COMM 371-202 / MOBILE DIGITAL STORYTELLING / SPRING 2015

Tuesday + 4:15 – 6:45pm + SoC 015

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SoC 220 + Office Hours By Appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Mobile devices (smartphones and connected tablets) have become ubiquitous and intimate part of our daily lives: they are everywhere, and they are with us all the time. This course will explore how stories can be told using hand-held devices and other mobile technologies. Topics covered include histories of site-specific narratives, visual tellings of urban space, mapping, real-time storytelling, and more. Emphasis will be on student creation of mobile stories; as well as analysis and critique of contemporary mobile media storytelling.

REQUIRED TEXTS

+ *The Mobile Story: Narrative Practices with Locative Technologies*. Edited by Jason Farman, Routledge (2014)
+ Additional readings will be made available via the course website

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

+ Smartphone or tablet with data connection (iOS or Android) and appropriate cable(s) or software to transfer files to / from device.
+ Apple App Store / Google Play Store account (**NOTE**: We'll be exploring and using several apps this semester. I will make every effort to use free or inexpensive apps, but you should be ready to purchase apps as needed or desired.)
 + Tumblr (or similar service, e.g. Wordpress, etc.) account to host your "moblog" and – if needed – your projects.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

+ Develop creative capacities, especially with regards to "creative misuse"
+ Learn how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems
+ Gain a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity

KNOWLEDGE GOALS

+ Mobile devices are sketchbooks for media makers. Always be looking and listening.
+ Mobile devices allow you to capture the serendipitous experience of urban experience.
+ Collect enough pieces and you can build a complete puzzle.
+ Software (apps, etc.) has a defined use. But always be thinking about possible creative misuse.

POLICIES

Late Work / Lost Work

Bosses, editors, and clients will not tolerate late or lost work: neither will I. Extensions will not be granted. Incompletes will not be assigned. Make-up work will not be assigned unless pre-arranged, or due to an authorized documented absence. If you fear you will miss a deadline, please discuss it with me ASAP. ***Backup your files***. If an assignment is lost or you discover a discrepancy later in the semester, email documentation will be required. It is your responsibility to make sure I get your work - it is not my responsibility to tell you your file was corrupted, or your email bounced, or to remind you to hand in work.

Attendance / Lateness

Missed work cannot be made up or excused except in the case of severe illness, death in the family, or religious holiday. These absences must be documented if you'd like to make up missed work. Documentation for a university-authorized absence must be cleared with the professor in advance. Come to class on time. Coming in late disrupts the class, and you'll likely miss important information. It is your responsibility to ask classmates for announcements you may have missed by arriving late. ***Repeated absence or late arrival will affect your grade.***

Illness

If you are ill, please do not come to class. Notify me and contact the Wellness Center for advice and get documentation.

Participation

Attendance and lateness policies described above factor into your participation grade, and so does your contribution the community of learning in our classroom. Your participation in class depends on quantity and quality of participation.

In this class, you'll hear lectures, participate in discussion, and provide feedback to classmates. Your positive and substantive contribution to each of these class elements is expected for a passing grade - doing the bare minimum will earn you a bare minimum grade. ***Your physical presence in the room is less than bare minimum participation; participation includes attendance, attention, and attitude as well as substantive contributions.***

Leaving early, texting, checking Facebook, chatting, sleeping, eating meals, and doing other non-class related work are distractions to you, me, and your classmates. If you need to leave class early, please tell me before class starts.

Classroom Citizenship

Students are expected to respect each other. When you enter a classroom, you are a member of a community of learning. Your success depends on your neighbors' success. Treat each other with tolerance and understanding. The people you'll interact with in class are your peers and future colleagues. ***Strive to do better on your own, but also strive to help your classmates to elevate the level of conversation and constructive criticism in the classroom.*** You are responsible for your own work, but you are also responsible to your teacher and your peers. Your positive substantive participation is a valuable aspect of the class.

Computers in the Classroom

Most class meetings will include a section of lab time where we use the classroom computers to learn software. If you would like to bring your own device (laptop, smartphone, etc.) to take notes, that is acceptable. However, you may need to use specific software (Photoshop, etc.) that is installed on the lab computers.

