

USC School for Cinematic Arts | Interactive Media Division

CTIN 534: Experiments in Interactivity

Time: Class session: Tuesday 3:00 pm to 5:50 pm

Workshop: Thursday 3:00 pm to 5:50 pm

Location: Online - Zoom link TBD

Units: 4

Prerequisites: none

Professor: Andreas Kratky

Contact: akratky@cinema.usc.edu

Office Hours: Thursday 11 am to 1 pm or by appointment

Office hour zoom-link:

<https://usc.zoom.us/j/93263710235?pwd=STQ5YngzbW5FOGFNYmInNnBGS2ZVZz09>

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to a basic set of skills enabling you to make compelling work in the field of interactive media. The aim of the course is to convey the necessary technical skills in close combination with the ability to express your ideas with images and sound. Both aspects are inseparable since it is impossible to create an expression without the technical means but at the same time it is impossible to determine the “right” application of techniques without a clear idea of what needs to be communicated. The class will deliver lectures discussing the conceptual and aesthetic structures of film and interactive media, hands-on lab exercises introducing the fundamentals of the technical skills that will be applied to the class projects, and extensive presentation and critique sessions. Each of the four projects that will be completed over the course of the semester will be presented in class with discussion and feedback from the class members, faculty, and occasional guests.

Beginning with an introduction to linear storytelling and film production we will open up to immersive media and the interactive involvement of the viewer/player into the projects. In this structure basic techniques of moving images, cinematography, directing, editing, and sound recording as well as design, spatial design, programming, and interface design will be covered. These techniques will be applied in the four class projects, each of which explores a different approach to storytelling and interactivity. The first three projects are individual projects, conceived as a succession where one project builds on the previous ones. The critique received in the presentations should inform the next project. The last project is a group project that will be developed over a larger timeframe with an intermediate presentation and feedback during the work process.

The class projects are mainly evaluated in respect to their experimental engagement rather than in respect to their technical perfection. All the work shown in the presentations is work-in-

progress and is not expected to be perfect. The aim is to train an “analytical eye”, the ability to analyze your work in respect to its artistic potential and its success in communicating your ideas. The class intends to be a platform for creative discourse and the critique sessions are essential to the learning experience. The goal of the course is not to teach recipes of how to do things, but to bring forward an understanding of the aesthetic fundamentals and encourage the experiment as the most important resource for the creation of compelling and effective work.

The work in CTIN 534 is done in a group where everybody helps everybody with feedback and skills. Collaboration and exchange at every stage of the projects are highly encouraged.

Course objectives

- Investigate the aesthetic potential of images, sound, and interactivity.
- Develop and sharpen your ability to formulate your ideas and communicate them effectively with visual media
- Experiment with different approaches to narrative and interactivity
- Formulate constructive criticism and use the feedback you receive from others to analyze and sharpen your work
- Understand the relationship between form and content
- Understand the relationship between storytelling and interactivity
- Develop fundamental skills in the areas of technical knowledge taught in the course

Course projects

1. Narrative Project:

Realize a short linear film: This project will be a first exercise to explore storytelling and your ability to translate ideas into images, sound and imaginary worlds. For this project you will have to conceive a simple story that develops over the course of a linear film. The “mental interaction” of the viewer is a point of particular interest in this project, engaging the viewer and playing with his expectations. This project is an individual project.

2. Spatial Project:

Realize an experience with a navigable spatial structure: Create a geographic space that the viewer can explore by navigating in different directions. The path that the viewer takes in this space should be a comprehensive narrative experience. The main question addressed in this project is the collaboration of the author with the viewer: How to create a meaningful and legible experience while at the same time letting the viewer decide by himself in which direction to proceed and where to look. This project is an individual project.

3. Recombinant Project:

Realize an interactive experience with a recombinant structure: Build the experience out of elements that can be read and re-interpreted in different ways depending on the navigation of the viewer. In order to communicate the choices and consequences of the navigational decisions to the viewer you should design a custom-made user interface that becomes an integral part of the experience. This project is a group project.

Readings

Several lectures have reading assignments. The readings are required in preparation of the class meeting they are listed for. All readings will be provided in digital format.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

During our class meetings time will be allocated to provide basic introductions to all techniques and technologies used throughout the semester. Throughout the class we will use several tools, such as editing software (e.g. Adobe Premiere or DaVinci Resolve), image editing software (e.g. Adobe Photoshop or Affinity Photo) and a game engine (e.g. Unity 3D). You will not be expected to be proficient in any of these tools, but it will be useful to have a certain familiarity with them. As part of the class we will offer introductions, tutorials and individual support to help you gain a level of proficiency that will allow you to creatively and conceptually engage with the class projects. The same goes for programming, you are not expected to be proficient in programming, and also in Unity 3D many things can be done without programming - but it will prove extremely beneficial if you acquire a basic level of programming knowledge while you are in the program. We will not require the use of specific tools, if you prefer a different tool, you are welcome to use that if it allows you to engage with the assignments in an appropriate way. Please communicate with the instructor if you have any questions about the technical requirements for your assignments.

