

**IML 499  
Designing and Writing for Transmedia Narrative**

Fall 2016  
4 units  
Tuesday: 1:00 – 2:50 pm  
SCI L104

Professor: Vicki Callahan  
Email: [vcallahan@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:vcallahan@cinema.usc.edu)  
Office Hours: Tuesday 4:00 -5:00 pm and by  
appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores the possibilities of transmedia, interactive, or cross-platform storytelling in the context of developing a story about contemporary campus life. Our goal is to generate the foundation for a collaborative script that looks at the social impact of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and the consequences of hatred on campus culture. The project offers students an opportunity to address issues of identity, self-esteem, and larger public health concerns.

Students will learn about classic film structure, interactive non-linear storytelling, and character development. They will also develop their ability to affect social change through dialogue and media-making. This will be a reading, writing, and viewing intensive class that explores the possibilities for narrative design and social impact.

The course features an international community partner, the UK based web-series, *TryLife* (Paul Irwin and Nicky Kaur, director and producer). *TryLife* (<http://www.trylife.tv>) is a successful interactive web-series with a large global audience aimed at exploring the difficult life choices facing young people and offering the opportunity to imagine a range of responses to key events. The course will be offered over two semesters, although students will have the option to take for one or both semesters. We will use the series as our narrative model to help us in the design of a prototype of a shooting script for *TryLife*, and we will receive direct feedback on our work from the production team.

**REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS**

- Alan Watt, *The 90 Day Screenplay: From Concept to Polish*
- Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*, Mariner Books, 2007.
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, Spiegel and Grau, 2015

- Students will be required to view several films, all will be on reserve at library but all will also be available via Amazon and Netflix.

### GRADING BREAKDOWN

Video Diaries/Reading Responses/Prep for Writing	20 points (2 x 10)
Project 1: Audio Interviews  Active Listening (2)	10 points (2 x 5)
Project 2: Audio Interviews   Soundscapes (2)	10 points (2 x 5)
Project 3: Scriptwriting/Transmedia Assignments (4)	20 points (4 x 5)
Project 4: TryLife USC Scene Writing (4)	20 points (4 x 5)
Peer Reviews	10 points (2 x 5)
Final Reflection	10 points

### ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY

No late work is accepted beyond the stated deadlines unless there is a documented excuse.

### ADDITIONAL POLICIES

**Online, In-Class Etiquette:** It is very important that our class time is quality time and that we can work as a focused collaborative unit while often working online as part of our class.

Therefore do not use any online time in class for personal communication not related to class – no messaging, mail, Facebook updates, cell phones etc. If for some reason you feel some urgent need to do this or have an emergency message (this includes calls), please step out of the classroom.

### PLEASE NOTE:

**FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX**

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE (Subject to change)

Please consult the course wiki for the most current information, assignments and due dates.

### August 30, Week 1 Introduction to the class

View and Discussion:

*Why So Serious?*

*Campfire Work*

*Conspiracy for Good*

LonelyGirl15: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-goXKtd6cPo>;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLqCM16i6QY>

***Due for week 2:***

**Read:**

- Chris Crawford, What is Interactivity? From Interactive Design
- Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* excerpts <http://www.altx.com/ebr/ebr7/7mur.htm>
- Karen Swallow Prior, “The New Old Way to Tell Stories, With Input from the Audience,” *The Atlantic*, October 18, 2013

**View:**

*The Lizzie Bennett Diaries*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KisuGP2lcPs>, Episodes 1 -4

**Create:**

Video Diary #1

**Sept 6, Week 2: What is Transmedia?**

Discuss *Lizzie Bennett Diaries*

View interactive stories:

“After 6/4, Tiananmen Square Beijing, 1989” <http://after64.sbs.com.au> :

“Killing Kennedy: <http://kennedyandoswald.com/#!/ambition-c-oswald-map-secondary>  
[x](#)

Triangle Fire Archive

Highrise

**Due week 3:**

**Read:**

- “Transmedia Activism” <http://henryjenkins.org/2016/01/telling-stories-lina-srivastava-talks-about-transmedia-activism-part-one.htmlde>
- Maanvi Singh “East Los High Isn’t Just a Soapy Teen Drama It is Also a Science Experiment” January 11, 2016: <http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2016/01/11/451940463/east-los-high-isnt-just-a-soapy-teen-drama-its-also-a-science-experiment>

**View:**

*Who is Dayani Cristal?* (on Netflix and Amazon)

**Create:**

Video Diary #2

**Sept 13, Week 3: Transmedia and Social Change and Introduction to Our Community**

**Partner, Try Life**

View Website and Discuss *Who is Dayani Cristal?*

In class view and explore: East Los High and *Try Life*

***Due Week 4:***

**Read**

Bill Nichols, “*What to Do About Documentary Distortion: Toward a Code of Ethics?*”

