

IML_475_World building

Spring 2023 Syllabus

JUNK

What if there was a world
300 years from now, built on
the detritus of a former
civilization?

JUNK | WORLD BUILDING | SPRING 2023

IML 475 Spring 2023 World Building class asks students to imagine, ideate and collaborate to develop a distant future and fictional world called Junk, inhabited by a population that is surviving on the detritus of catastrophic events in the distant past.

The provocation on the title page sets up the conditions of the world you will build. From this world of JUNK you will develop and produce open-media projects derived from the collaboration between the participants in the class.

You will learn specific tools and methods of world building in order to co-create a deeply researched, holistic world at multiple scales. The questions you ask will help to define a knowledge-base that defines the rules of the unique world upon which you will build your stories.

You will be asked to tell stories of time and space, environments and population, and establish multiple points of view from which the characters and stories of the world will emerge.

World building is by definition immersive. You should be prepared to inhabit the world and work closely together to develop it from sketch to resolution.

World building is by definition transdisciplinary. Because of the diverse disciplines represented by the students each of you will bring your own skills and interests to bear in the telling of the stories of the world. While developing a common visual language for research and visual development each student will work in the medium that they wish, without constraint.

World building is by definition evolutionary, holistic, collaborative, and co-creative. You will be required to interact as a class and in teams to develop a collective intelligence, holistic world and emergent stories for the co-created or individual projects that will emerge by the end of the semester.

What if? Why not? You will learn to question everything as the basis of the creative process.

What is World Building?

“World building lives at the intersection of design, technology, and storytelling. In its ability to enable and conjure deeply considered holistic worlds, it represents the foundational narrative and design practice for transmedia, spherical storytelling, and the post-cinematic.

World building takes a lateral anthropological stance, borrowing specifically from ethnographic practice to contextualize speculative designs in real world research. World builders as designers then use this ethnographic groundwork as a place from which to begin imagining future possibilities.

This process allows designers to intelligently project plausible scenarios and outcomes through the creation of diegetic prototypes and models backed by rigorous research, envisioning desirable futures and the steps we may take to realize them - or the parallel universes we may be grateful to prevent ...”

World Building and the Future of Media, a case study: Makoko 2036

Laura Cechanowicz, Brian Cantrell, Alex McDowell

The JUNK Scenario:

Imagine that a 7.8 earthquake on the Southern San Andreas Fault hits the Coachella Valley on April 11th, 2043.

Based on a 2008 U.S. Geological Survey Report (*Shake Out Scenario*) ... researches estimate such a quake would cause some \$200 billion in damage, 50,000 injuries and 2,000 deaths. But “it’s not so much about dying in the earthquake. It’s about being miserable after the earthquake and people giving up on Southern California,” says USGC seismologist Lucy Jones. “Everything a city relies on to function—water, electricity, sewage systems, telecommunications, roads—would be damaged and possibly not repaired for more than a year. Without functioning infrastructure, the local economy could easily collapse, and people would abandon Los Angeles” [1].

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/what-will-really-happen-california-when-san-andreas-unleashes-big-one-180955432/>

Add to this the impact of climate change on Southern California in the coming decades to establish the foundation of the world you will research and develop [2].

In the decade-long **exodus** from Los Angeles after the 2043 collapse, your ancestors migrated to the Junk Archipelago (a fictional group of islands off the California Coast [3]), joining the remaining population of the archipelago.

Now consider that the world you are building takes place in a 300 year after this catastrophic series of events, in a ‘future present’ that you will occupy for the duration of the semester in this class.

From this scenario you will imagine a unique world and the basis of a new society from which you will develop diverse stories and multiple outcomes. New world. New vision. A new way to consider storytelling and its impact and apply it to your craft in any field.

SYLLABUS

WK 1: 1/13/23 - INTRODUCTION - What is world building?

The Street Corner.

An overview of world building. The Mandala. Scale and Ecosystems.

