

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR: CS 7
INTERACTIVE STORYTELLING

SPRING 08 –MWF 1:45-2:50

LORIE LOEB
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Syllabus



Interactive storytelling begins with the rich experience of storytelling and adds the element of audience interaction. For hundreds of years, audiences have been involved in the telling of stories but because of the advent of new technologies there has been a growing interest in the field of interactive storytelling. We will look at computer and video games, blogs, interactive theater, role-playing games and depictions of interactive storytelling in books, movies and television to analyze the quality of the audience experience and discuss the value of interactivity on the art of storytelling. We will develop methods for analyzing interactive story by first studying traditional (linear) narrative structure and comparing it with interactive story structure such as branching narratives, loops and games. Classroom exercises will be given to help develop a set of tools to understand how stories are built, discover where the decision points are and what sorts of choices the "interactor" would find meaningful.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

All papers will be written in draft form first. The first two papers will be done in two stages—a draft and then a final version. The final paper/project will be put together in four steps. Complete descriptions of each paper will be handed out during class.

1. Using some guidelines from Aristotle's Poetics, write a Holodeck experience you would like to be a part of. This should be 2 to 3-

pages long. You create the rules for the Holodeck, but you can use the rules from Star Trek as your guide. Place yourself wherever you'd like—in outer space or in your room here in Hanover. Whatever you choose for the location, don't change who you are. Keep your personality and use your own interests as the starting point for the paper. Begin by setting up the story. Describe the world. What does the world look like? Who is in it? Where and when are you? What is the conflict? Next talk about how you resolve the conflict keeping in mind that this is a Holodeck and you are in control of the experience.

2. **Research Paper:** You will write your research paper like a computer science paper in which you are offering a new use or method for interactive storytelling. To do this, you must understand where the current state of the art and technology are, how it is being used, and what areas need further development. Then you need to lay out your idea. How is your idea different? How does it build on what others have done? What are the applications and benefits of your idea? What are the flaws?

You can approach this from a number of directions. For example, you could focus on the technology and develop a new technology for interactive storytelling. You could focus on the educational aspects and develop a new educational tool. If you prefer, you could focus on interactive storytelling as a means of social interaction and develop a new interface or a new way to make the interaction more robust and meaningful. You could also focus on applications around entertainment. Choose just one area, do research about how interactive storytelling has been used in this area up until now and then talk about where you plan to take it.

3. You will work in small groups. Create an interactive story that will be shared/performed/offered to the class at the end of the quarter. This is a 4 stage process.
 - a. **Stage One: Concept and Design.** Devise a story structure. Create a storyboard or script to represent the structure, decision points, choices and plot lines. What are the nouns and verbs? What will the choices be? How will the interaction be presented? This stage will be “pitched” to the class for comments and feedback.
 - b. **Stage Two: First Draft.** Write a first draft of the interactive story. This stage will be turned in for comments and suggestions.

- c. **Stage Three: Revision and Prep.** Revise the work and prepare it for presentation. Create images to help augment the story and devise a way to present it to the class. Have some friends “play” the game to get their feedback. Create images to help augment the story and devise a way to present it to the class.
- d. **Stage Four: Presentation.** Present your interactive story to the class. Find a way to make the interaction as clear as possible so the class can get a feel for how the interaction will be presented and what the experience would be like for the active audience in your story world. You can perform the story in some way, use digital technology to present the story or use visual aids.

Other writing assignments:

Aristotle’s Poetics for Interactive Storytellers
Class Exquisite corpse writing project
Ray Bradbury re-write as interactive story
Ongoing blog and vblog
Role playing exercises
Personal Storytelling

Grading:

Paper 1: 20%
Research Paper: 30%
Final Paper/Presentation: 30%
Other Writing 10%
Class Participation 10%

Books:

Tierno Aristotle’s Poetics for Screenwriters
Crawford Chris Crawford on Interactive Storytelling
Miller Digital Storytelling: Creator’s Guide

Weekly Schedule:

Wed. March 28

Introduction to class and each other – short story circle

What is an “Interactive story?”

Screening of Star Trek: The Next Generation’s Holodeck example (Ship in a Bottle)

Homework: Read Introduction and Chapters 1–3 Tierno’s Aristotle’s Poetics for Screenwriters

Paper 1: Holodeck paper. First draft due Wednesday, April 4

Friday, March 30

Group story exercises (Exquisite corpse)

Brief history of Interactive storytelling – Aristotle, myths, rituals, games and theater

Homework: Read chapters 1 and 2 of Crawford on Interactive Storytelling and chapters 1–2 Digital Storytelling

Paper 1: Holodeck paper. First draft due Wednesday, April 4

Monday, April 2

Introduction to 3-Act structure

Aristotle

Characters and Plot, Story Technique

Homework: Bring in a postcard from a distant place. This could be somewhere you have visited or would like to visit. Read chapter 3 of Crawford on Interactive Storytelling and chapter 3 Digital Storytelling

Paper 1: Holodeck paper. First draft due Wednesday, April 4

Wed. April 4

First Draft – Holodeck Papers Due

In-class writing project: Postcard

What is interactivity?

