Syllabus LMC 6317
Interactive Narrative (Fiction and Non-fiction) Spring 2015
Thursday 4:30-6:30
TSRB 322

Professor Janet H. Murray
jmurray@gatech.edu
Office Hours Monday 4-6 PM TSRB 320A

Course Description
The larger objective of this course is to contribute to the expansion of human expressive powers by creating and critiquing artifacts that exploit the affordances of the emerging digital medium for the purposes of the ancient human practice of storytelling. Stories are a foundational structure of human cognition and human culture, and a new medium for storytelling offers new possibilities for understanding the world and our relationships to one another. To explore interactive narrative is therefore one way of exploring the boundaries of human understanding and cultural change.

This course focuses on in-depth discussion of two kinds of works: interactive narratives in a wide range of digital and legacy formats, and theoretical works that offer a critical vocabulary for understanding actual and potential traditions of practice. The course will be conducted as a graduate seminar with formal seminar reports and weekly journal responses (which can be in the form of rapid prototypes).   Students will also create one major final project that will combine a formal design document with the creation of a theoretically-grounded prototype.

Programmatic Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate knowledge, comprehension, and application of the tools and formal design elements of digital media design.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate existing digital media artifacts, services, and environments using formal knowledge, and to explain and defend one's critical evaluation.
- Demonstrate the ability to devise, design, create, and assess prototypical digital media artifacts, services, or environments and to contextualize them within recognized traditions of practice..

Requirements and Grading

This is a graduate seminar course that provides a scholarly in-depth look at key artifacts and critical texts in interactive narrative design, and that explores the connections between theories of narrative and innovative design.

- **30% Formal Seminar Reports**
- 30% Weekly journal posts/rapid protypes)
- 20% Final project theoretically-informed **design documentation**, including paper, poster, video, and oral presentation
- 20% Final project **working prototype** of an original interactive narrative

Required Texts

Aarseth, Espen. *Cybertext* (1997). Chapter excerpts on tsquare.

Aristotle (1996). *Poetics.* London,New York, Penguin Books. (excerpts)
http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html Sections IV-XIX, XXIII, XXIV

Chen, Jenova. *Journey,* ThatGameCompany. (console video game, 2012).

Crawford, Chris. *On interactive storytelling.* (2012)
http://ptgmedia.pearsoncmg.com/images/9780321864970/samplepages/0321864972.pdf

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse*, 1980, Chapters 2 and 3. Available on tsquare.

Evans, R. and E. Short (2013). "Versu—A Simulationist Storytelling System." IEEE Transactions on Computational Intelligence and AI in Game (available on tsquare)

The Fullbright Company, *Gone Home* (2013)*,* PC or Mac game: purchase for download or play in EGL.

Herman, David, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative.* 2002: Nebraska University Press. Chapter 3 Scripts, Sequences, and Stories. Available on tsquare.

Jenkins, Henry "Searching for the Origami Unicorn: The Matrix and Transmedia Storytelling," *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 93-130. Available on tsquare.

Jules, Jesper. "On Absent Carrot Sticks: The Level of Abstraction in Video Games" in Ryan, M-L and Thon, J-N (2014)

Laurel, Brenda. *Computers as Theater* (1993). Chapter excerpts on tsquare.

Mateas, M. and A. Stern (2005). *Façade.* Available on line* and in EGL.

Mateas, M. and A. Stern, "*Façade:* An Experiment in Building a Fully-Realized Interactive Drama," in *Game Developers Conference* 2003: San Jose CA.

Mateas's   group's Prom Week site: http://promweek.soe.ucsc.edu/

McCoy, J., M. Treanor, B. Samuel, A. Reed, M. Mateas and N. Wardrip-Fruin, (2013). Prom Week: Designing past the game/story dilemma Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games (FDG 2013), Chania, Crete, Greece May 14-17,. http://www.fdg2013.org/program/papers/paper13_mccoy_etal.pdf

McGonigal, Jane. *A Real Little Game: The Performance of Belief in Pervasive Play,* Proceedings of Digital Games Research Association (DIGRA) 2003
http://www.avantgame.com/MCGONIGAL%20A%20Real%20Little%20Game%20DiGRA%202003.pdf

Montfort, N., *Twisty little passages: an approach to interactive fiction.* 2003, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. Chapter 4 "Zork and other mainframe works." Available on tsquare.

Murray, J.H., *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* 1998, Cambridge MA; London UK: MIT Press, chapters 3-6, available on tsquare and on reserve.

