Writing About Interface: Digital Games, Hypertext, and Life on the Scroll
ENC 1145 Section 7376
Spring 2015, M/W/F, MAT 108, Period 3

Kyle Bohunicky
kbohunicky@ufl.edu⌷SEP⌷
Office: Turlington 4367⌷SEP⌷
Office Hours: Tuesday, Period 8 and by appointment

Course Description:

Writing About Interface: Digital Games, Hypertext, and Life on the Scroll will introduce students to current methods and theory used to study Human-Computer Interfaces (HCI). In this class, HCI will cover four broad categories: input devices and haptics (keyboards, control pads, microphones, remotes, etc.), screens (touch, virtual reality, 3D, textured, etc.), hardware (disk drives, processors, power sources, motherboards, etc.), and digital interfaces (layouts, navigation bars, windows, buttons, menus, icons, cursors, etc.). Interface WILL NOT, however, just be limited to HCI, and students will be challenged to apply this framework to Non-Digital Interfaces (NDI) including books, art objects, tools, etc. Given that this is a *Writing About…* class, students will approach HCI and NDI as an *expressive component of digital and non-digital media* inseparable from the materials that they frame and deliver. Students will write about, write with, and write their own HCI and NDI to explore how interface shapes and informs conceptions of race, gender, class, and culture in digital and non-digital spaces.

Readings will include an assortment of books, hypertexts, and digital games including *Howling Dogs*, *Loom*, *N*. Katherine Hayles' *Writing Machines*, *Okami*, Espen Aarseth's *Cybertext*, *Adventure*, Terry Harpold's *Ex-Foliations*, *House of Leaves*, *Afternoon*, and Mary Flanagan's *Critical Play*.

Student Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, students will have demonstrated their ability to:

- Understand the history, major theories, and debates in HCI– and digital media studies

- Develop a language and method to discuss/analyze HCI as expressive and argumentative media

- Analyze the significance of HCI and NDI to writing and digital culture, as well as how the production of interface shapes larger socio-cultural movements

- The ability to think critically about the role of writing and culture to the production of HCI/NDI and vice versa

- Produce writing with a focused thesis, unity throughout the essay, and coherence between paragraphs and ideas and within the essay as a whole

- Display a command of grammar, mechanics, punctuation, spelling, and accurate MLA citation and documentation of research

- 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

- Understand and employ various technological resources in your critical reading, writing, and thinking practices, including the use of word processing to develop essays, e-mail to communicate professionally, and the Internet and library database resources for developing research skills

Required Texts SEP

This course will cover a wide range of media including books, PDFs, hypertexts, digital games, and digital art. In addition to the required books, students are also **required** to purchase several digital games through Valve Software's "Steam" client (http://store.steampowered.com). Students will need to download the free trial of *World of Warcraft* from battle.net (http://us.battle.net/en/). Out of print games for older consoles can be accessed through the following sites: (http://www.8bbit.com) (http://www.virtualnes.com). Finally, students can find e-literature and hypertext at the following sites: (http://collection.eliterature.org) (http://elmcip.net/).

Bogost, Ian. *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0262514880

Bruce, Alexander. *Antichamber*. 2013. Digital.

Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000. ISBN: 978-0375703768

Emerson, Lori. *Reading Writing Interfaces*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0816691265

Galactic Café. *The Stanley Parable*. 2013. Digital.

Gaynor, Steve. *Gone Home*. Midnight City, 2013. Digital.

Harpold, Terry. *Ex-foliations: Reading Machines and the Upgrade Path*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0816651023

Hayles, N. Katherine. *Writing Machines*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002. ISBN: 978-0262582155

ICOM Simulations. *Déjà vu.* Kemco, 1985. Digital.

Inglott, Karl. *Glitchspace*. Space Budgie. Digital.

Pardo, Rob, Jeff Kaplan, and Tom Chilton. *World of Warcraft*. Blizzard Entertainment, 2004. Digital

Pope, Lucas. *Papers, Please*. 2013, Digital.

Wolpaw, Erik and Chet Faliszek. *Portal*. Valve Corporation, 2007. Digital.

Zuhn, Kevin. *Octodad: Dadliest Catch*. Young Horses, Inc., 2014. Digital

All other readings will be made available on E-Learning

Assignments

Assignments must be submitted on Sakai before class on the day they are listed as due (see course reading schedule). Essays should be uploaded as Microsoft Word documents (.doc or .docx) to the appropriate assignment box. ***Title files with your last name, first name, and the title of the assignment*** (see below). All assignments should be written following Modern Language Association (MLA) formatting guidelines. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner along with the appropriate citations and a works cited page.