Assignment Submission Policy

All written and digital assignments, including the documentation component of each of the class projects, should be submitted by email to akratky@cinema.usc.edu by the start of class on the day that they are due. All projects and in-class exercises should be uploaded to the class Google team drive and submitted by email to akratky@cinema.usc.edu. Projects to be screened in class must be on the team drive at the beginning of class, ready to be presented. Projects

Grading Structure

CTIN 534 criteria for grading are as follows:

- Class participation: 5%
- In-class exercises: 20%
- Narrative Project: 25%
- Spatial Project: 25%
- Recombinant Project: 25%

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79

C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Attendance

Punctual attendance at all classes is mandatory. (This includes online classes.) Students arriving more than five minutes late to three classes, more than ten minutes late to a single class, or leaving early, will be marked as having an unexcused absence from class, unless prior permission has been obtained from the instructors. This course relies heavily on interaction between instructor and students and your participation constitutes a significant component of the learning process. Your attendance is fundamental to the structure of this course and the objectives and goals and is therefore mandatory. You are expected to participate in every scheduled class session. This might be through in-person attendance, virtual attendance, or asynchronous viewing of class recordings and subsequent feedback/discussion. If you must miss a class, please be sure to get any notes and assignments from a classmate so you do not fall behind.

For students attending class virtually in Zoom, please log in using your USC-enabled Zoom account for security purposes. It is also recommended that you keep your camera turned on so you can better interact with the class and participate in class activities.

If you feel that you are unable to participate in the ways listed above, please speak to your professor. Accommodations may be made for certain situations.

Unauthorized Social Media Use During Class

Non-class focused social media use, including text messaging, shopping, Internet messaging and email, is not permitted during class unless explicitly permitted by the instructors. A 0.5% grade reduction will result from each occurrence of a student being found using non-class focused social media during class.

A Safer Space

In this class, we make a commitment to foster a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. This means that we will use preferred pronouns and respect self-identifications. While debate and discussion are welcome, please remain aware of the implications of your words and the images that you include in your work. If the instructor or another student points out that something you have said or shared with the group might be offensive, avoid being defensive; this is a valuable opportunity for us to grow and learn together.

Because this class involves presentation and discussion of creative projects that will contain a range of materials, some of which may present difficulties for others in the class, students and groups are encouraged to use content or trigger warnings as part of their presentation as appropriate.

If you have a concern about any aspect of the class, you are encouraged to speak with the instructor. If you feel uncomfortable speaking with the instructor, you are also welcome to speak with the graduate advisor for the division, who can either discuss the issue with you directly or point you toward other on- and off-campus resources for addressing your concern.

Missing an Assignment Deadline, Incompletes

The only acceptable excuses for missing an assignment deadline or taking an incomplete in the course are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform the instructors before the assignment due date and present verifiable evidence in order for a deadline extension to be granted. Students who wish to take incompletes must also present documentation of the problem to the instructors or student assistant before final grades are due. Incompletes are only available after the week-twelve withdrawal deadline.

For assignments turned in after the assignment deadline without prior permission from the instructor, a penalty will be imposed equal to 10% of the total available points for the assignment, for each day or part of a day that the assignment is late, up to a maximum of seven days.

Mid-term Conferences

These conferences allow you to get a sense of your overall progress, areas for improvement and an estimated grade at mid-point in the semester. If you are in danger of failing, you will be alerted in writing and in a conference; the instructor will outline with you together what steps must be taken in order for you to pass. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of USC's add/drop and withdrawal deadlines.

Course Outline:

1. Week

- Aug 18, 2020: Introduction
 - Overview over course structure
 - Discussion of different narrative structures
 - Introduction of camera basics
 - Assignment: First camera experiments (fulfill shot list)
- Aug 20, 2020: Workshop: Individual work and advisement on first camera assignment

2. Week

- Aug 25, 2020: Discussion of concepts of visual storytelling and montage
 - Review of shot list assignment
 - Assignment: Shoot short non-narrative sequence
 - Reading discussion: Sergei Eisenstein: A Dialectic Approach to Film Form; in: Eisenstein, S., Film Form, 1977

- Aug 27, 2020: Introduction to editing (Adobe Premiere/DaVinci Resolve)
Workshop: Individual work and advisement on non-narrative assignment

3. Week

- Sept 1, 2020: Review and discussion of non-narrative assignment
Reading discussion: Scott McCloud: Understanding Comics, excerpt
Discussion of storyboarding and pre-visualization
Assignment: Narrative project (due week 5)
- Sept 3, 2020: Workshop: Individual work and advisement on narrative assignment