Murray, J.H., "Is there a story-game?", in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, P. Harrington and N. Wardrip-Fruin, Editors. 2003, MIT Press: Cambridge MA

Snow Fall, (New York Times 2013)

Propp, V., *Morphology of the Folktale* 1928, Austin: University of Texas Press. (Intro to Second Edition and Chapter II)

Ryan, Marie-Laure. *Avatars of Story.* University Of Minnesota Press (2006) (Excerpts on tsquare)

Ryan, M.-L. and J.-N. l. Thon (2014). Storyworlds across media : toward a media-conscious narratology. Lincoln ; London, University of Nebraska Press excerpts from M-L Ryan and J. Jules on tsquare

Short, E. (2013). The Unwelcome Proposal. Pride and Prejudice (adaptation). J. Austen, Versu interactive storytelling system.

Tell-Tale Games (2014), *Game of Thrones: Fire from Ice.* iOS game.

Wright, Will (2000). *The Sims,* Maxis Electronic Arts. PC game.

Additional Story-Games

Kan "Reives" Gao, *To the Moon*. Freebird Games. 2011
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_the_Moon
http://freebirdgames.com

Davey Wreden. *The Stanley Parable.* Galactic Café, 2011
http://www.**stanleyparable**.com
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Stanley_Parable

Tale of Tales. *The Path.* 2009
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tale_of_Tales_%28company%29
http://tale-of-tales.com/ThePath/

Ustwo. *Monument Valley* 2014 *http://www.monumentvalleygame.com/*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monument_Valley_%28video_game%29

Playdead. *Limbo.* 2010
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limbo_%28video_game%29
http://playdead.com/limbo/

Recommended / Supplementary Texts

Bal, M. (1998). *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

Daniel Benmergui, Storyteller (2011-ongoing) and related blogposts and art games.

Bogost, Ian, Simon Ferrari, Bobby Schweitzer. *Newsgames: Journalism at Play.* MIT Press (2010)

Bogost, Ian. *Persuasive Games* Chapter 1 Procedural Rhetoric. Available on tsquare.

Campbell, Joseph. (1949). *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York, Pantheon Books.

Fernandez-Vara, Clara. "The Game's Afoot: Designing Sherlock Holmes. DiGRA 2012. Available on tsquare.

Frasca, G. Ludology Meets Narratology: Similitude and Differences between Videogames and Narrative, 1999 ,
http://www.ludology.org/articles/ludology.htm and his Georgia Tech masters thesis on *Videogames of the Oppressed*

Hales, Katherine. *Electronic Literature* (2008)**.**

Harrell, D. F. (2013). Phantasmal media : an approach to imagination, computation, and expression. Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press.

Jenkins, Henry, "Transmedia Storytelling 101," Confessions of an Aca-Fan, March 22, 2007

Jules, Jesper. *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds.* MIT Press, 2011.

Johnstone, Keith. *Improvisation and the Theatre.* (1984)

Joyce, Michael. (1987). Afternoon. Cambridge MA, Eastgate Systems

Lebowitz, M. (1984). "Creating Characters in a story-Telling Universe." Poetics **13**: 171-194.

Lebowitz, M. (1985). "Story-Telling as Planning and Learning." Poetics **1985**: 483-502.

Lebling, P. D., et al. (1979). "Zork:A Computerized Fantasy Game." IEEE Computer **12**(4): 51-59.

McGonigal, Jane (2011). Reality is broken : why games make us better and how they can change the world. New York, Penguin Press.

Mittell, Jason, "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television," 2006

Short, E. (2013). An Introduction to Society, Versu interactive storytelling system.

Short, E. (2013). Introducing Versu. Emily Short's Interactive Storytelling. **2014**.

Short, E. (2013). Versu and Jane Austen. Emily Short's Interactive Storytelling. **2014**.

Todorov, T. (1971,1977). The Poetics of Prose. Ithaca New York, Cornell University press.

Weizenbaum, J., *Eliza-- A Computer Program for the Study of Natural Language Communication between Man and Machine.* Communications of the Association for Computing Machinery, 1966. Volume 9, Number 1 (January 1966): 36-35.(1): p. 36.

Assignments

Weekly: a one-page response to texts. Write one paragraph on the assigned digital artifact, one on the assigned critical text, and one on the relationship between them (300 words maximum). If multiple texts or artifacts are assigned, choose one of each to write about.