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. If Sakai is not functioning properly when you attempt to submit a paper, you must immediately email me and apprise me of the situation and bring a hard copy to class, which you may submit for no penalty.

Course Assignments

In all of your writing, I will be looking for well-written and well-reasoned arguments that address the questions posed. Mere descriptions of the function of a particular software artifact are not what I'm looking for; you will be asked to analyze, evaluate, and then make and support arguments about such artifacts. The following are formal written assignments, not a note or a status update. **Proofread and cite sources.** Well-reasoned, persuasive writing is what I'm looking for, whether or not I agree with your position is irrelevant. In both cases, going beyond the letter of the assignment and integrating it with your own ideas, questions, and interests is encouraged and will help you improve your performance.

- **Response Papers** (300 points total) — Minimum 250 words each

  Periodically, response prompts will be assigned at the beginning of the week and due in class on Friday of that week. These are expected to cover the material throughout the week, so your response should form significant connections between course media/readings and our discussions. Please note that surface level analyses will not be accepted.

- **Presentations** (150 points) — 15 - 20 minutes

  Starting Monday, Jan 12th, you and two other partners will choose a day to present on a selection from Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. Presentations must do the following:

  ➢ Summarize the assigned section of text (i.e. "What happened?")

➢ Describe the typographical/stylistic elements of the assigned section
➢ Analyze how these typographical/stylistic elements influenced your reading
➢ Analyze the meaning of the assigned section and how that meaning is connected to the typography (i.e. "What does it all mean, and how does it create that meaning?")
➢ Consider how the section reflects on the physicality of the book and positions it as interface
➢ How the reading is connected to our conversations about HCI and NDI
➢ Connect to at least one outside, scholarly source on the text

Group 1: Background introduction and pages 1 – 73 (Jan 23rd)

Group 2: 74 – 274 (Feb. 6th)

Group 3: 274 – 417 (Feb 20th)

Group 4: 417 – 657 (March 13th)

Group 5: 657 – 709 and conclusion remarks (March 27th)

- **Midterm: Rhetorical Analysis (**150 points) — 1500 words; Minimum 3 academic sources

  Based on our readings and in-class discussions, you will craft a rhetorical analysis of a digital artifact we have encountered in class. Your analysis must first identify an argument that designers are making with their HCI, and explain how the HCI constructs its argument/responds to a specific issue. Finally, you will consider the larger social significance of this argument.

- **Final: DIY HCI** (300 points total: 150 for media, 150 for response) – 2000 words, Minimum 5 academic sources

  Using Wordpress (https://wordpress.org), Wix (http://www.wix.com), or Weebly (http://www.weebly.com), you will build your own HCI. Your HCI must draw on our readings and discussions throughout the course, and this should be evident in the design of your HCI. Keep in mind that what you express is your choice: it could be an idea, an adventure, a story, a navigational artifact, etc. You can also integrate other media through platforms like Game Maker (https://www.yoyogames.com/studio), Unity (http://unity3d.com) or Twine (http://twinery.org). Your DIY HCI should experiment and play with the concepts and theories we've explored in class. Expect that this project **will be time consuming**, so it's best to start tinkering early.

  After uploading your HCI to your UF webspace (http://help.gatorlink.ufl.edu/webserv.html), you will then write a critical reflection on your HCI. This must be a careful consideration of how the HCI in question is expressive and argumentative, drawing on at least four sources from the course to support your reading.

- **Participation** (100 points)

Participation accounts for in-class discussion, workshops, quizzes, in-class work and other related activities. 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 tools 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. 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. ***I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes if necessary***

This is a General Education course providing the student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For more information, see http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-educationrequirement.aspx#learning

Course Policies:

Computers and Cellphones: While our course will focus on computers and digital media, students are to refrain from using these devices unless prompted by the instructor. Students who do not abide by this policy with be counted as absent for the day. That said, we will look at media in class, so please do have your laptops/cellphones on hand should the need arise.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed three unexcused absences. If you miss more than **three** classes during the semester, each additional absence will lower your overall grade by 50 points. 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, family emergencies, and health issues for which you must provide appropriate documentation in advance of the absence.

Additionally, tardiness will not be tolerated. If you are tardy for three class periods, you will receive an unexcused absence.

Note: 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. If you anticipate having a prolonged absence for any reason, please speak with me in advance to make appropriate arrangements.

