

# eng 1131-1805

## writing through media: mediating the human machine fall 2013

Instructor: Scott Sundvall

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Meeting Time: MWF, Period 7; Screenings R, Periods 9-11

Location: CSE 211A

Office Hours and Location: TBA

### Course Description (Generally)

This course originated as an extension of “writing about literature,” to include also entertainment and popular culture media (cinema, television, music, video games, pop literature, comics, magazines, ’zines, and the like). One difference from ENC 1102, besides the objects of study, is the method of study: writing **through** media. Students not only analyze and interpret media works but also use “creative” forms and practices to explore the production of meaning. 1131 with its overview of pop media is distinguished from 1145 special topics and 2300 film analysis.

The goal of the course is to introduce students to the transition underway between literacy and post-literacy (“electracy”) in contemporary culture. This shift is approached through its rhetorical implications, with the students as makers (and not just consumers) of new media effects. Hence this course is best taught in a computer classroom, in the context of which its more “writerly” assignments seem less experimental than they do in a conventional setting. At the same time, the course is adaptable to the conventional classroom.

### (Specifically)

By focusing on our shift into the image-centric, digitally mediated, networked epoch of electracy (literacy + in the age of electronic media), this writing through media course will examine, use and produce emerging rhetorical methods and strategies. We will not only examine and consume these rhetorical practices; we will also actively and creatively produce them. As such, this course constitutes an experiment. Our driving question informing this experiment, particular to this section of ENG 1131: How can/do we productively mediate the *human machine*, and how can we do so in the service of *individual and collective well-being*?

Our experiment will move through four phases (though each phase will overlap with the other phases): Image-Argument; Argument-Image; Narrative; Synthesis. In each phase, we will recursively return to the notion that “invention” best informs pedagogy and learning, rather than “consumption” and “verification.”

### **Required Texts**

Čapek, Karel. *R.U.R (Rossum's Universal Robots)*. New York: Penguin, 2004.

McLuhan, Marshall and Fiore, Quentin. *The Medium is the Massage*. Berkeley: Gingko Press, 1967.

Murakami, Haruki. *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. New York: Vintage International, 1993.

Packard, Edward. *Hyperspace: Choose Your Own Adventure*. New York: Bantam Books, 1983.

Course Packet (Available from Target Copy)

### **Assignments**

#### **Paper Experiment #1: 3<sup>rd</sup> I Paper (1,500 words) – 100 points**

This writing experiment asks students to situate themselves within the poetics of a given work/text. Thus, students will not merely analyze the work/text, but also construct/invent a concept-driven vision of the work/text that incorporates their own persona. They will not draw on what the work/text implies, but rather how the work/text implicates them. **Due September 9.**

#### **Paper Experiment #2: Mynifesto (2,000 words) – 150 points**

A personalized manifesto (my + manifesto), this assignment is meant to guide the student from their 3<sup>rd</sup> I experiment and towards their Conduction experiment and target for their viral video. This experiment will encourage the use of style, poetics, and general creativity as vital components of a successful electrate manifesto; it will suggest that the personal/ontological is not only political, but also aesthetic. **Due October 21.**

#### **Paper #3: Conduction (3,000 words) – 250 points**

Students will take their persona work from the first experiment, as well as their mynifesto from the second experiment, and refine them with the theory texts encountered in the last third of the semester. The goal of this assignment is for students to continue practicing the style, poetics, and general creativity from the first two experiments, and germinating the argumentative seed began in the second experiment by applying and synthesizing the encountered theories. **Due November 18.**

#### **Blogs: 300-500 words each – 100 points**

**Blogs are due every Sunday by midnight** (note the blog prompts on the syllabus at the beginning of each week). Students should use all the visual potentials of the blog (not just text, but also images, videos, music, links, etc.).