Seminar Report: an oral/slide presentation (15 minutes, ~10 slides). Prepare a comprehensive oral/slide presentation on either an artifact or a reading assigned for this week. Your report should summarize the key aspects of the artifact/reading that advance our understanding of interactive narrative. You may also present similar texts or artifacts to clarify your points as appropriate. Your presentation should include discussion questions and you should be prepared to led the class discussion as well as to offer your own insight.

We will assign the whole semester's reports by the end of the 2nd week so please think about what you want to focus on, and feel free to propose alternate texts or artifacts that you will take responsibility for presenting.

Final Projects: **Working interactive digital narrative, design document, demo video**. An original interactive narrative, in digital form, using a platform and delivery environment of your choice. The project should be a complete working prototype that is playable and that supports replay of the same scenario with different experience. It should produce a sense of dramatic agency in the interactor.

Design Document for your Final Project:
1. Executive Summary (paragraph)
2. The theoretical question your project addresses: Who has raised it before and how have they framed it? What is at stake? What will you address? (2-4 pages)
3. The tradition of practice your project draws on: What other artifacts are like the ones you are making? What strategies have they used to create satisfying experiences? How is yours similar or different? Make clear how the tradition of practice is related to the critical question motivating your project. (2 or more pages, with illustrations as appropriate)
4. Evaluation criteria? What are your aesthetics and how will you know whether you have created a successful artifact? (1-2 pages)
5. Screen shots, flow chart (as needed)
6. Brief preliminary evaluation and future plans (1-2 pages)
7. A VIDEO that documents the project with screen captures. It should briefly and persuasively explain the theoretical rationale, and show multiple run-throughs of the final project, demonstrating the value of interaction, and the aesthetic objectives. (1.5-3 minutes)

	Artifact	Readings	Recommended
Week 1 Intro Thursday Jan 8	Eliza, Zork	Aarseth (excerpts on site) Murray, HoH, ch 3-6	Montfort Weizenbaum Leibling et al on Zork
Week 2 Formalisms for story variation Thursday Jan 15	Myst OR Journey, OR an open world Rock Star game	Propp	Murray chapter on Plot Lebowitz articles on Universe system Joseph Campbell
Week 3 Structuring story with dramatic beats Thursday Jan 22	Façade	Aristotle Laurel, Mateas	Joe Bates Harrell Riedl
Week 4 Discourse and Plot Thursday Jan 29	Gone Home To the Moon The Stanley Parable (play Gone Home and one of the other two)	Chatman Ryan	Bal Todorov Prince
Week 5 Refining Story Abstraction Thursday Feb 5	The Sims	Herman	
Week 6 Story/Game Thursday 2/12	Detective or adventure game or other story/game of your choosing, e.g. Phoenix Wright …	Juul Crawford	Fernandez-Vara
Week 7 Simulation Thursday 2/19	Any Emily Short Vertu story Prom Week	Richard Evans and Emily Short on Vertu system McCoy, Mateas, et al on Prom Week	Emily Short blog
Week 8 Interactive Narrative Project Formulation Thursday 2/26	Present your Seminar Project concept in 5 slides: Tradition of Practice / Inspiration Theoretical Context Title; Genre; Platform; rough plot summary; principle characters Will interactor want to replay it? If so, why? If not, is that a problem? How will you provide the experience of dramatic agency?		
Week 9 Story Worlds Thursday 3/5	Tell-Tale Games, Game of Thrones:Fire from Ice	Jenkins Ryan (Story Worlds across media excerpts)	
Week 10 Actualities made interactive Thursday 3/12	Snow Fall; World without Oil, Bogost Fatworld Papers Please Daniel B. games (Play 2 in depth)	McGonigal	Bogost, et al *Newsgames*
Spring Break	Spring Break		Spring Break
Week 11 Seminar Project Thursday 3/26	Due: formal Seminar Project proposal (with theoretical foundation and traditions of practice your work speaks to)		
Week 12 (no class 4/2) Seminar Project Conferences	Meet with JHM individually with expanded pre-proposal including wireframes and flow chart of your project		
Week 13 Seminar Project Mockup Testing Thursday 4/9	Create a partial playable mockup of your final project and test one another's projects		

Week 14 Seminar Project Lab Week (no class 4/16)	Lab Week - open time to work on your projects	
Week 15 Thursday 4/23	Final poster, and live demo of your project , with very close to final design doc and running code	
Finals Week	Absolute final code, design doc, poster, and video due by noon Monday 4/27	