We'll be relying heavily on web resources to help expand our knowledge of mobile digital storytelling as well as to help us answer questions / troubleshoot software and other tools. This is particularly true with regards to design software: there are many forums, FAQs, tutorials, and other resources online that will help expand your knowledge of these tools. ***LEARN TO CONSULT THESE RESOURCES BEFORE YOU ASK FOR HELP.***

A reminder: be respectful with your use of technology. Please do not use valuable class time to send text messages, use headphones to listen to music, watch wacky videos, look at Facebook, check email, chat, etc. Doing so will lower your participation grade severely.

Students with Disabilities

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of the course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. **Plagiarism in your work will result in a minimum of a failing grade for that assignment.** The case may carry further sanctions from the School of Communication or the University, the most serious being permanent expulsion. Avoid turning in work that could be interpreted as plagiarism or academically dishonest (e.g., failing to properly credit a source or using someone else's ideas without clarifying that they are not yours). This is an academic community; being uninformed or naïve is not an acceptable excuse. It is dishonest to:

- turn in the same work for two classes;
- turn in a paper you have not written yourself; or
- copy from another student or use a "cheat sheet" during an exam.

Grading

The grade given to average work on all assignments is a C. So, *if you just complete the bare minimum for each assignment, expect to earn a C for your work.* Grades of B or A indicate impressive achievement above the average. Grades of A in particular indicate especially exceptional work. Grades below C indicate inadequacies or errors in any or all of the grading criteria. The university grading scale will be used. Percentage grades are not rounded up. An 87.45% is a B+, not an A-.

Students will receive comments and grades for each assignment unless otherwise noted in the syllabus. It is your responsibility to keep track of the grades you earn. I will not send you updates on cumulative grades. I will not send you warnings when you drop below some point value. I will not send you prompts to participate more or to work harder. *The total points for the class and for the assignment are listed in the syllabus so at any point in the semester, you should be able to calculate an approximation of your grade easily.* Students may meet with me during office hours throughout the semester to discuss their grades and comments.

If you would like to discuss a grade on an assignment you must make an appointment to visit me during office hours. Bring the assignment, my comments, and a written explanation of how your work met the requirements of the assignment, and showed impressive achievement above the average. *You have two weeks from the day I return the assignment to dispute my assessment of that work.* After two weeks, I will assume you are satisfied with my assessment, and I will not reconsider the assessment for any reason.

ASSIGNMENTS

1.) Discussion Leadership – (50 points) – DUE DATE: Variable

Discussion leaders will write a post on the class blog that raises provocative questions based on that weeks reading and will be called upon during class to assist in guiding discussion, respectful debate, and deeper reflection. Tell us what you find intriguing or problematic about the reading. **DO NOT** just summarize. Find an aspect of the reading that piques your curiosity, investigate it, and report back. Please include web links to related and relevant material. **NOTE: Postings should be around 500 words and are due on Mondays at 12 noon.**

2.) Fragments "Moblog" – (5 points per week x 15 weeks = 75 points) – DUE DATE: Ongoing

You will keep a "moblog" (mobile blog) where you will publish spontaneous, mobile-made media fragments (photo, video, audio, etc.) throughout the semester. The goal is to establish habits of observation as well as collection, and to harvest media that will serve as inspiration for later mobile storytelling projects. This assignment will be assessed on a weekly basis, and will be marked as "completed" or "not completed".

NOTE: Undergrads must post TWO items (minimum), grad students THREE items (minimum) per week.

3.) Experiments with Images, Audio, Map s+ GPS – (25 points x 3 media = 75 points) – DUE DATES: See Below

During the first half of the semester, you will produce several quickly-executed but thoughtfully-considered "experiments" using your mobile device's media and location capturing abilities. Subject matter is up to you. Either a traditional "narrative" or something more impressionistic. **NOTE: Undergrads will create ONE experiment in each medium, grad students TWO.**

> + **IMAGE (Photo / Video)** – DUE DATE: **JANUARY 27**
>> A brief photo essay or video story. Person? Place? Thing? No writing. Show us, don't tell us.
> + **SOUND** – DUE DATE: **FEBRUARY 3**
>> The city ceaselessly speaks: what is it saying? People? Traffic? Nature? A "field recording"? Narrated?
> + **MAPS & GPS** – DUE DATE: **FEBRUARY 17**
>> Make an interpretive map. "Where, " but also "why". Emotions? Memories? A sketch upon the Earth?

4.) Midterm Project: Expanded Experiment – (75 points) – DUE DATE: FEBRUARY 24

You will select one of the above "experiments" and expand upon it to create a more polished, completed story. Further details regarding this assignment will be discussed in-class.

