

ENGI 131: WRITING THROUGH MEDIA
TRANSMEDIA ADAPTATIONS
Spring 2013 I Section 4841
Weil 0408A | MWF 4, T E1-E3

Instructor: Casey Wilson

Email: kubrtm@ufl.edu

Office: Turlington 4321

Office Hours: Tuesday periods 8-9, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

While the adaptation of a story from one medium to another has a rich and varied history, recent years have seen an explosion in the number of transmedia adaptations, or those adaptations which seek to tell the same story by using multiple forms of media in conjunction with one another. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, for example, transforms Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* into a YouTube series supplemented by Twitter and Tumblr accounts for the main characters, while *The Hunger Games Adventures* expands the world of the film adaptation upon which it is based into a simple point-and-click videogame. Thus, to fully understand and enjoy these stories, the audience must be engaged in multiple branches of the story at once.

In this class, we will examine definitions of adaptation and transmedia as laid out by academic and cultural critics, and seek to determine why transmedia has become such a popular form for retelling stories. In order to ground our discussions, each screening period will be devoted to viewing one or more films, television shows, or online video projects that engage in this kind of adaptation.

This is, however, primarily a writing class, and as such our focus will never stray far from the act and process of writing. Moreover, this course is about writing *through* media, so students will experience a number of different writing tools and platforms - including Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook - and will produce written content according to the opportunities and confines that they offer. The course will ultimately culminate with students creating their own transmedia adaptation and writing a detailed rhetorical analysis of their creative choices.

This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog: <http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#learning>

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, I hope you will be able to do the following:

- Produce writing that includes a focused thesis and a logical and coherent structure
- Display a command of grammar, mechanics, punctuation, spelling, and MLA citation
- Work collaboratively in an academic writing community, learning from and contributing to the writing of your classmates in addition to engaging in critical verbal discourse
- Express a critical viewpoint through both academic and creative projects

- Tailor your writing to a specific subject, platform, and audience
- Demonstrate a basic familiarity with various theories of transmedia and adaptation
- Think critically about the opportunities afforded to storytellers across different media forms

REQUIRED TEXTS

Any version of the following texts is acceptable. Additional readings will be posted through course reserves and on the course blog.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*

Hinds, Gareth. *Romeo and Juliet*

Langridge, Roger and Chris Samnee. *Thor: The Mighty Avenger: The Complete Collection*

LaZebnik, Claire. *Epic Fail*

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*

SCREENINGS

The Avengers (2012)

Battlestar Galactica (2004, selected episodes)

The Hunger Games (2012)

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (2012-2013, selected episodes)

Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. (2013, selected episodes)

Pride and Prejudice (2005)

Romeo + Juliet (1996)

Ted Talks (selected)

Thor (2011)

ASSIGNMENTS

Tumblr Curation: You will sign up for two weeks during the semester during which you will be responsible for curating our class Tumblr. On your assigned weeks, you will be responsible for finding between three to five posts each day that are relevant to our course and reblogging and commenting upon them as appropriate. At the end of each week, you will post a thoughtful and polished reflection upon your experience of selecting material to share with the class. (300-600 words each; 50 points each)

Definition Essay: Based on our viewings, readings, and discussion, you will write an essay that provides an extended definition for either “transmedia” or “adaptation”. This essay must include at least two secondary sources and should make detailed use of primary texts to ground your argument. (900-1200 words; 100 points)

Adaptation Analysis: For this assignment, you will choose an adaptation we have *not* discussed in class and analyze its successes and failures based on our class readings and

discussions. Does the adaptation make full use of its new medium? Does the core theme or argument of the original text survive the transformation? Why might the changes made in the adaptation matter? (1200-1500 words; 100 points)

Transmedia Adaptation Proposal: Early in the semester, you will select a text (book, film, song, game, etc.) that you wish to turn into a transmedia adaptation. In this proposal, you will explain what text you have chosen and why you think it would benefit from a transmedia adaptation. (300-600 words; 50 points)

Soundtrack/Casting Project: As you begin to consider your adaptation, you will either create a soundtrack or create a fantasy cast for your story. Whichever option you choose, you will also provide a brief essay that discusses why you made your particular selections. What do the songs add to your interpretation of the story? What makes you believe that the actors you have chosen could do justice to the characters? (600-900 words; 75 points)

Advertising Campaign: Group project. In this assignment, you will partner with one or two of your classmates and choose *one* of your adaptations for which you will create an advertising campaign. This may take the form of a poster, a video, a jingle, or any other approved medium. Each member of the group must submit an individual paper explaining the rhetorical choices the group made in creating the advertisement. (600-900 words; 125 points)

