DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

English 921-011: Narrative in a Digital Age

Instructor: Dr. Jason Boyd
Office: JOR1027 (for office hours); otherwise, POD469
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11AM-12PM, or by appointment
Email: jason.boyd@ryerson.ca (for course policy on instructor-student email contact, see below)
Website: 2DL Brightspace

This is a Professional Elective available to BA English and ACS English Option students. It is also an elective in the English Minor and available as a Professionally-Related or Open Electives course to certain programs (please check your program’s elective tables to ensure you can take this course for credit). This is NOT a Liberal Studies credit.

The Faculty Course Survey will be administered between:
13-23 November (online); 23 November-4 December (paper-based)

The Final Exam period is: 8-19 December [note: there is no Final Exam for this course]

Lecture schedule

Section 011: Wednesdays, 2-5PM, EPH242

NB: Students must attend their RAMSS-assigned lectures.

Calendar Description

This course explores how contemporary writers and artists have attempted to come to terms with the so-called post-print era—a historical moment characterized by the strategies of fragmentation and recombination that digital hyperspaces make possible. By analyzing digital texts and the work of cultural theorists on the nature and impact of this new medium, students will address the implications of the rise of computing and the internet for the future of literary and other cultural practices.

Detailed Description

This course explores the impact of digital technologies on notions of narrative or storytelling, examining how these technologies are changing the scope, definition, and ways of creating and experiencing the ‘literary’. We will examine works from four types of digital literature: 1) Writing Machines, or the intersection of the literary and digital
algorithms, formats, and programming languages; 2) Hypertext and Hypermedia; 3) Locative Narrative, which makes use of dynamic digital mapping technology to tell stories about and across material space; and 4) Digital Games and Narrative.

**Delivery Mode**

3 hour lecture/discussion. Portions of some classes will be dedicated to tutorials on digital authoring platforms.

**Course Goal**

Students examine and analyze the history and current state of storytelling in a digital age by exploring digital narratives and the methods and technologies used to create these works, contextualized by pertinent scholarship and creative, hands-on exploration, and improve their critical reading and integration of primary and secondary research into their analytical writing.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

**Outcome 1**: Students survey, note, retain, recall and critically engage with salient features of a broad range of creative works informed by computing technologies as well as scholarship examining salient features of narrative in a digital age.

**Outcome 2**: Students analyze a key component of digital narrative as embodied in a specific work and relate their analysis to pertinent critical work.

**Outcome 3**: Students develop hands-on experience with computer programs and platforms for creating digital narratives, for example, algorithmically generated text, hypertext, interactive fiction (IF) and story-rich digital games.

**Outcome 4**: Students explore a key component of digital narrative through the creation of a digital narrative, informed by scholarly sources.

**Required Works**

*Please see the 'Course Schedule' below for a full list of required readings. Creative and critical works are either freely available online, available online for download (either for free or for purchase [see 'To be purchased' below]), available through the D2L Brightspace course shell, or available on iPads which can be checked out on loan from the Library (these are marked with "[tablet]" in the Course Schedule). See "Other Course/Instructor Policies" (policy 3) for more information.*
To be purchased:

Sam Barlow, *Her Story* (2015). Downloadable through the *Her Story* website ($5.99) and through Steam ($6.49) for PC/Windows & Mac. Also available on iOS ($5.79) [prices subject to change]. [http://www.herstorygame.com/purchase/](http://www.herstorygame.com/purchase/)

Mike Bithell, *Thomas Was Alone* (2014). Downloadable through the *Thomas Was Alone* website ($13.64) and through Steam ($10.99) for PC/Windows & Mac. Also available on iOS ($5.79). [http://www.mikebithellgames.com/thomaswasalone/](http://www.mikebithellgames.com/thomaswasalone/)

*The online collections below contain a number of the works and readings being studied in the course. They are referred to in the Schedule by the following acronyms:*


**Recommended Texts**

See 'Recommended Readings' in the D2L Brightspace course shell.

**Required and Recommended Technology**

Please note that experiencing technological difficulties is not a valid excuse for not completing the readings or for late assignments. Students are expected to troubleshooting technical problems themselves, or in consultation with the instructor.