Grading Scale	B 3.0 / 83-86 / 830-869	C 2.0 / 73-76 / 730-769
A 4.0 / 93-100 / 930-1000		C- 1.67 / 70-72 / 700-729
A- 3.67 / 90-92 / 900-929	B- 2.67 / 80-82 / 800-829	
B+ 3.33 / 87-89 / 870-899	C+ 2.33 / 77-79 / 770-799	D+ 1.33 / 67-69 / 670-699

D 1.0 / 63-66 / 630-669   D- 0.67 / 60-62 / 600-629   E 0.00 / 0-59 / 0-599

Statement of student disability services: 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/

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 UF 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

Weds, Jan 7
- ➢ Course Introduction
- ➢ Homework: Choose an Interface that you interact with frequently and consider how it informs and shapes your choices. Also consider what it might express about those choices. Write down your findings and propose some ways we might talk about and study HCI.

Unit 1: A (Brief) History of Interface

Fri, Jan 9
- ➢ Discuss the four registers of HCI
- ➢ Introduce HCI's early figures
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Designing the User Interface* Chapters 1.1, 2.4 (including all subsections), and 2.5 (all subsections) on Sakai

Mon, Jan 12
- ➢ Discuss *Designing the User Interface* Chapters 1.1, 2.4 (all subsections), and 2.5 (all subsections)
- ➢ Sign up for *House of Leaves* presentations
- ➢ **Review writing prompt 1 for Friday**
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Reading Writing Interfaces*: Introduction and Chapter 1

Weds, Jan 14
- ➢ Discuss *Reading Writing Interfaces*: Introduction and Chapter 1
- ➢ **Homework**: Play Serge Bouchardon's *Loss of Grasp* (http://www.sergebouchardon.com/) and Phillipe Bootz's "petite brosse à dépoussiérer la fiction" (http://elmcip.net/person/philippe-bootz).
- ➢ **Homework:** Respond to writing prompt 1 and print a copy of your response for Friday.

Fri, Jan 16

- ➢ Discuss responses to *Loss of Grasp* and "petite brosse à dépoussiérer la fiction"
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Ex-foliations* Chapter 1

Mon, Jan 19
- ➢ Holiday—No Class

Weds, Jan 21
- ➢ Discuss *Ex-foliations*: Chapter 1
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *House of Leaves*: 1 - 73

Unit 2: Interface and Rhetoric

Fri, Jan 23
- ➢ Presentation: Group 1
- ➢ **Homework**: *Lingua Fracta*: Preface, Chapter 1

Mon, Jan 26
- ➢ Discuss *Lingua Fracta*, Preface and Chapter 1
- ➢ **Review writing prompt 2 for Friday**
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Gone Home* (Steam)

Weds, Jan 21
- ➢ Discuss *Gone Home*
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Persuasive Games*: Preface
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Phone Story* (http://www.phonestory.org), *Darfur is Dying* (http://www.darfurisdying.com)
- ➢ **Homework**: Writing Prompt 2 due Friday

Fri, Jan 30
- ➢ Discuss *Persuasive Games*: Preface, *Phone Story*, *Darfur is Dying*
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Persuasive Games* Chapter 1
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Dys-4-ia* (http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/591565), *September 12* (http://www.newsgaming.com/games/index12.htm)

Mon, Feb 2
- ➢ Discuss *Persuasive Games*: Chapter 1, *Dys-4-ia*, *September 12*
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Persuasive Games*: Chapter 3
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Everyday the Same Dream* (http://www.molleindustria.org/everydaythesamedream/everydaythesamedream.html), *Unmanned* (http://unmanned.molleindustria.org)

Weds, Feb 4
- ➢ Discuss *Persuasive Games*: Chapter 3, *Everyday the Same Dream*, *Unmanned*
- ➢ Homework: Read *House of Leaves*: 74 – 274

Fri, Feb 6
- ➢ Presentation: Group 2
- ➢ **Homework**: Read "Life on the Scroll"
  (http://nickm.com/writing/essays/continuous_paper_mla.html)
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Zork* (http://www.web-adventures.org/cgi-bin/webfrotz?s=ZorkDungeon), *Zork* (http://thcnet.net/zork/), and *Zork* (http://uncyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Game:Zork)

Unit 3: Paper Interface

Mon, Feb 9
- ➢ Discuss "Life on the Scroll," *Zork*, *Zork*, and *Zork*
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Ex-foliations*: "Read Me First"
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Maniac Mansion* (http://www.8bbit.com/maniac-mansion)

Weds, Feb 11
- ➢ Discuss *Ex-foliations*: "Read Me First," *Maniac Mansion*
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Ex-foliations:* "Ex-foliations"

Fri, Feb 13
- ➢ Discuss *Ex-foliations:* "Ex-foliations"
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Myst: Masterpiece Edition* (Steam)

Mon, Feb 16
- ➢ Discuss *Myst: Masterpiece Edition*
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Reading Writing Interfaces*: Chapter 2
- ➢ **Homework**: Play WINDOWS93 (http://www.windows93.net)