<http://www.documentary.org/content/what-do-about-documentary-distortion-toward-code-ethics-0>

Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz, “Border Crossing and Genre Bending, An Interview with Jesikah Maria Ross, [http://jesikahmariaross.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Bazaz\\_Ross\\_Feature.pdf](http://jesikahmariaross.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Bazaz_Ross_Feature.pdf)

**View:**

***The Hunting Ground: The Inside Story of Sexual Assault on American College Campuses***  
(Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering)

**Create:**

**Video Diary #3**

**Sept 20, Week 4: Ethical Media Making**

Discuss *The Hunting Ground*

Listen/View:

Jesikah Maria Ross” *Saving the Sierras: Restore/Restory*; RView209

Sharon Daniel: *Public Secrets*; *Blood Sugar*

*Story Corps*

**Begin work on Project 1 Audio Interviews**

***Due Week 5:***

**Read:**

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

**Create:**

**Video Diary #4**

**Sept 27, Week 5: The Memoir**

**View in Class: Question Bridge**

**Discuss Coates**

***Due Week 6:***

**Read:**

selection from Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting*  
and excerpts from

Janet Murray, <https://inventingthemedium.com/category/vi-onward-with-invention/interactive-narrative/>

**View:** *Fruitvale Station*, Ryan Coogler

**Create:**

Notes for Writing/Transmedia Assignment #1

Video Diary #5

**Oct 3, Week 6: Biographical Drama**

**Writing/Transmedia Assignment #1: *Fruitvale Station***

***Due Week 7:***

**Read:**

selections from *The 90 Day Screenplay and Interactive Storytelling*

**Listen:**

*Audio Selections from Michelle Serros, Chicana Falsa: And other Stories of Death, Identity, and Oxnard*

**Create:**

Notes for Transmedia Assignment #2

Video Diary #6

**Oct. 10, Week 7: On Writing, Memory, and History**

**View in Class: Welcome to Pine Point**

**Screenwriting/Transmedia Assignment #2: Chicana Falsa**

***Due Week 8:***

**Read:**

*Selections from: Watt, 90 day Screenplay and Crawford Interactive Storytelling*

**Create:**

Project 1 interviews

**Oct. 17, Week 8: Project #1 Interviews + peer review in class**

***Due Week 9:***

**Read:**

*selection from Alison Bechdel, Fun Home*

Selections from Interactive Storytelling

**Create:**

Notes for Writing/Transmedia Assignment #3

Video Diary #7

**Oct 24, Week 9: Visual Storytelling**

**View: Hollow**

**Screenwriting/Transmedia Assignment #3: *Fun Home***

***Due Week 10:***

**Read:**

*Selection from* Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*

“Twine the Video Game Technology for all,

“[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/23/magazine/twine-the-video-game-technology-for-all.html?ref=magazine&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/23/magazine/twine-the-video-game-technology-for-all.html?ref=magazine&_r=1)

**View:**

*Pariah*, Dee Rees, 2011

**Create:**

Video Diary #8

**Oct 31, Week 10: Voice**

View Work by Portenpine Heartscape, <http://slimedaughter.com/games/>

Depression Quest, <http://www.depressionquest.com>

Screenwriting/Transmedia Assignment #4 on *Pariah*

***Due Week 11:***

Reading:

Selections from *The 90 Day Screenplay* and *Interactive Design*

**View:**

Try Life

**Create:**

Interviews

*Try Life notes*

**Nov 7, Week 11: Review of Project 2 Interviews + Peer Review**

USC TryLife Scene Writing #1

***Due Week 12:***

**Read:** selections from *The 90 Day Screenplay* and *Interactive Design*

**View:**

*Try Life*

**Create:**

Try Life notes/Writing

Video Diary 9

**Nov 14, Week 12: Voices**

USC TryLife Scene Writing #2

*Due Week 13:*

**View:**

*Try Life*

**Create:**

*Try Life Notes/Writing*

Video Diary #10

**Nov 21, Week 13: Interactivity**

**USC TryLife Scene Writing #3**

*Due Week 14:*

**View:**

*TryLife*

**Create:**

*Try Life Notes/Writing*

**Nov 28, Week 14: Character and Choice**

**USC TryLife Scene Writing #4**

**Final Feedback Session and Semester 2 planning**

**Dec 13, Final Exam, Final Course Reflection Due at 1:00 pm**

## **POLICIES**

### **Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity or to the Department of Public Safety. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources.

### **Support Systems**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

### **Disruptive Student Behavior:**

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

### **Citation Practices**

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. Media Arts + Practice seeks to apply a reasonable working definition of fair use that will enable students and instructors to develop multimedia projects without seeking authorization for non-commercial, educational uses. Four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

All projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. There are several different citation styles and practices; please ask your professor(s) what style manual s/he would prefer.