**Hardware:**
Computer (Mac or PC), with up-to-date operating system
Headphones
Speakers (external or internal)
Software:
Adobe Flash Player and/or plug-in
Java plug-in
Shockwave plug-in
Spatterlight (Mac) or Gargoyle (Mac, Windows, Linux) (IF interpreters)

NB: Specific web browsers may be required for some works. Web browser settings may need to be changed for some works.

Digital authoring tools:

a) Locative narrative
Google Maps (MyMaps) (online): https://maps.google.ca/

b) Hypertext
Twine (Windows, Mac OS X): http://twinery.org/ (Version 1 [1.4.2] is currently recommended over Version 2 [2.0.8])
Inklewriter (online): http://www.inklestudios.com/inklewriter/
Ren'Py (visual novel; Windows, Mac OS X, Linux, Android): http://www.renpy.org/

c) IF (Interactive Fiction)
Inform 7 (Windows, Mac OS X, Linux): http://inform7.com/
Quest (Windows & online): http://textadventures.co.uk/quest

**D2L Brightspace**

Students will be expected to regularly consult the D2L Brightspace course shell on my.ryerson.ca for scheduling changes, relevant assigned readings and assignments pertaining to the lecture on a weekly basis.

This syllabus, assignment instructions, and other important information pertaining to the course will be posted on D2L Brightspace.

**Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential Literature 1</td>
<td>25 September</td>
<td>25% (10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential Literature 2</td>
<td>9 October</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tablet Reading Blog</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>'Let's Play' Essay</td>
<td>30 October</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Description of Assignments

This section provides an overview of the assignments – detailed instructions will be provided on D2L Brightspace during the course.

The Potential Literature assignments (Cyborg Texts, Chessbard Anthology) will assess your comprehension of the capabilities of the text generation systems we will examine in class through your deliberate and creative use of these systems in the creation of computer-aided collaborative texts.

The Tablet Reading Blog will assess your completion and retention of salient aspects of the assigned works for the iPad, as well as the effectiveness of pilot iPad loan program, using the iPads on loan at the Library. Blog posts will be due before noon on the Wednesday on which the work is discussed in class.

The 'Let’s Play' Essay asks students compose a short essay that both documents their progression through a ‘playable’ creative digital work and that reflects critically on their experience of that work.

The Digital Essay asks you to build upon your hands-on engagement with authoring systems, your narrative analysis skills, and the readings of assigned creative and critical works to critically engage with a key concept in digital narrative in an essay that uses scholarly secondary sources (connects to Outcomes 1 to 4). Using Twine, Inklewriter, Ren'Py, Quest or Inform7, students will write an essay exploring a key concept in digital narrative (e.g., the Ergodic; Interactivity; Immersion; User as Creator; the Reader as Player; (Non)Linearity). You will be required to use at least two scholarly secondary sources.

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Topics/Texts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9 Sept.</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>16 Sept.</td>
<td>Writing Machines 1: Procedurally-Generated/Algorithmic Text</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Topic: The Cyborg Writer: Combinatorial and Constraint Writing Words:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Neil Hennessy, JABBER (2000) [Java applet, download]:</td>
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<td><a href="http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/hennessey/data/jabber/index.html">http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/hennessey/data/jabber/index.html</a></td>
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<td>Background reading (optional): Lewis Carroll, &quot;Jabberwocky&quot; (1855/1872):</td>
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<td><a href="http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/jabberwocky">http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/jabberwocky</a></td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>14 Oct.</td>
<td><strong>STUDY WEEK – NO CLASS</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Topic: Hypertextuality and Understanding Lives  
Guest Presenter: Ramona Pringle  
Reading: TBD  

| 8  | 28 Oct. | **Hypertext 3: Hypermedia, Hyperspace, Hyperbook**  
Topic: Hyperlinking and Extra-textuality  
   - Lucky Special Games, *Locked-In* (nd) [download]: [http://luckyspecialgames.com/#lockedin](http://luckyspecialgames.com/#lockedin)  
   - [Point & Click Adventure]: TBD  
   - Simogo, *Device 6* (2013) [tablet]  
Reading: TBD  

