

IML 440 Interdisciplinary Thesis

Spring 2018 | 4 units

Prerequisites: IML 346, IML400

Open to Honors in Multimedia Scholarship students only.

Tuesdays, 4 – 5:50PM

Professor: Virginia Kuhn, PhD: vkuhn@cinema.usc.edu (call me Vee)

Course Wiki: <https://mapwiki.sca.usc.edu/>

Course Description:

IML440 expands the preparatory work you have completed toward your thesis and guides you through execution, testing, revision and finalizing your project in time for the Spring Showcase. The class is designed to help you complete your thesis project, working from your proposal through to a viable scholarly multimedia project. As such, the goals of 440 are these:

- To help you move from the proposal stage through production and into completion
- To help you hone your ability to articulate your project's controlling idea and its relationship to the media you've chosen
- To help you see your work within a context larger than USC since the work you produce is part of a much broader international movement.

This class begins with project plan updates before moving into issues of execution and scheduling of content and platform knowledge. It is understood that even as your project may shift during execution, user testing, and revision, much of the conceptual work and research has begun. As such, we move quickly into production. You will have many opportunities to present works-in-progress for feedback and problem solving. In addition, members of the MA+P Major's thesis class will be called upon to interact with your projects, and you with theirs, as a form of user testing. Finally, we hope to have a few guest speakers culled from the ranks of Honors program alumnae who are working in a broad range of occupations and from whose experience you can benefit. They will also be able to offer feedback on your "elevator pitches." You will be expected to research the speakers and be prepared to engage them in a lively and smart discussion around the vital issues of contemporary digital culture.

In addition to your thesis project, **you will also need to produce project documentation, which is, in many ways, as important as the project itself, particularly if our thesis includes a significant performative (and thus ephemeral) aspect.** Although the exact scope and form of the documentation will be slightly different for each project, in general, a hard media version of the project, along with a digital version of the project's documentation (typically a process video) is required for you to achieve the Honors in Multimedia Scholarship designation on your transcript.



Attendance and Participation: This class depends on self-directed theses and group critique, which makes attendance crucial. **Come to class.** If you must miss a class, please notify me via email (with **IML440 in the subject line**) and be sure to **get any notes and assignments from a classmate.** This allows me to engage with you intellectually rather than logistically. Please exchange contact information **with at least two other students.**

Peer Review

Peer review is an important aspect of this course: not only does it help your classmate develop, hone and enhance his/her project, it helps sharpen *your* skills at critically engaging sophisticated media projects while it also helps you anticipate how your own work will be received. The peer review we conduct in class will be a mixture of informal (via oral, in-class commentary) and structured (via assigned written response completed as homework).

Texts: (provided on course wiki)

Universal Principles of Design (William Lidwell, Kritina Holden, Jill Butler) 2010 Rockport P.
The Interface Effect (Alexander Galloway) 2012, Polity P.

Grading Breakdown:

+	Project Plan, weekly progress	15%
+	Peer Review of Colleagues' Work	15%
+	Attendance + Participation	15%
+	Thesis Documentation	25%
+	Thesis Project	30%

Research:

Need to do research but don't know where to start? Searching for a book, article, or data to support your argument? Not sure how to cite a source in your bibliography? Ask a librarian!

Research help is available:

- In person and by phone, chat and email at [Ask a Librarian](#)
- Through [research guides](#) and [FAQs](#)
- By [contacting your subject librarian](#)

Project Plan

The project plan will give you some structure to either retain or deviate from. Either way, it is crucial that you a) chunk the work and b) establish hard deadlines.

Items to include in your project plan:

1. A summary overview (which will eventually become your abstract)
2. A timeline including at least two action steps and their completion dates
3. A draft wireframe of your interface or landing page
4. At least two sources for theoretical issues, at least one media source

Thesis Documentation:

As you know, thesis projects are gauged by the following parameters, which we discuss early and often. Since many of these are implicit in the project itself, your articulation of the ways in which you have met each stricture is vital. Your thesis documentation will include the following:

- a) A project abstract (250-500 words); this will be revised several times and will appear in the Showcase program
- b) An overview video that is 3 to 5 minutes in length and includes screen shots or screen casts of your project as appropriate
- c) A discussion of each thesis parameter by section (a minimum of one full sentence per sub-category). These are drafted at midterm and finalized at end of term.