Homework:

Read chapter 4 of Crawford on Interactive Storytelling and chapter 4 Digital Storytelling. Read Ray Bradbury’s “The Veldt” Due Monday, April 9

Fri. April 6

Decision points (where does interactivity come in)

Structure for interactivity.

Homework:

Read: Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt" due Monday April 9.

Monday, April 9

Get 1st draft back with comments

Find decision points in "The Veldt" (Backward looking)

Consider rewrite options

Homework: Final draft of Holodeck paper due Friday, April 13. Read chapters 5 and 6 Chris Crawford on Interactive Storytelling

Wed. April 11

Games vs. Stories

Homework: Rewrite of The Veldt due Monday, April 16, Rewrite of Holodeck Paper Due Friday, April 13

Friday, April 13

Paper 1 Final Draft Due Today!

Verb Thinking

Homework: Rewrite of "The Veldt" Due Monday, April 16

Monday, April 16

Group debate on Interactive Storytelling in preparation for 2nd Paper

Homework: Read chapters 7 and 8 Chris Crawford, Chapter 4-8 Glassner
1st Draft of 2nd Paper Due Wednesday, April 25

Wed. April 18

Library Research Session

Friday, April 20

Fairytales and Story Components

Homework: Paper 2

Monday, April 23

Homework: Paper 2, 1st draft due Wednesday, April 25

Wed. April 25

Paper 2, First draft due today

Guest lecture by Nick Montfort, author of *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction* (<http://nickm.com/>)

Homework:

Friday, April 27

Verbs and Events, Introduction to Final paper/project

Homework: Begin work on the final project.

Monday, April 30

Roles and Sequencing

Research Paper w/comments returned

Homework: Storytelling anecdotes

Wed. May 2

Introduction to Final Project

Storytelling

Homework: Rewrite of 2nd Paper, Due Monday, May 7

Stage One: Story "Pitch" due Wednesday, May 9

Fri. May 4

Anticipation

Storytelling anecdotes

Homework: Rewrite of 2nd Paper, Due Monday, May 7

Stage One: Story "Pitch" due May 9

Monday, May 7

Rewrite of 2nd Paper due today

Writing a Script

Homework: Stage One: Story "Pitch" due, May 9

Wed. May 9

Turn in 2nd Paper

Story Pitches and discussion

Homework: Stage 2, 1st Draft Due Monday May 14

Friday, May 11 (no Lorie—meet in groups)

Group work on Final Project

Homework: Final Project Stage 2, 1st Draft Due Monday May 14

Monday, May 14

Turn in Stage 2 of Final Project

Roles and Sequencing

Homework: Final Project

Wednesday, May 16

Gossip, lies and truth

Homework: Final Project

Friday, May 18

Get Stage 2 back, begin Stage 3

Homework: Final Project

Monday, May 21

Homework: meetings with Lorie

Homework: Final Project

Wednesday, May 23

meetings with Lorie

Homework: Final Project –

Friday, May 25

Stage 3 due today.

Homework: Final Project

Mon, May 28 (Memorial Day – No classes)

Wed, May 30

Presentation of Final Interactive Stories

Sunday, June 3 3PM

Presentation of Final Interactive Stories

Paper schedule

Paper 1: Holodeck

1st Draft Due:

Wednesday, April 4

In-Class Discussion of Paper 1

Friday, April 6

Papers returned with comments

Monday, April 9

Final Draft Due

Friday, April 13

“The Veldt”

Read by

Monday, April 9

In-Class Discussion

Monday, April 9

Rewrite due:

Monday, April 16

Paper 2: Interactive Storytelling Research Paper

Group debate

Monday, April 16

Library Research Demo

Wednesday, April 18

1st Draft due

Wednesday, April 25

1st Draft with comments returned
Monday, April 30

Final Draft due
Wednesday, May 9

Paper 3: Group Interactive Story Project

Phase one due:
Wednesday, May 9 (Pitch storyboards and concepts)

Phase two due:
Monday, May 14 (1st draft)

Phase three due:
May 21

Meetings with Lorie to discuss final project:
May 21 and 23

Presentations of final Projects:
Wednesday, May 30 during class
Sunday, June 3, 3–6 PM