

IML 103
Digital Studies Studio II

Spring 2014
4 units
Mondays, 2:00 – 4:50 pm
SCI L105

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Office Hours TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course proceeds from the belief that the act of imagining, designing and developing fully conceived and articulated worlds represents an important step toward taking advantage of the full potentials offered by contemporary digital media. In designing “worlds” and/or transmedia environments, we imagine a palette of possibilities that extends far beyond character or story development and even the design of game mechanics or user experiences. “World building” allows us to imagine interlocking systems of value, action and imagination in which each element of the world we create may be redefined, reshaped or reconceived at the most basic levels.

We will begin by analyzing the form and functioning of several artificially constructed “story worlds” from the entertainment industries, ranging from literature and comic books to television and video games, followed by consideration of some “real world” environments that may be considered “scripted spaces;” finally, we will consider instances of hybrid physical/virtual environments and the strategies by which they engage real world issues of history, environment, economy, ideology and/or social behavior.

The potential social impact of worlds that describe utopian or dystopian visions is vast. And while there are many genres of world design, this class encourages you to consider imagining work that is engaged in issues of relevance to the political or social world. Hence, the lab component of the course is structured around a design challenge that is at once broad and specific: *Design a story world*.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Frank Rose, *The Art of Immersion*
- Jane McGonigal, *Reality Is Broken*
- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*
- China Miéville, *The City & the City*

Additional readings are available as electronic reserves in the USC library.

ASSIGNMENTS

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| • Blog Contributions | 30% |
| • Assignment #1 | 5% |
| • Assignment #2 | 10% |
| • Assignment #3 | 20% |

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| • Final Project | 25% |
| • Participation in Class Discussions | 10% |

Students are expected to come to class prepared and to participate actively in class discussions and blog posting. With the inclusion of a lab component in this class, readings have been kept to a minimum, so it is especially important to engage thoughtfully with the contents of each assigned reading and exercise. There will be three lab assignments with ample opportunities for critique. The primary reflective component of the course will be blog postings that are due prior to class on the date assigned. All blog posts must be tagged with "IML103" (no spaces) in order to be counted. Projects may be completed individually or in pairs.

Assignment #1

Analyze the terms of use of an online community in which you take part (anything from Facebook to YouTube to the MAP program). Post a brief synopsis of your analysis to the class blog and come to class prepared to talk about this community in terms of its:

- origins and reason for existence
- borders, limits and exclusions
- assumptions and lacunae regarding users
- values, ethics and ideological commitments
- presumed and encouraged behaviors
- cultures and customs
- economies of value
- laws and consequences
- similarities and differences from your physical world communities

Assignment #2

Use de Tocqueville's mode of outsider observation to perform an analysis of a virtual world, game environment or story world, including MMOGs, MUVes, ARGs, TV series, novel(s), comic books (e.g., *Burning Man*, *World of Warcraft*, *Spore*, *Minecraft*, *Dwarf Fortress*, *World Without Oil*, *I Love Bees*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *Dune*, DC/Marvel multiverses, etc.).

Assignment #3

Read (or familiarize yourself with) at least one of the following:

- The Communist Manifesto
- The Cyborg Manifesto
- The Internet Manifesto
- The Unabomber Manifesto
- The Fluxus Manifesto

Create a visual argument in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies of one of these attempts to define or empower a social movement, OR compose your own manifesto modeled on one of the above for the world you are creating as your final project in this class.

Final Project

Design a story world that bears a consequential relationship with the world we inhabit by taking advantage of the possibilities offered by digital media authoring. Your project will be created in the 3D interactive engine Unity. Any platform that we might select for this design challenge would offer both strengths and drawbacks – it is up to us to figure out how it may be used most effectively. While a series of tutorials and resources will be provided, as with all digital authoring environments, the primary responsibility for acquiring the technical skills necessary to use this platform effectively lies with students. The primary goal of the hands-on component of the class is to broaden our range of design potentials rather than to fetishize any particular software platform.

POLICIES

Fair Use

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. The MAP program 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. In keeping with section 107 of the Copyright Act we recognize 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.

Citation Guidelines

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. The style we use is APA 5th edition and you may refer to these guidelines: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Emergency Plan

In the event that classes cannot convene at the university, all IML courses will continue via distance education. Specifically, the IML portal and course wikis will be deployed to enable faculty-student interaction (asynchronously and also via virtual office hours), complete syllabi, course readings and assignments, software tutorials, project assets, parameters and upload instructions, peer review processes and open source alternatives to professional-level software used in the IML curriculum. Further details are available on the course wiki.

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.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

The following weekly schedule is subject to change. Please consult the course wiki for the most current information, assignments and due dates.

Week 1

World building: diegesis, metaphor and metalepsis

Week 2 – NO CLASS (MLK DAY HOLIDAY)

Week 3 – ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE.

Online spaces // Physical spaces

Week 4

Design Fiction // Design Methodology

Week 5

Virtual Worlds

Imaginary Cosmologies

Week 6 – NO CLASS (PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY)

Week 7 - ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE.

Transmediality

Week 8

Present and critique prototypes in class!

Hybrids

Week 9

Physical Worlds

Week 10 – ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE.

Utopias and Dystopias

Week 11

Present and critique project prototypes in progress

Week 12

The Social Construction of Space

Week 13

Alternate Realities

Week 14

Philosophy, Theology, Cosmology

Week 15

Present and critique final projects in class

FINAL EXAMINATION

Continue final presentations