

ENGL 7981 Topics in Modern and Contemporary Literature
Literature in the Digital Age

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Office Hours:
 MWF 11:30-12:30
 or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this new millennium, words are constantly juxtaposed against images, videos, and sounds across a global network through which people have access to more text than ever before. What does it mean to read and write literature in this moment? What new possibilities emerge for writing itself in a digital context—what new modes of representation and expression? How do we as readers need to think differently in order to read within the digital? We'll take up these and other epistemological and methodological questions as we consider how contemporary authors represent, respond to, and employ digital technology in their writing. Along with relevant scholarship, we will explore a wide range of genres and medial formats, including experimental works that push at the boundaries of the page in an attempt to rethink print literature alongside the digital, as well as literature that is born digital, such as electronic literature, hypertexts, and digital games.

TEXTS

Required:

Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves*

Steven Hall, *The Raw Shark Texts*

Eli Horowitz, Matthew Derby, and Kevin Moffatt, *The Silent History* (app form for iOS devices)

Cardboard Computer, *Kentucky Route Zero*

http://store.steampowered.com/app/231200/Kentucky_Route_Zero/

Hammond, *Literature in the Digital Age*

Links and PDFs of other readings will be available on Moodle

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Weekly Response: 15% Students will answer the weekly prompts posted by me to the Moodle forum by the evening before class at 6pm. Answers should be 500 words in length.

Reports: 20% Each student will write 4 brief article/chapter reports, with 1-2 page printed handouts for the class, which should also be posted on our Moodle discussion forum. You will sign up for these as the semester progresses. These reports should be in annotated bibliography form, with a MLA citation, summary of major arguments, and a brief commentary on your assigned article, chapter, or primary text. Commentaries should be exploratory and may raise discussion questions. Incorporate important quotations from the text (including page numbers). These reports should be designed to be read aloud.

Proposal of final essay: 15% A 3-4 page proposal for the final essay. The proposal should discuss the questions and hypotheses to be explored in the final essay, preliminary analyses of primary texts, and an annotated bibliography of likely secondary sources. Please bring two hard copies of your proposal to class on Week 13 for peer review.

Final essay: 50% This is a traditional article-length research paper (18-22 pp.) due on the date a final exam would be scheduled for this course. Alternative/creative projects may be proposed, and must be accompanied by an artist's statement that places the project in a critical context. The paper/statement should follow MLA format for an article submitted to a journal for publication. I encourage you to meet with me in office hours to discuss your ideas for final research projects.

This is a seminar. Engaged participation (and consistent attendance) are assumed. In the absence of these, your grade will be adjusted significantly downward.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1:

Introduction to course, syllabus, texts, assignments, etc.

Week 2: The rise of the internet and the "death" of literature
 Franzen, "Perchance to Dream" & "Mr. Difficult"
 Marcus, "Why Experimental Literature Threatens to Destroy..."
 Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"
 selections from Fitzpatrick, *The Anxiety of Obsolescence*

Week 3: New Horizons for the Literary
 selections from Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies*
 selections #1 from Hammond, *Literature in the Digital Age*: Intro, Ch. 1-2
 Pressmen, "The aesthetic of bookishness in twenty-first-century literature"
 Hayles, Ch. 5 "The Future of Literature" in *Electronic Literature*

Week 4: The Mark of the Digital I
 Hall, *The Raw Shark Texts*

Week 5: The Mark of the Digital II
 Hansen, "The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves"
 Danielewski, *House of Leaves*

Week 6: The (Horrorific) Power of the Book I
 Welsh, *Mixed Realism*: preface, Ch. 1, Ch. 6
 Danielewski, *House of Leaves*

Week 7: The (Horrorific) Power of the Book II
 Hayles, "Material Entanglements: Steven Hall's The Raw Shark Texts as Slipstream Novel"
 Danielewski, *House of Leaves*

Week 8: New Media
 Chun, "Did Somebody Say New Media?"
 Preface to "New Media and American Literature" spec. issue of *American Literature* on Moodle
 ed Ryan, *Narrative Across Media*: Intro, Ch. 1, Ch. 12 "Will New Media Produce New Narratives?"
 Hammond, *Literature in the Digital Age*: Ch. 6

Week 9: Electronic Literature: Interactive Fiction and Hypertexts
 Hayles, Ch. 1 "Electronic Literature: What is it?" from *Electronic Literature*
 Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality 2*: Ch. 8 & Ch. 10
 Aarseth, *Cybertexts* Ch. 1, Ch. 2, Ch. 4
 Joyce, *afternoon*.

Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*

Week 10: The Digital Novel

Hammond, *Literature in the Digital Age*: Ch. 7
The Silent History

Week 11: Literary Games I

Ensslin, *Literary Gaming* Introduction, Ch.3-4, Ch. 8, Ch. 10
 Aarseth, “Quest Games as Postnarrative Discourse” in *Narrative Across Media*
 Jagoda, “Fabulously Procedural...” from *American Literature* special issue

Week 12: Literary Games II

Kentucky Route Zero (Acts I & II)

Week 13: Proposals and Peer Review

Proposal for final essay due (bring two hard copies!)
 Peer review of proposals

Week 14: Conclusion discussion

Final paper due on date of Final Exam

PLAGARISM & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

According to section 10.1 of the LSU Code of Student Conduct, “A student may be charged with Academic Misconduct” for a variety of offenses, including the following: unauthorized copying, collusion, or collaboration; “falsifying” data or citations; “assisting someone in the commission or attempted commission of an offense”; and plagiarism, which is defined in section 10.1.H as a “lack of appropriate citation, or the unacknowledged inclusion of someone else’s words, structure, ideas, or data; failure to identify a source, or the submission of essentially the same work for two assignments without permission of the instructor(s).” (*Sec. 10.1*, LSU Student Code of Conduct: <http://saa.lsu.edu>)

Cases of academic misconduct & plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students. Students will show respect for others in the classroom and *will not use cell phones or other electronic media unless asked to do so by the instructor*. In addition, a student who disrupts instruction will be asked to leave the classroom and will lose participation points for the day/week.

DISABILITY SERVICES

According to the *General Catalog*, “The *Office of Disability Services* assists students in identifying and developing accommodations and services to help over-come barriers to the achievement of personal and academic goals. Services are provided for students with temporary or permanent disabilities. Accommodations and services are based on the individual student’s disability-based need.” Students must provide current documentation of their disabilities to their teacher. Students should contact the office early so that necessary accommodations can be arranged.