| 9  | 4 Nov. | **Locative Narrative: Mapping Narratives**  
Topic: Psychogeography and Hypergeography  
   - *murmur* Toronto: [http://murmurtoronto.ca/](http://murmurtoronto.ca/)  
   - Inkle Studios, *80 Days* (2014) [tablet]  
Reading: Jeff Ritchie, "The Affordances and Constraints of Mobile Locative
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Games and Narrative 1: Interactive Fiction (IF)</th>
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Learning and Student Resources

Academic Integrity  http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/
Academic Accommodation Support  http://www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/academic-accommodation-support
Counselling (free + confidential)  http://www.ryerson.ca/counselling/index.html
Financial Assistance  http://www.ryerson.ca/currentstudents/financialaid/
Learning Support  http://www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/index.html
Medical Centre  http://www.ryerson.ca/studentservices/medicalcentre/
Ryerson Student Union  http://www.rsuonline.ca/index.php
Student Services  http://www.ryerson.ca/studentservices/
Writing Support  http://www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/writing-support/index.html

Ryerson calendar and student guide  http://www.ryerson.ca/currentstudents/calendars/

University Policies

Students are required to familiarize themselves with and adhere to all of the following University policies:

1. For the student code of Academic Conduct (including policies on plagiarism), please see:  
   http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf

2. For the student code of Non-Academic Conduct, please see:  
   http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol61.pdf

3. Final Examinations: For general Ryerson policies regarding examinations, see:  
   http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol135.pdf  Policy 135 - Examination Policy

4. Ryerson policy on student email: Students are required to use and maintain their Ryerson email address as their official communication with the Instructor.  
   http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol157.pdf  Policy 157 - Student email Policy

5. Academic Consideration:  
   Students must submit assignments on time and write all tests and exams as scheduled. Normally, assignments submitted for grading will be handed back within approximately two weeks, except for the final exam.
There will be no penalty for work missed for a justifiable reason. Students need to inform the instructor of any situation that arises during the semester that may have an adverse affect on their academic performance, and request any necessary considerations according to the policies well in advance, if possible. Failure to do so will jeopardize any academic appeals.

Except in cases of accommodations for disabilities, where documentation is handled directly by Academic Accommodation Support, students must fill out an Academic Consideration form and submit it to their own program office. BA English students should submit the form to Wendy Francis, Program Administrator in JOR-1042. Other program students must submit directly to their program office. For non-program students enrolled in courses at The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, please submit to the Chang School.

You can access the form at http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/forms/academic_consideration_document_submission.pdf

The following procedures must be followed for all Academic Consideration Requests:

- **Medical certificates** – In the case of illness, a Ryerson Medical Certificate, or a letter on letterhead from a physician with the student declaration portion of the Ryerson Medical Certificate attached, is required to be submitted to the office of the student’s own program within 3 working days of the missed assignment deadline, test or examination. For non-program students enrolled in courses at The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, the Ryerson Medical Certificate is required to be submitted to the Chang School. (see www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf for the certificate) The program office will notify the instructor that the documents have been received. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with your instructor for a make-up assignment/test/examination. Retrospective medical certificates (i.e., where doctors can only state that the student reported having symptoms at an earlier date rather than observing the symptoms) may not necessarily be accepted by the English Department/instructor. BA English students who submit more than three medical certificates over the course of the program are expected to meet with the Undergraduate Program Director to discuss how best to manage ongoing/recurring medical issues.

- **Religious observance** – Students are strongly encouraged to make requests within the first two weeks of class. Other requests for accommodation of specific religious or spiritual observance must be presented to your program office (or the Chang School for non-program students) no later than two weeks prior to the conflict in
question (in the case of final examinations within two weeks of the release of the examination schedule). To make this request, you must submit a Request for Accommodation form (http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/relobservforminstr.pdf) to your program office. The office will notify the instructor when they have received the request form.

