

IML-575: World Building as a Design Practice for Storytelling

Fall 2015, 4 units

Taught by Professor Alex McDowell

Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9:00 am - 11:50 am

RZC 120 (Robert Zemeckis Center)

Any storyteller can weave a compelling narrative, but world builders create storyworlds that can support myriad stories by multiple storytellers across disparate platforms –including those platforms for which there may not yet be a name. Such world building becomes even more powerful when it moves beyond transmedia entertainment experiences and tackles real-world challenges in real-world environments.

IML 575: World Building as a Design Practice for Storytelling is a practice-based studio class that introduces world building as a comprehensive methodology that defines the connective tissue and logic of any story-driven world, allowing narratives to evolve organically and defining both history and future in either the real world or fictional ones.

Students will learn:

- the narrative designer's art of world building
- how to use world building to rethink existing narrative forms and practices
- how to build compelling story worlds with new media technologies in mind

Over the course of the semester, students will collaboratively create a new fictional storyworld, consulting with domain experts across multiple disciplines to ensure this world is imaginative, plausible and extensible.

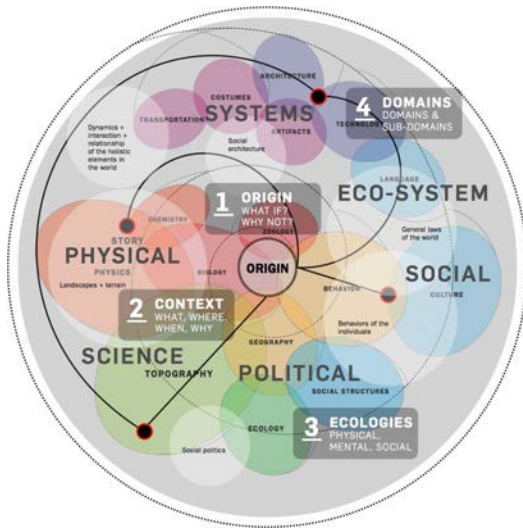
The robust, holistic and unified world developed in this class will support multiple narratives to be iterated, designed and prototyped by the class. These might include, but are not limited to, short films, animations, interactive media, comic books or VR experiences. In producing these narratives, the class will engage in design visualization, interactive prototyping, location scouting (virtual or real), research of environments, population, and inception, and development of characters and stories for various platforms.

This extensibility also extends to the creative process itself. One of the central goals of the class is to radically reimagine the creative production process for crafting transmedia worlds. The world developed during the semester must be designed to continue beyond the class and support continuing semesters and lab research as narrative experiences set in this world evolve into full production.

Students will have the opportunity to work collaboratively across disciplines and outside of their comfort zone, and will be selected from across the various divisions of Cinematic Arts and other USC schools as part of a creative team. They will work in large and small groups, and will be in constant interaction with professional creators and thought leaders.

Professor Alex McDowell is an award-winning designer and storyteller working at the intersection of emergent technologies and experiential media. McDowell has 30 years experience as production designer working in feature films, working with directors David Fincher, Steven Spielberg, Terry Gilliam, and Anthony Minghella amongst others. He is founder and creative director of 5D Global Studio.





The World Building Mandala, Alex McDowell, 2004