

ENG 1131: Writing Through Media—Ergodic Literature

Section 1983
MWF, 6; W, E1-E3
ARCH 116

Instructor: Caleb Milligan
Email: camilligan@ufl.edu
Office Hours: TUR 4367;
MWF, 4 (and by appointment)

Course Description

Ergodic literature, according to media theorist Espen J. Aarseth, are those works for which “nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text,” demanding responsibilities beyond just “eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages.” In this course, we will investigate important historical and more recent examples of ergodic texts, paying particular attention to the ways they require us to engage with and interact with the work. Our assigned texts should demonstrate that ergodic literature is not medium specific, as we investigate print literature, film, hypertext fiction, and games that all merit consideration as “cybertexts.”

As we read and play these works, we will “write through media” by composing our own exercises of ergodic writing and reading through assignments that test limits of print and digital media. Course screening times will be dedicated to collaborative reading/viewing works that test ergodic and interactive possibilities, and to workshopping with print craft and required software for composition. We will regularly “read together” to emphasize the diversity of experiences ergodic texts may solicit, and to compare the differing resolutions each of you may reach to the shared resolutions we arrive at as a group. You should thus gain appreciation for the analysis and composition of ergodic literature in its many forms.

Course outcomes

By the end of ENG 1131, you should be able to:

- identify what constitutes an ergodic work of literature
- expand your literary and computational frameworks of literary media
- analyze the composition, not just the content, of our assigned texts
- respond critically to ergodic concepts through ergodic composition
- improve your skill as a writer across print and digital forms

Required Texts

All required print texts for this course will be available through the UF Bookstore in the Reitz Union, or online via www.uf.bkstr.com.

Aarseth, Espen J. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. ISBN: 0801855799.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *Writing Machines*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002. ISBN: 0262582155.

Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. New York: Pantheon, 2000. ISBN: 0375703764.

Pessl, Marisha. *Night Film*. New York: Random House, 2013. ISBN: 0812979788.

(You must also download the *Night Film Decoder* app from the iTunes or Google Play store)

In addition to these print works, you will need to create a STEAM account at store.steampowered.com to purchase two digital games we will be discussing at length.

Miller, Robyn and Rand. *Myst*. Cyan, 1993.

Gaynor, Steve. *Gone Home*. Fullbright, 2013.

Other assigned print and electronic readings will be made available via Canvas

All electronic texts we will study in this course are compatible with current versions of the Mac OS and Windows operating systems.

Assignments

(1000 total points possible)

200 Twine Composition

You will create an interactive text through the hypertext editor Twine (twinery.org) to demonstrate how to sustain an argument, theme, or chain of ideas through non-linear storytelling strategies and electronic platforms. Your work should engage the equivalent effort of **1500** words.

250 Print Project

You will create a participatory paper project that tests the limits of the medium as a viable format in our purported “late age of print.” This assignment may take many forms as long as it establishes its compositional basis in what we have discussed in class. Your work should engage the equivalent effort of **1750** words.

300 Academic Paper

You will compose an academic paper that takes up an issue discussed in our critical texts and demonstrated in our literary texts. Your paper should present an original argument that engages larger critical conversations by citing Aarseth, Hayles, and at least *three* other scholarly sources in its discussion of one of our assigned ergodic works. It must be at least **2000** words.

150 Blog Posting

You will contribute *five* posts to our class blog that discuss the ergodic concepts we raise in class. Each post must attempt an interactive rhetorical device in its composition (e.g. footnotes, hyperlinks, embedding, etc.). They must all be at least **150** words, for a total of **750** words.

100 Participation

You must be an active and engaged part of each day's class to not only participation credit but to ensure that our course will be an academically fruitful experience. This grade will be gauged by group activities and larger class discussions. **To guarantee receipt of a full grade, you must contribute to class meaningfully at least once a class period.**

Grading Scale

| | | | | | | | |
|----|------|--------|----------|----|------|-------|---------|
| A | 4.0 | 93-100 | 930-1000 | C | 2.0 | 73-76 | 730-769 |
| A- | 3.67 | 90-92 | 900-929 | C- | 1.67 | 70-72 | 700-729 |
| B+ | 3.33 | 87-89 | 870-899 | D+ | 1.33 | 67-69 | 670-699 |
| B | 3.0 | 83-86 | 830-869 | D | 1.0 | 63-66 | 630-669 |
| B- | 2.67 | 80-82 | 800-829 | D- | 0.67 | 60-62 | 600-629 |
| C+ | 2.33 | 77-79 | 770-799 | E | 0.00 | 0-59 | 0-599 |

Assessment Rubric

Grades will be given for each major assignment and correspond to the criteria shown below. More specific rubrics and guidelines applicable to individual assignments may be delivered during the course of the semester. In order to receive the grade in the left hand column, the assignment must meet ALL of the criteria in the description.

| Grade | Description |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows ALL instructions specific to the assignment rubric • Generates and elaborates on original ideas relevant to the course content • Assignment is mechanically sound and free of distracting grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors • Assignment displays clear organizational forethought including attention to transitions, introduction, and conclusion. |