4. Week

- Sept 8, 2020: Lighting exercise: Different moods and expressions, lighting for narrative
Discussion of virtual light and cameras in Unity 3D
Reading discussion: John Alton: Painting with Light, chapter 2, theory of lighting, chapter 3, Mystery Lighting.
- Sept 10, 2020: Workshop: Individual work and advisement on narrative assignment

5. Week

- Sept 15, 2020: **First project due**
Screening and discussion of the first project (Group A)
- Sept 17, 2020: Screening and discussion of the first project (Group B)

6. Week

- Sept 22, 2020: Lecture and discussion of spatial and non-linear narrative structures.
Assignment: Spatial narrative project
Reading discussion: Bachelard: Poetics of Space, excerpt
- Sept 24, 2020: Introduction to the Unity 3D authoring environment, exploring point of view and character

7. Week

- Sept 29, 2020: Discussion of visual design concepts, interface, and experience design
In-class exercise: Create a shared interactive space and give a guided tour to your class-mates.
- Oct 1, 2020: Workshop: Individual and group work and advisement for spatial project

8. Week

- Oct 6, 2020: **Second project due**
Screening and discussion of the second project (Group B)
- Oct 8, 2020: Screening and discussion of the second project (Group A)

9. Week

- Oct 13, 2020: Discussion of recombinant and procedural experiences
Reading discussion: Italo Calvino, Cybernetics and Ghosts; in: Calvino, I., The Uses of Literature, 1986

Assignment: Introduction of Recombinant narrative project (in conjunction with CTIN 541)

- Oct 15, 2020: Workshop: Group work and advisement for recombinant narrative project

10. Week

- Oct 20, 2020: Introduction to sound design
Reading discussion: David Sonnenschein, Sound Design, excerpt
- Oct 22, 2020: Workshop: Individual/group work and advisement for final project

11. Week

- Oct 27, 2020: Intermediate screening and critique of final project
- Oct 29, 2020: Intermediate screening and critique of final project

12. Week

- Nov 3, 2020: Introduction to non-traditional interfaces
- Nov 5, 2020: Workshop: Individual and group work and advisement for final project

13. Week

- Nov 10, 2020: **Third project due**
Screening and discussion and critique of third project (Group A)
Class evaluation
- Nov 12, 2020: Screening and discussion and critique of third project (Group B)

Final Exam

- Dec 3, 2019: **Final version of project and semester paper due**

ACADEMIC POLICIES

SCA Diversity and Inclusion Statement:

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

Course Content:

The required materials (readings, screenings, etc.) that are used in this course may, at times, depict or address potentially sensitive subject matter. Our discussions in class may also include these topics. The selection and presentation of these materials do not amount to an endorsement of the ideas expressed in them. If you have personal concerns about any of these materials, please discuss them with your professor so they may arrange appropriate alternatives if needed.

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.

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 Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Statement on Fair Use:

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. Student 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. For citation purposes, we follow *Kairos Journal of Rhetoric, Technology and Pedagogy* style guide; Kairos uses [APA format](#), which is slightly modified and whose general guidelines and specific examples may be found here: <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/styleguide.html#apa>

Computer Code:

Computer code is often shared and reused. This is appropriate in a 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>

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

USC Libraries: <https://libraries.usc.edu/>

Zoom Safety and Etiquette

"Netiquette" or "internet etiquette," describes the recommended communication and behavior of online communication. Having a Zoom netiquette policy for your course can help minimize the chances of miscommunication and perceived disrespect. [This CET resource](#) provides possibilities for what to include in your course policy.

It is also recommended that you encourage students to contact you with questions or concerns about complying with a policy. For instance, if a student is unable to keep their camera on during the synchronous Zoom session, encourage them to contact you prior to the class session to discuss expectations and accommodations needed.

For the safety of the classroom environment, students must login to Zoom through their USC account. <https://usc.zoom.us>

Synchronous session recording notice

Synchronous sessions will be recorded and provided to all students asynchronously. Information for faculty on recording class sessions can be found on the [Academic FAQs for Faculty](#) on the USC COVID-19 Resource Center.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

The sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment is prohibited and against USC university policy.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

COVID-19 Information for Students Coming to Campus

USC has COVID-19 and health protocols requirements for students who will be coming to campus. Please consult the [USC COVID-19 resource center website](#) for the latest COVID-19 testing and health protocol requirements. Requirements are continuously updated so please check frequently.

Students should also stay informed with the "We Are USC" portal:

<https://we-are.usc.edu/students/>

Students are also expected to follow the [University's Expectations on Student Behavior](#).

PLEASE NOTE:

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

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710
<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

USC Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symphlicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710
campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.