5.) Mobile Experience Reaction & Critique – (50 points) – DUE DATE: ON OR BEFORE APRIL 7

You will choose from among the several mobile experiences we'll explore (alternate reality games, tours of neighborhoods, app-directed urban explorations, augmented reality apps, etc.) and write a review / reaction paper which recounts your interaction with the experience, offers your opinions, likes, and criticisms, and discusses the experience within the context of one (or more) of the course readings. **NOTE: Undergrads will write 2-3 pages, grad students 4-5 pages.**

6.) Final Project Proposal – (25 points) – DUE DATE: MARCH 24

The proposal (between 250-500 words in length) should explain your group's idea for the project and how you intend to complete it (you must also attach a separate schedule for milestones you plan on completing). Once approved, you will spend the rest of the semester working collaboratively to conceive, design, and implement your project.

7.) Final Project: One Street – (150 points) – DUE DATE: IN-CLASS CRIT APRIL 21, REVISE UNTIL APRIL 28

Working in small groups (2 or 3), and building upon the fragments and sketches you've made (photo/video, sound, maps, GPS) and experiences with location-dependent apps, games, etc. you will create a story (narrative, experimental, or otherwise) about some aspect of a single street in Chicago. Incorporation of multiple media objects and styles is essential. Further details regarding this assignment will be discussed in-class.

TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE: 500

SCHEDULE

Week One – January 13 – Course Introduction + The Importance of Collecting Fragments

Week Two – January 20 – IMAGE STORIES (PHOTO/VIDEO)

READ FOR THIS WEEK

+ *Site Specificity, Pervasive Computing, and the Reading Interface* (The Mobile Story, Ch. 1)

+ "The Flâneur" (http://www.thelemming.com/lemming/dissertation-web/home/flaneur.html)

Week Three – January 27 – AUDIO STORIES

READ FOR THIS WEEK

+ *Walking-Talking Soundscapes, Flaneurs, and the Creation of Mobile Media Narrative* (The Mobile Story, Ch 7)

+ "Theory of the Derive" (http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html)

Week Four – February 3 – MAPS

READ FOR THIS WEEK

+ *Locative Media in the City: Drawing Maps and Telling Stories* (The Mobile Story, Ch 8)

+"Vagueness Gridlocked: A Map of Smells of NYC" (http://uiccomm494.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/smell.pdf)

Week Five – February 10 – GPS

READ FOR THIS WEEK

+ *Paths of Movement: Negotiating Spatial Narratives Through GPS Tracking* (The Mobile Story, Ch 9)

+ "The Big Draw of a GPS Run" (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/20/fashion/20GPS.html)

Week Six – February 17 – CHECK-IN / WORKSHOP

Week Seven – February 24 – PRESENTATIONS OF MIDTERM PROJECTS

Week Eight – March 3 – SPRING BREAK

Week Nine – March 10 – WHY LOCATION MATTERS

READ FOR THIS WEEK

+ *Re-narrating the City Through the Presentation of Location* (The Mobile Story, Ch. 3)

+ "The Rue Vilin," from *Species of Spaces and Other Places by* Georges Perec

Week Ten – March 17 – GAMES

READ FOR THIS WEEK

+ *The Geocacher as Placemaker: Remapping Reality through Location-Based Mobile Gameplay* (The Mobile Story, Ch. 11)

+ "Why Google's Ingress Game is a Data Goldmine"

  (http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21628936.200-why-googles-ingress-game-is-a-data-gold-mine.html)

Week Eleven - March 24 – MOBILE STORIES IN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

READ FOR THIS WEEK

+ Enhancing Museum Narratives: Tales of Things and UCL's Grant Museum (The Mobile Story, Ch. 19)

+ Interactive Games Make Museums a Place to Play (http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99244253)

Week Twelve - March 31 – TRANSMEDIA FICTION

READ FOR THIS WEEK

+ "I Heard It Faintly Whispering": Mobile Technology and Nonlocative Transmedia Practices (The Mobile Story, Ch. 14)

+ Transmedia Storytelling 101 (http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html)

Week Thirteen – April 7 – TEXT IN THE AGE OF TEXTING

READ FOR THIS WEEK

+ Narrative Fiction and Mobile Media After the Text-Message Novel (The Mobile Story, Ch. 15)

+ Thumbs Race as Japan's Bestsellers Go Cellular (http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/20/world/asia/20japan.html)

Week Fourteen - April 14 – CHECK-IN / WORKSHOP

Week Fifteen - April 21 – PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PROJECTS