, including instant messaging classmates, texting, e-mail, Facebooking, video games (outside of their use as examples to support particular arguments). Please feel free to use any device that makes your participation in class discussions easier. Please do not leave your cell phones on audible ring, and barring emergencies, do not take or make phone calls during class. In other words, be courteous to your instructor and your peers.

Other Course Policies

- I am always happy to meet with you about the course or your larger T&T program of study. If my office hours are not convenient for you, we can certainly schedule alternative times to meet in person or virtually.
- We will mostly follow the syllabus and schedule, but they are subject to minor changes, about which I will apprise you ASAP during normal class meetings or by email.
- In order for the class to be a success, you must be well prepared for and actively engaged in all class meetings. I will take notes about your level of preparation and participation.
- Because this is a discussion-oriented class, attendance and punctuality are crucial. Beyond affecting your participation grade, missing more than one class will result in your overall course grade being lowered. Missing more than two classes will likely cause you to fail the course.
- All UCF students are responsible for upholding standards of academic integrity as explained by The Golden Rule (http://www.ucf.edu/goldenrule). When it amounts to academic dishonesty, plagiarism can have dire consequences such as failing a paper or the entire course.
- Students with disabilities will be accommodated in this course. Please let me know at the beginning of the term about any such needs, and I will make adjustments and help you locate resources to aid your performance in the course.

Tentative Schedule

Note: Each night's lecture is divided into three parts. Part one is a theoretical roundtable and class discussion. The next part is an applied lecture on programming. The final part is project presentation time or guided lab time using the computers. We will write sample programs in class during those evenings with guided lab time.

Week	Date	Topics and Activities	Readings and Assignments Due By Next Meeting
1	August 22	Part I: Welcome and Introduction to the Course; Review of Syllabus; Student Introductions Part II: HTML, CSS, Network Tools Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Ong p. 1-99 ❑ Complete this HTML tutorial: http://www.jneuhaus.com/write.html
2	August 29	Part I: Model Roundtable: Orality, Literacy, Technology, and Consciousness Part II: Introduction to PHP, data types, comments, output Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Ong p. 100-176 ❑ Complete technical tutorial
3	Sept. 5	No Class (Labor Day Holiday)	❑ Read: Jenkins p. 1-134
4	Sept. 12	Part I: Roundtable #1 Presentation: Knowledge, community, storytelling Part II: Variables and control structures Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Jenkins p. 135-194 ❑ Complete Programming Quiz #1
5	Sept. 19	Part I: Roundtable #2 Presentation: Media literacy, politics, and participation Part II: Iteration and Loops Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: O'Gorman p. 1-70
6	Sept. 26	Part I: Roundtable #3 Presentation: Discourse Networks & New Media Part II: GET/POST, input, forms Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: O'Gorman p. 71-116 ❑ Complete Programming Quiz #2 ❑ **Digital Project 1**

Week	Date	Topics and Activities	Readings and Assignments Due **By Next Meeting**
7	Oct. 3	Part I: Roundtable #4 Presentation: Nonsense, Play, and Postmodernism Part II: Functions, part I Part III: Digital Project 1 Presentations *NewTextReader*	❑ Read: Landow p. 1-214
8	Oct. 10	Part I: Roundtable #5 Presentation: Hypertext, Authorship, Critical Theory Part II: Functions, part II Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Landow p. 215-376 ❑ Complete Programming Quiz #3
9	Oct. 17	Part I: Roundtable #6 Presentation: Narrative, Education, Politics Part II: Arrays, text parsing, implode/explode Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Hayles p. 1-167 ❑ **Final Project Proposal**
10	Oct. 24	Part I: Roundtable #7 Presentation: Language, Code, and Performance Part II: Objects, Part I Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Halyes p. 171-243 ❑ Complete Programming Quiz #4
11	Oct. 31	Part I: Roundtable #8 Presentation: Information Patterns and Transmission Part II: Objects, Part II Part III: Digital Project 2 Presentations *Procedural Argumentation*	❑ Read: Turkle (entire book) ❑ **Digital Project 2**
12	Nov. 7	Part I: Roundtable #9 Presentation: Avatar, Interface, and Identity Part II: Objects, Part III + SimpleXML Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Norman (entire book) ❑ Complete Programming Quiz #5

Week	Date	Topics and Activities	Readings and Assignments Due **By Next Meeting**
13	Nov. 14	Part I: Roundtable #10 Presentation: Psychology and Design Part II: MySQL, Part I Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Lessig p. 1-119
14	Nov. 21	Part I: Roundtable #11 Presentation: Regulation and Control Part II: MySQL, Part II Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Lessig p. 120-232 ❑ Complete Programming Quiz #6
15	Nov. 28	Part I: Roundtable #12 Presentation: Intellectual Property and Privacy Part II: MySQL, Part III Part III: Lab time	❑ Read: Lessig p. 233-345 ❑ **Final Project**
16	Dec. 5	Part I: Discussion: Free Speech Parts II-III: Final Project Presentations *Future of Texts and Technology*	Congratulations on completing the course! Have a great Winter Break.