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment is properly formatted in MLA or other style guide approved by instructor • Assignment incorporates source material appropriately and effectively • Assignment provides evidence to support claims |
| B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows most instructions specific to the assignment rubric • Incorporates and elaborates ideas relevant to the course content • Assignment may have a few minor errors but is free of distracting grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors • Assignment has an identifiable organizational structure • Assignment has a few minor formatting issues • Assignment incorporates source material appropriately • Assignment provides evidence to support most of its claims |
| C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows some instructions specific to the assignment rubric • Incorporates ideas relevant to the course content • Assignment has a few distracting grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors • Assignment has an identifiable organizational structure • Assignment has a few minor formatting issues • Assignment incorporates source material • Assignment provides evidence to support some of its claims |
| D | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows very few instructions specific to the assignment rubric • Incorporates ideas irrelevant to the course content • Assignment has numerous distracting grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors • Assignment has an unclear organizational structure • Assignment has formatting issues • Assignment incorporates no (or very little) source material • Assignment provides little to no evidence to support its claims |
| E | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not follow instructions specific to the assignment rubric • Incorporates no ideas relevant to the course content • Assignment has numerous distracting grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors • Assignment has no identifiable organizational structure • Assignment has numerous formatting issues • Assignment incorporates no source material • Assignment provides no evidence to support its claims |

Course Policies

Attendance

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Attendance is required. If you miss more than **five** classes during the semester, you will *fail the class*. I exempt from this policy only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with me prior to the date that will be missed.

If you are absent for any reason, it is still your responsibility to remain aware of due dates and turn work in on time. You should contact fellow students to learn what you missed in class that day. In-class work cannot be made up.

If you enter class after roll has been called, you are late, which disrupts the entire class. Two instances of tardiness count as one absence.

Classroom Behavior

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Many of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own.

Class Work

All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on their assigned deadlines via Sakai. I will not accept hard copies of your work. Late work will be docked ten points for every day it is late until it loses all credit.

In-class assignments will consist of group activities and larger classroom discussion. Be prepared for each class by doing the assigned reading and being ready to contribute to class in a meaningful way each day.

Provisions for Students with Documented Disabilities

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

Harassment

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eo/sexharassment.htm>.

Academic Honesty

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>

Composition (C) and Humanities (H) Credit and Writing Requirement

This course can satisfy the General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>.

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/writing-and-math-requirement.aspx>.

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

8/24 Course Introduction

8/26 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapter 1

8/28 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapters 1, 2

8/31 “As We May Think”, Bush; “A Future Device for Individual Use”, Harpold

9/2 “The Babysitter”, Coover
* show Engelbart’s “The Mother of All Demos”

9/4 *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: Foreword - 97

9/7 (Labor Day)

9/9 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapters 2, 3
* present examples from Aarseth’s “textonomy”

9/11 *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 97 - 246

9/14 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapter 3; *The Jew’s Daughter*, Morrissey

9/16 *The Jew’s Daughter*, Morrissey

* read Morrissey together

9/18 *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 246 - 370

9/21 *my body—a Wunderkammer*, Jackson

9/23 *my body—a Wunderkammer*, Jackson
* read Jackson together

9/25 *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 370 - 491

9/28 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapter 4; *Twelve Blue*, Joyce

9/30 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapter 4; *Twelve Blue*, Joyce
* read Joyce together

10/2 *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 491 - 587

10/5 *Twelve Blue*, Joyce

10/7 *Howling Dogs*, Porpentine
* lead Twine tutorial

10/9 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapter 8; *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 587 - 709

10/12 Twine Presentations

10/14 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapters 5, 6
* show Wheeler's *Tender Loving Care*

10/16 *Night Film*, Pessl: Prologue - 91

10/19 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapter 5; *Galatea*, Emily Short

10/21 *Galatea*, Emily Short
* play Short together

10/23 *Night Film*, Pessl: 91 - 168

10/26 *Ad Verbum*, Montfort

10/28 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapter 6
* view Montfort's computational poetry

10/30 *Night Film*, Pessl: 168 - 269

11/2 *Ad Verbum*, Montfort

11/4 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapter 7
* lead Print Project tutorial

11/6 (Homecoming)

11/9 *Night Film*, Pessl: 269 - 422

11/11 (Veteran's Day)

11/13 (No class meeting – Milligan is attending a conference)

11/16 Print Project Presentations

11/18 *Myst*, Miller & Miller
* play Miller & Miller together

11/20 *Night Film*, Pessl: 422 - 483

11/23 *Gone Home*, Gaynor

11/25 (Thanksgiving Break)

11/27 (Thanksgiving Break)

11/30 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapter 7

12/2 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapters 8, 9

12/4 *Night Film*, Pessl: 483-593

12/7 Research Paper Peer Review

12/9 Course Wrap-Up

Final Papers Due