Weds, Feb 18
- ➢ Discuss *Reading Writing Interfaces*: Chapter 2, WINDOWS93
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *House of Leaves*: 274 – 417

Fri, Feb 20
- ➢ Presentation: Group 3
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Papers, Please* (Steam)
- ➢ **Homework**: Prepare for peer review on Wednesday

Mon, Feb 23
- ➢ Discuss *Papers, Please*
- ➢ **Homework**: Peer Review on Wednesday

Weds, Feb 25
- ➢ Peer Review Rhetorical Analysis
- ➢ **Homework**: Rhetorical Analysis due on Friday by 5 PM

Fri, Feb 27
- ➢ No Class
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Afternoon*
  (http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/pmaf/hypertext/aft/)
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Ex-foliations*: Chapter 6

Spring Break!

Unit 4: Text, Hypertext, and Narrative Interface

Mon, Mar 9
- ➢ Discuss *Afternoon*, *Ex-foliations*: Chapter 6
- ➢ Review Writing Prompt 3
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Cybertext*: Chapter 1
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Howling Dogs*
  (http://aliendovecote.com/uploads/twine/howling%20dogs.html#2m)

Weds, Mar 11
- ➢ Discuss *Cybertext*: Chapter 1, *Howling Dogs*
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *House of Leaves*: 417 – 657

Fri, Mar 13
- ➢ Presentation: Group 4
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *Glitchspace* (Steam), *Portal* (Steam)
- ➢ **Homework**: Writing Prompt 3 due Monday

Mon, Mar 16
- ➢ Discuss *Glitchspace*, *Portal*
- ➢ Homework: Read *Writing Machines*: Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Weds, Mar 18
- ➢ No Class (CCCCs conference)

Fri, Mar 20
- ➢ No Class (CCCCs conference)

Mon, Mar 23
- ➢ Discuss *Writing Machines*: Chapters 1, 2, and 3
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *The Stanley Parable* (Steam)

Weds, Mar 25
- ➢ Discuss *The Stanley Parable*

➢ **Homework:** Read *House of Leaves*: 657 – 709

Fri, Mar 27
➢ Presentation: Group 5
➢ **Homework**: Read *Writing Machines*: Chapter 8

Mon, Mar 30
➢ Discuss *Writing Machines*: Chapter 8 and finish *House of Leaves*
➢ **Homework**: Play *World of Warcraft* (http://us.battle.net/en/)
➢ **Homework**: Read "A Study of User Interface Modifications in World of Warcraft" (http://gamestudies.org/1202/articles/ui_mod_in_wow)

Weds, April 1
➢ No Class (PCA ACA conference)

Fri, April 3
➢ No Class (PCA ACA conference)

Unit 5: Gamic Interface

Mon, April 6
➢ Discuss *World of Warcraft*, "A Study of User Interface Modifications in World of Warcraft"
➢ **Review Writing Prompt 4**
➢ **Homework**: Read "Game Analysis: Developing a Methodological Toolkit for the Qualitative Study of Games" (http://gamestudies.org/0601/articles/consalvo_dutton)
➢ **Homework**: Play *OctoDad* (Steam)

Weds, April 8
➢ Discuss "Game Analysis," *OctoDad*
➢ **Homework**: Read "Screw the Grue" (http://gamestudies.org/0701/articles/harpold)
➢ **Homework**: Writing Prompt 4 due Friday

Fri, April 10
➢ Discuss "Screw the Grue"
➢ **Homework**: Play *Déjà vu* (http://www.8bbit.com/deja-vu), *Don't Shit Your Pants* (http://www.kongregate.com/games/rete/dont-shit-your-pants),

Mon, April 13
➢ Discuss *Déjà vu*, *Don't Shit Your Pants*
➢ **Review Writing Prompt 5**
➢ **Homework**: Read *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*: Preface, Chapter 1

Weds, April 15
- ➢ Discuss *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*: Preface, Chapter 1
- ➢ **Homework**: Prepare for Peer Review on Friday

Fri, April 17
- ➢ Peer Review
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *flOw* (http://interactive.usc.edu/projects/cloud/flowing/), *Antichamber* Steam)
- ➢ **Homework**: Writing Prompt 5 Due Monday

Mon, April 20
- ➢ Discuss *flOw*, *Antichamber*
- ➢ **Homework**: Read *Ex-foliations*: Chapter 7
- ➢ **Homework**: Play *EnviroBear* (http://gamejolt.com/games/action/enviro-bear-2000/211/)

Weds, April 22
- ➢ Discuss *Ex-foliations*: Chapter 7, *EnviroBear*
- ➢ Course Wrap-up

<u>Final Paper Due at 5 PM, April 29</u>