**Quizzes: Mondays (on films and readings) – 100 points**

**Quizzes are performed every Monday.** They will help to ensure that students are completing the readings/screenings.

**Viral Video: 300 words (plus video) – 250 points**

As the course develops (and especially with the Mynifesto experiment), students will identify a site/target (a problem concerning collective well-being). Students will produce a viral video that stimulates productive change in the service of collective well-being, using electrated aesthetics to achieve this goal. **Due at the end of the semester (specific date TBA).**

**Participation: Blog Responses; Facebook Presence; In-class Presence – 50 points**

In addition to regular attendance, participation includes responding to blogs from peers, as well as contributing to the course Facebook group page.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Unless it is specifically connected to assigned collaborative work, all work should be individual. Evidence of collusion (working with someone not connected to the class or assignment), plagiarism (use of someone else's published or unpublished words or design without acknowledgment) or multiple submissions (submitting the same paper in different courses) will lead to the Department's and the University's procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the university's Honor Code, available online at:

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx#honesty>.

### **Harassment**

Every student in this class is expected to participate in a responsible and mature manner that enhances education. Any conduct that disrupts the learning process may lead to disciplinary action.

Because this course requires much contact, collaboration, and dialogue among students, it is essential that each student work to create an environment of respect and tolerance.

From the University of Florida Honor Code: "One of the major benefits of higher education and membership in the university community is greater knowledge of and respect for other religious, racial and cultural groups. Indeed, genuine appreciation for individual differences and cultural diversity is essential to the environment of learning. Another major aspect of university life involves sexual relationships. Sexual attitudes or actions that are intimidating, harassing, coercive or abusive, or that invade the right to privacy of the individual are not acceptable. Organizations or individuals that adversely

upset the balance of communal living are subject to university disciplinary action. Only in an atmosphere of equality and respect can all members of the university community grow.”

## Conferences

While we can always correspond by e-mail, I strongly encourage you to meet with me during office hours. This time allows you and I to work on your unique strengths (and potential weaknesses). In short, it's the best time for me to be able to work on your development in the most unique and focused sense.

## **WEEKS 1-3: IMAGE-ARGUMENT: NEW MEDIA, THE SUBJECT, AND THE BODY**

### **Week 1**

Possible Blog Prompts:

1. Give a general impression of the course thus far, and the terms, concepts, arguments introduced.
2. Create/invent your own “page” to add to McLuhan’s book.
3. Considering the darker tropes in both McLuhan and *Videodrome*, how might we use the same mediums, media, and strategies for the production of well-being?

August 21

Introduction: Electracy, Well-Being, Community

Course Overview

Q&A

Flash Clip

Homework

Read Marshall McLuhan’s *The Medium is the Massage* 1-48.

Blog Entry #1

August 22

Film Screening: David Cronenberg’s *Videodrome*

August 23

*Videodrome* and the Human Machine

Making Dynamic/Inverting Logic

Homework

Continue McLuhan 49-93

Blog Entry #1

### **Week 2**

Possible Blog Prompts:

1. Compare and contrast the visual arguments presented in *Videodrome* and *eXistenZ*.
2. Create/invent your own “page” to add to McLuhan’s book.
3. Examine and/or reproduce the visual argumentative methods used in Cronenberg and/or McLuhan.

August 26  
Crash Course in Film Analysis  
Homework  
Blog #2  
Finish McLuhan

August 28  
Introduce Writing Experiment #1  
Massaging McLuhan  
Film Analysis Revisited  
Homework  
Blog #2

August 29  
Film Screening: David Cronenberg’s *eXistenZ*

August 30  
*eXistenZ* and *Videodrome*: The Mediated Human Machine  
Homework  
Blog #2

### **Week 3**

Possible Blog Prompts:

1. Consider the gesture towards “gaming” in *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* and *eXistenZ*, and how you/we might productively appropriate such a thematic strategy. Try to think in terms of the “visual.”
2. Make individual/replicate the “3<sup>rd</sup> I Experiment” and post your experimental results on your blog (three days extra time allowed for this choice)?
3. Apply/conduct the arguments presented in our first three films and/or the “3<sup>rd</sup> I Experiment” to/with another target of your choice.

September 2  
HOLIDAY  
Homework: Read Karel Čapek’s *R.U.R* by the end of the week

September 4  
Electrate Strategies: A Collaboration  
Electracy Revisited in Three Brief Acts  
Homework

Blog #3

Read/Explore: <http://www.3rdi.me>

September 5

Film Screening: Shinya Tsukamoto's *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*

September 6

Section 1 Collapse: Human-Machine Experiment Results

Review

Homework

Blog #3

## **WEEKS 4-6: ARGUMENT-IMAGE: VISUAL CULTURE, TERROR, AND THE POLITICS OF FEAR**

### **Week 4**

Possible Blog Prompts:

1. Use the affective logic of "The Falling Man" as a cue and present/construct/invent an image that produces similarly, but in the service of proactive well-being. Explain such below in writing.
2. Write an affective response to the "The Falling Man" image. How does it mean to you?
3. Consider the ethical implications of readily available media images of terror in the age of electracy, especially by comparing the "The Falling Man" to the Boston Bombing pictures.
4. Write a response to Tarantino's *Django Unchained*.