Transmedia Adaptation: The culminating project of the semester will be the creation of an original transmedia adaptation (complete or partial) of your choosing. Your adaptation must incorporate no fewer than two forms of media, at least one of which must contain a written component. (A film script, for example, or an instruction manual for a board game.) You must also demonstrate an understanding of the original text *and* the media into which you translate it; this project will be a serious undertaking and thus must be started early in the semester. Along with the adaptation, you will submit a brief paper that explains your adaptation choices from a rhetorical perspective. (At least 2000 words; 350 points)

Participation: This grade accounts for in-class discussion, workshops, quizzes, in-class work, and other related activities. It also includes your participation in live-tweeting our weekly screenings. The grading metric for participation will be posted on the class blog for reference throughout the semester. (100 points)

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

Total Points Possible: 1000

Grading Rubric:

A brief overview of how I arrive at the grades for all major assignments is below. We will discuss each assignment in more detail as they arrive.

In each paper, I will evaluate:

- 1) content, including argument, development, and support
- 2) organization, including paragraph structure, overall flow of ideas, transitions
- 3) mechanics, including grammar and style.

You should strive to excel in all three areas; more specific grade breakdowns are as follows:

The A-range essay has strong content, strong organization, AND strong mechanics.

The B-range essay has one key area (content, organization, mechanics) notably in need of revision.

The C-range essay has two key areas (content, organization, mechanics) notably in need of significant revision.

A D-range essay has two or more key areas in need of substantial revision.

An “E” is usually reserved for students who do not do the assignment or fail to attend class. However, an “E” may also be given if an essay blatantly ignores all three areas of evaluation.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory for this course. Consequently, if you miss more than **three** classes during the semester, your grade will drop considerably. This **includes** screenings. Each absence beyond three will lower your overall grade by **50 points**. However, if you miss more than **six** classes, you will **fail** the course. Exempt from this policy are **only** those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, for which you must provide appropriate documentation in advance of the absence. All other absences are considered equally “excused”; as such, I suggest that you save your absences for when you are truly ill. If you anticipate having a prolonged absence for any reason, please speak with me in advance to make appropriate arrangements.

If you are absent, it is still **your responsibility** to make yourself aware of all class discussions and activities as well as any new developments, such as assignments and due dates. You are still responsible for turning assignments in **on time**. You will not, however, be able to make up any in-class assignments. I will not approach you regarding absences and missing or late assignments; it is your responsibility to speak to me and keep track of your own attendance and assignments.

Late Arrival: Our class is discussion-based, and as such late arrival is both late and disruptive. Class starts **sharply at 10:40 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and 7:20 on Tuesday**, and anyone not in the room at that time will be counted as tardy. **Early departures** from class will also count as a tardy; any student missing more than ten minutes of class may be marked absent at the instructor's discretion. You are allowed two tardies without penalty; any tardy past two will lower your overall grade by **25 points**.

Participation: Participation is a necessary component of your time in this class, and as such will factor into your grade. You are expected to arrive to class prepared, with homework done, articles/books read, and paper and writing utensils at hand. You will work individually, in small groups and in class-wide discussion. I will expect each of you to **actively participate** each day.

Class Discussion: You are expected to add constructively to the conversation we have each day. You will treat the instructor and your fellow classmates with **respect at all times**, especially when you disagree with them. Anyone who breaks that rule will be asked to leave the classroom.

Technology: Our class is media-based, and we will likely be using computers and other technology on a regular basis during class. E-readers will be allowed; this does not include cell phones, which must be put away and on silent during class. I reserve the right to ban laptops, tablets, and the like from the classroom at any time should they become disruptive.

Paper Submissions: In order to receive credit for an assignment, you must **follow all guidelines** set out for paper submission. All assignments should be done on a computer and have a professional appearance. (No stains, wrinkles, etc.) This includes proper **MLA formatting**, ranging from font and font size to the heading and margins. Any multi-page assignment turned in via hard copy that is not **stapled** together will lose one letter grade. Any digital papers should be **submitted in PDF format** unless otherwise instructed. Please include your **last name** in the document title for electronic submissions.

Papers due via hard copy will be turned in at the **start of the class** period on the due date. Papers due electronically should be turned in via Sakai by the time that class begins on the due date. **No late assignments will be accepted**, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Failure of technology (hard drive crashes, printer out of ink, etc.) is not an excuse.

Email Correspondence: This is an English class, so **I** expect your emails to me to be **professional** and follow mles of grammar and etiquette. Please include proper salutations and a signature that includes your name.

Final Grade Appeals: Concerns about grading on individual assignments **should be addressed to the instructor**. A student who is sure his or her final grade is inaccurate or undeserved may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount,

Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower grade; the decision is final.

Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit: This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

Statement of Writing requirement (WR): 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/gordon.aspx>

Statement of student disability services: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Statement on 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.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

Statement on academic honesty: All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Statement on course policies: 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>.

Statement on course evaluations: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations open during the last weeks of the semester; students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following schedule is tentative and subject to change throughout the semester. All assignments and readings are due the day they are listed. Check the class blog (linked on Sakai) daily for announcements and updates.

Week One:

1/6/14: Course introduction

Suggested: Begin reading *Romeo and Juliet*

1/7/14: Screening: Selected Ted Talks on transmedia and adaptation

1/8/14: What is transmedia?

Read: “Transmedia 202: Further Reflections” by Henry Jenkins and “I GIVE UP! Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Transmedia” by Jim Stewartson

1/10/14: What is adaptation?

Read: “What is Adaptation?” by Julie Sanders

Week Two:

1/13/14: Intro to rhetorical analysis

1/14/14: Screening: *Romeo + Juliet*

1/15/14: Discuss *Romeo + Juliet*

1/17/14: Effective definitions

Week Three:

1/20/14: No class

1/21/14: Screening: Selections of various *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations

1/22/14: Discuss *Romeo and Juliet*

Read: *Romeo and Juliet*; *Understanding Comics* chapters 1 and 2

1/24/14: *Why adapt?*

Read: “What Novels Do That Films Can’t (and Vice Versa)” by Seymour Chatman

Week Four:

1/27/14: Choosing an audience

1/27/14: Screening: *Pride and Prejudice*

1/28/14: Discuss *Pride and Prejudice*

1/30/14: Continue discussing *Pride and Prejudice*

Due: Definition Essay

Week Five:

2/3/14: A guide to proposals

2/4/14: Screening: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

2/5/14: Discuss *LBD*

Read: “Hank Green and Bernie Su’s *Lizzie Bennet Diaries* celebrates #darcyday” by Liz Shannon Miller; “*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* finds a new way to present a 200-year old story” by Erik Adams; “Exclusive: Jay Bushman on transmedia in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*” by Marama Whyte

2/7/14: Writing across media

Week Six:

2/10/14: How to craft a thesis

2/11/14: Screening: Finish *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

2/12/14: Discuss *LBD* and YA adaptations

Read: *Epic Fail*

2/14/14: Continue discussing Austen retellings

Due: Transmedia Adaptation Proposal

Week Seven:

2/17/14: Introductions

2/18/14: **Screening:** *Thor*

2/19/14: Discuss *Thor*

Read: *Thor: The Mighty Avenger*

2/21/14: How comics work

Read: *Understanding Comics* chapters 3, 4, 5, 8, 9

Week Eight:

2/24/14: Conclusions

2/25/14: **Screening:** *The Avengers*

2/26/14: Discuss *The Avengers*

2/28/14: Share and discuss soundtracks/casts

Due: Soundtrack/Cast Project

Week Nine:

3/3/14: No class

3/4/14: No class

3/5/14: No class

3/7/14: No class

Week Ten:

3/10/14: Visual analysis

3/11/14: **Screening:** *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*

3/12/14: Discuss *S.H.I.E.L.D.*

3/13/14: The future of Marvel and beyond

Read: "Can Marvel Studios Change Hollywood?" by Adam B. Vary

Week Eleven:

3/17/14: The rhetoric of advertisements

3/18/14: **Screening:** Group work time

3/19/14: Conferences

3/21/14: Share advertising projects

Due: Advertising project

Week Twelve:

3/24/14: Discuss *The Hunger Games* novel

Read: *The Hunger Games*

3/25/14: **Screening:** *The Hunger Games*

3/26/14: Discuss *The Hunger Games* film

3/28/14: Continue discussing *THG*

Read: "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire: What Marvel, DC and Hollywood Can Learn" by Russ Burlingame

Week Thirteen:

3/31/14: Casual gaming

Read: “Hardcore Casual: Game Culture *Return(s) to Ravenhearsf* by Mia Consalvo and “What is Causal?” by Jesper Juul

4/1/14: **Screening:** Play *The Hunger Games Adventures*

4/2/14: Discuss videogame

4/4/14: Effective revision

Week Fourteen:

4/7/14: Tips for cohesive organization

4/8/14: **Screening:** *Battlestar Galactica*

4/9/14: Discuss *Battlestar*

4/11/14: Discuss papers

Due: Adaptation Analysis

Week Fifteen:

4/14/14: Tabletop games

Read: TBA

4/15/14: **Screening:** *Battlestar Galactica* and *The Hunger Games* board games

4/16/14: Discuss board games

4/18/14: Wrapping up

Week Sixteen:

4/21/14: Conferences

4/22/14: **Screening:** Class choice

4/23/14: Conferences

Final projects due by April 28 at noon.