- **Other requests for Academic Consideration** that are not related to medical or religious observation must be submitted in writing together with the Academic Consideration form to your program office (or the Chang School for non-program students). The letter must clearly state the reasons for the request and describe the events or circumstances that seriously impair your ability to meet your academic obligations, and that were beyond your control. When possible, supporting documentation must be attached to the letter. The program office will notify the instructor when they have received the request. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with your instructor for a make-up assignment/test/examination.

- **Students with disabilities** - In order to facilitate the academic success and access of students with disabilities, these students should register with Academic Accommodation Support http://www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/academic-accommodation-support/. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that instructors are notified of their individual accommodations by Academic Accommodation Support (through Clockwork)

- **Regrading or recalculation** – These requests must be made to the instructor within 10 working days of the return of the graded assignment to the class. These are not grounds for appeal, but are matters for discussion between the student and the instructor.

- Submission of the Academic Consideration form and all supporting documentation to your program office does not relieve you of the responsibility to NOTIFY YOUR INSTRUCTOR of the problem as soon as it arises, and to contact the instructor again after the documents have been submitted in order to make the appropriate arrangements.

- **If you do not have a justifiable reason for an absence and/or have not followed the procedure described above, you will not be given accommodation nor credit or marks for the work missed during that absence.**

For more detailed information on these issues, please refer to Senate Policy 134 at (Undergraduate Academic Consideration and Appeals) and Senate Policy 150 (Accommodation of Student Religious Observance Obligations). Both can be found at www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/.
English Department Policies

Use of Technology in Classroom:

The misuse of technology, which includes texting, web browsing, online gaming, video and movie watching, will not be permitted in any English Department courses. If approved by individual instructors, electronic devices may be used during lectures or seminars (tutorials) strictly for course-related purposes — note-taking, online reading, and assignments/exercises. Refusal to comply with this policy may result in the loss of electronic privileges for the term and the dismissal of a student from a lecture. Mobile phones and tablets must be fully turned off for the duration of each class.

Late Policy:

The penalty for late submission is 5% per day, including weekends, up to a maximum of seven days. Assignments submitted more than seven days after the due date will not be reviewed and will receive a grade of zero, unless there is a documented medical reason or an extension has been granted on the basis of documented compassionate grounds. Academic consideration for late or missed assignments must be requested as outlined in the Senate Academic Consideration Policy - http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/ senate/policies/pol134.pdf

See online English Department Student Handbook at http://www.ryerson.ca/english/students/current-students/resources/english-student-handbook/index.html for other policies specific to the Department of English.

Other Course/Instructor Policies

1. **Assignment submission criteria:** Please see individual assignment instructions for submission criteria.
2. **Attendance/participation:** Regular attendance at and participation in class is required. An attendance sign-in sheet will be circulated during each class.
3. **Course Policy on Pilot Tablet Program:** As part of a pilot and study into the effective use of tablet technology in learning at Ryerson, ENG921 students will be able, through the Library, to check out one of ten iPads (iPads) on short-term loan to study assigned tablet-based works. Usage of the iPads is governed by this course policy in combination with the Library’s policy (available on the D2L Brightspace course shell).

This pilot program is restricted to students enrolled in ENG921. Students will be able to check out an iPad for a short-term loan of **two hours maximum** per loan. Given that the pilot program comprises 10 iPads and given the size of the class, out of consideration for fellow students, it is strongly advised that students stay
in the vicinity of the Library (in the Library tower or the SLC) when they have checked out an iPad, immediately dedicate time to completing the assigned work, and return the iPad promptly when finished. Students are also asked to plug in iPads during use in order to preserve battery strength for later users. *Remember to bring your own earphones!*

An iPad borrowing timesheet will be accessible through the D2L Brightspace course shell. Students are asked to indicate on this timesheet when they plan to borrow an iPad. This will enable students to strategize when they have the best opportunities to borrow a tablet. *This is not an official reservation system which will guarantee the availability of a tablet at a certain time*—it is only meant to provide information about possible peak borrowing times. Students should be aware that they may have to wait 5-10 minutes for recently-returned iPads to be reset for the next user.