September 9

Transition: Surveillance, Control, Mediating Power & Inversion Techniques

Flash Clip: Horror/Terror at Our Fingertips: "The Falling Man"

Homework

Blog #4

Read: [http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0903-SEP\\_FALLINGMAN](http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0903-SEP_FALLINGMAN)

September 11

"Falling Man" and the Electracy Politics of 9/11: Reflections

Homework

Blog #4

Review: <http://cryptome.org/2013-info/04/boston-bombs/boston-bombs.htm>

September 12

Film Screening: Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained*

September 13

Electrate Violence: Verbal, Visual, Figurative in Narrative and in Journalism  
On Trial: Paula Deen vs. Quentin Tarantino

Homework

Blog #4

View: <http://www.bigbigforums.com/news-information/668434-food-network-has-fired-paula-deen.html>

### **Week 5**

Possible Blog Prompts

1. Use the blog to explore/employ the differences between visual and verbal logic/argument/persuasion, as demonstrated in the debate clips.
2. Construct a blog entry that effectively utilizes the rhetoric of protest culture in the service of well-being.
3. Explore the film “Terrorizing Dissent.”

September 16

The Rhetorical “Moves” of Political Debates

Homework

Blog #5

Read: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2021078,00.html>

September 18

Red Tie, Blue Tie, You Live, I Die: Electracy in the Electorate, Senator’s Sons, Kent State Massacre

Introduce Writing Experiment #2

Homework

Blog #5

Listen to: CCR’s “Senator’s Son” and Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young’s “Four Dead in Ohio” and consider the persuasive efficacy of these songs (see: Youtube).

September 19

Film Screening: “Terrorizing Dissent” (Select Parts: <http://www.terrorizingdissent.org>)

September 20

Appiphany and the Rhetoric of Protest Culture: May 1968-2004-Anonymous

Homework

Blog #5

Read May 1968 Public Graffiti: <http://www.bopsecrets.org/CF/graffiti.htm>

### **Week 6**

Possible Blog Prompts:

NOTE: MANDATORY: You must incorporate an image from Creative Commons into your blog this week.

Otherwise, be free.

September 23

Electrate Rhetoric: Affect, Transmission, and the “Digital Common”

Examples: Anonymous, 4chan, Virality

Homework

Blog #6

Come to next class period with a “viral video” that you find most effective.

September 25

Occupy 2.0: Rhetoric and Social Media

Introduce Viral Video Assignment

Homework

Blog #6

Read: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/may/11/occupy-globalmay-manifesto> and be prepared for a quiz!

September 26

Film Screening: John Badham’s *WarGames*

September 27

Collaboration/Review: “Privacy” and the “Private” in an Age of Information Warfare  
(NSA: Never Secret Anymore)

Homework

Blog #6

## **WEEKS 7-8: NARRATIVE: ELECTRACY AND THIRD MEANINGS**

### **Week 7**

Blog Prompts: TBA

September 30

An Introduction to Electrate “Signification;” Commercials, Commodities, and Third Meanings: Hummers, Body Wash, Alcohol

Homework

Blog #7

Read: Selections from Ferdinand de Saussure (*Course in General Linguistics*) and Roland Barthes (choices from *Mythologies*, *Empire of Signs*, *S/Z*)

October 2

Meaning Meaning What? – A Review

Homework

Blog #7

Continue with Roland Barthes

October 3

Film Screening: David Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive*



October 4  
Lynch & Trope & Meaning  
Homework  
Blog #7  
Read Selections from Jacques Derrida (“Signature, Event, Context”)

**Week 8**

Blog Prompts: TBA

October 7  
Theory Review  
Inversion Techniques: Cookies, Pop-Ups, and the Digital/Electrate Rhetoric of Instant Consumption  
Homework  
Blog #8