CONCEPTUAL CORE:

- + The project's controlling idea must be apparent and be productively aligned with one or more multimedia genres.
- + The project's efficacy must be unencumbered by technical problems (typically involves having a back-up plan).
- + The project must approach the subject matter in a creative or innovative manner.

RESEARCH COMPONENT:

- + The project must display evidence of substantive research and thoughtful engagement with its subject matter.
- + The project must use a variety of credible sources, which are cited appropriately.
- + The project must effectively engage with the primary issue/s of the subject area into which it is intervening.

FORM + CONTENT:

- + The project's structural or formal elements must serve the conceptual core.
- + The project's design decisions must be deliberate, controlled, and defensible.
- + The project must achieve significant goals that could not be realized on paper.

Statement on Fair Use: Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. MA+P projects are produced with fair use doctrines in mind using its four pillars: (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. Generally speaking, this means you must only use as much of a copyrighted work as is necessary to make your point, and you must cite your sources accordingly.

Citation Guidelines: We assert that work produced in our classes is covered under the Doctrine of Fair Use. In order to make this claim, however, all projects must include academically appropriate citations in the form of a References section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing

grade. The References section is either included in the project itself or as a separate document, as appropriate. We follow the Kairos Journal of Rhetoric, Technology and Pedagogy style guide <<http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/styleguide.html>> for citation purposes; Kairos uses a modified APA format, whose general guidelines and specific examples may be found here: <<http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/styleguide.html#apa>>

Computer code is often shared and reused. This is appropriate in a MA+P course unless otherwise directed by the assignment. If you do use code, you should attribute it. Please follow these protocols from MIT which call for placing a comment in one's code with a url to the original source, a note if it was adapted, and the date of retrieval: <<https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/writing-code>>

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://scampus.usc.edu/>. 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 of an emergency, all attempts will be made to continue MAP courses as usual. If we cannot meet synchronously, we will continue with our asynchronous work. In addition, all course materials are backed up on a secondary site (usually Blackboard) in the event that the primary wiki site should go down.

Weekly Schedule: *Subject to change as necessary to improve the course. Please consult the wiki for the schedule, which will always be kept current.*

1/9: Introduction, overview of course structure, discussion of timeline, and tech needs, wiki enrollment and page set up. For next time, draft of Project Plan due.

1/16 Prior to this week's class, your Project Plan draft must be submitted to the wiki (follow the Project Plan parameters above). In-class discussion of projects (20-30 mins each). Structured peer review of project plans assigned. (Incorporate a concept from *Universal Principles of Design* into your final proposal.)

1/23 In class work on tech tutorials, theory excursions. Peer review due.

1/30 Revised Project Plans due. Prototype testing of the **IML444 class projects**. Post a reflection that details your impression of the progress made from last week's user testing experience.

2/6 Go over *Universal Principles of Design* and thesis parameters as time permits.

2/13 Thesis parameter discussion and project documentation work.

2/20 Thesis parameters: first draft due. In class work on preparing an "elevator pitch"; one to two minute overview of your project with controlling idea, brief context and working title. These will later be filmed but written for now. For next time, both groups give semi-formal update.

2/27 *Progress reports. Get parent addresses for letter re: senior event during commencement.*

3/6 Formal midterm updates. (potential prototype testing of the **IML444 class projects**)

3/13 SPRING BREAK: **Prep for prototype testing with IML444 class on 3/20**

3/20 Prototype **testing of your projects** with members of IML444 (MA+P major's thesis class).

3/27 *Project updates based on last week's feedback. Titles, abstracts discussion.*

4/3 In class work on titles and abstracts. Abstracts in wiki for Vee to polish.

[Revised abstracts due for publication in Showcase program.]

4/10 Updates, in class work on equipment needs, mapping of space, outstanding tech issues discussed

4/17 View abstracts (Honors, + Majors see map of projects. In class work on projects. Reference list due. Documentation efforts. (potential prototype testing of the **IML444 class projects**)

4/24 LAST CLASS Course evaluations at the start. Project updates as appropriate. Revised thesis parameters due.

5/8: Final exam, 4:30PM. Projects due with revisions for spelling, correctness and functionality

May 11 (Friday)—Commencement