October 9  
Theory Review Cont.  
Inversion Techniques Cont.  
Homework  
Blog #8  
Read and “Mark Up” Assigned Fashion Catalogue using Theory (Due Monday; See Assignment Sheet )

October 10  
Film Screening: Leos Carax’s *Holy Motors*

October 11  
Collaborative Experiment: Applying the Principles of Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction to Surrealism  
Theory Review Cont.  
Homework  
Blog #8

**WEEKS 9-10: NARRATIVE: HYPERTEXT**

**Week 9**

Blog Prompts: TBA

October 14  
Introduction: Hypertext and a Post-Structural Return  
Homework  
Blog #9  
Begin Edward Packard’s *Choose Your Own Adventure: Hyperspace*

October 16

Links and Non-Linearity: Persuasive Hypertext

Homework

Blog #9

Finish *Choose Your Own Adventure: Hyperspace*

October 17

Film Screening: Steven Soderbergh's *Schizopolis*

October 18

A New Logic: Rhetoric and Electrate Space & Time

Homework

Blog #9

Read: Assigned Hypertext Fiction (TBA from <http://collection.eliterature.org> )

### **Week 10**

Blog Prompts: TBA

October 21

The Poetics of Non-Linear Rhetorical Movement

Homework

Blog #10

Read: Assigned Hypertext Fiction (TBA from <http://collection.eliterature.org> )

October 23

Review

Introduce Writing Experiment #3

Homework

Blog #10

Read: Selections from *George Landow's Hypertext 2.0 and 3.0*

October 24

Film Screening: Henry Joost's and Ariel Schuman's *Catfish*

October 25

Manti Te'o, Catfish, and the Question of Truth & Ethics in Electracey

Homework

Blog #10

Continue Landow

## **WEEKS 11-12: SYNTHESIS: POSSIBILITY, POTENTIAL, HORIZONS**

### **Week 11**

Blog Prompts: TBA

October 28

Considering a Target  
Introduce Writing Experiment #3  
Homework  
Read: Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto"  
Blog #11

October 30  
Political Potential in Cyborganics  
Rhetorical Fixtures of Concept  
Homework  
Blog #11  
Continue "A Cyborg Manifesto"

October 31  
Film Screening: Duncan Jones' *Moon*

November 1  
Replication vs. Reproduction in Electracy  
Homework  
Read: Selections from Greg Ulmer (choices from *Internet Invention*, *Digital Monuments*,  
*Avatar Emergency*)

## **Week 12**

Blog Prompts: TBA

November 4  
Reinventing the Internet and Becoming Emergent: A Revisiting  
Homework  
Blog #12  
Continue Ulmer

November 6  
Ulmer Review and Experimentation  
Homework  
Blog #12  
Continue Ulmer

November 7  
Film Screening: Mark Romanek's *Never Let Me Go*

November 8  
NO CLASS

**WEEKS 13-14: SYNTHESIS: WHAT'S SO NEW ABOUT NEW  
MEDIA(?)**

### **Week 13**

Blog Prompts: TBA

November 11

NO CLASS

November 13

Practical Electracy Forward: Writing/Meaning and Ethics

Homework

Blog #13

Read: Selections from Mark Hansen's *Critical Terms for New Media*

November 14

Film Screening: Brett Leonard's *Lawnmower Man*

November 15

Fearing Our (originary) selves (Human-Machines): Plato→Luddites→Technophobia

Homework

Blog #13

Read: Selections from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*

### **Week 14**

Blog Prompts: TBA

November 18

Writing the Future of Techno(nto)logy: D&G

Homework

Blog #13

Read: Selections from Katherine Hayles' *My Mother Was a Computer*

November 20

Mapping the Future

Homework

Blog #13

Read: Haruki Murakami's *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (first half)

November 21

Film Screening: Robert Longo's *Johnny Mnemonic*

November 22

Technology, Persuasion, Memory

Homework

Continue Murakami

### **WEEKS 15-16: WRAP-UP**

**Week 15**

Blog Prompts: TBA

November 25

Evaluations

Homework

Continue on Projects

Finish Murakami By Next Week

NO CLASS THE REST OF THE WEEK

**Week 16**

Blog Prompts: TBA

December 2

Course Reflection: Collaborative Examination of Experimental Results

December 4

TBA