The role of the historical and future Street Corner. A collaborative co-creation of the conditions on the ground in LA in the decade after the Big One. Set up for individual research homework.

The **context** of the World of JUNK.

The Scenario. The earthquake, **the Big One and its aftermath.**

NOTE: the world of Junk is being taught to world building students in a global network of schools, universities and institutions across 4 continents. This world building consortium is led by the USC Media Arts + Practice IML_575

class, faculty at Austral University, Buenos Aires and the Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media, University of Nebraska. There will be remote and periodic interaction between all schools in the consortium, who continue to collaborate and share the teaching methods and work produced. All students will be working with the same premise, and provocation of JUNK. The website.

Week 1 assignment:

Define the conditions of the world in the decade of collapse after the big one. Where are we, when are we. What are the global effects on LA and South Cal. What is the impact on population. What new roles emerge. What does it mean for the infrastructure to collapse.

Memory of the future. Where do you live now?

Describe a person whose daily life has been upended by the immediate collapse of the infrastructure. How has their life been changed by the failure of their resources, tools, interactions that they used to depend on. (Examples: a surgeon, a storekeeper (what kind of store), a school kid, an elderly woman with physical disability). (500 words)

WK 2: 1/20 - WHOLE CLASS - the past (CONTEXT)

Take the character you created in WK1 assignment and define the **exodus**, and why they head out to the ocean rather than inland.

Build the 2070 Mandala as the basis of the history of the world.

Visual exploration - images of the conditions of the world after the Event.

Week 2 assignment

Describe the journey from the disaster of LA to a new home in the ocean. What do you find there. What is left on the island, what has survived. How do the people you find there live? (1000 words, 20 pieces of visual research, annotated. 6 images of the conditions on the islands.

Writing the world. Its conditions. Location scouting.

WK 3: 1/27 - WHOLE CLASS - the foundation, the detritus, the future present (WORLD)

Jump forward 300 years. You live in the future present. The world you described previously is now deep and perhaps forgotten history. You are 12-15th generation post-Event.

Choose the world, begin to define its conditions. the island, map making - create the Archipelago. Name it.

Include sites of town or city(s), terrain, infrastructure, agriculture, industry, infrastructure.

WK 3 assignment

Deep research to describe the conditions of the world, and the detritus it is built on. 10 visual explorations.

Continue to explore the details of the world based on the discoveries made in class - sites of town or city(s), terrain, infrastructure, agriculture, industry, infrastructure.

Populate the Mandala.

WK 4: 2/3 - GROUPS - exploring the world - future present (SCALE)

1) Define rules of the world - full class

2) End of class - At the end of class we will divide into (2-3) groups. These groups will remain together for the rest of the semester. Each group will represent a single community.

Each group will find a site for their community and world within the world, each will occupy a specific part of the island. Within the group, define the conditions of the community.

WK 4 assignment

Explore and define the logic of the world. 1000 words.

Make a list the rules of the world, prioritize 10. List and Place in Mandala.

Visual examples

WK 5: 2/10 - the rules of the world (RULES) - the woven narrative

The woven Narratives pulls from all the raw materials that have been defined by the Rules of the World.

WK 6: 2/17 - the districts

Each group defines the **district** that they populate, its specific rules, its conditions, its population.

WK 7: 2/24 - **the street corner** (conditions/ population)

WK 8: 3/3 - **the street corner** (infrastructure/ population)

CHARACTERS

WK 9: 3/10 - **the street corner** (roles, future of work)

WK 10: 3/17 (SPRING BREAK)

After Spring Break the class will move into production.

WK 11: 3/24

Work with your group to decide on final projects. How do they tie to the world you have developed? How do they support the world that each group has built?

Each group presents their project or projects to the class.

WK 12: 3/31

Start individual and/or group final projects. Class / groups: work together to test the world.

Students - propose the media format you will be developing for your final project.

WK 13: 4/7

Final projects - define the final narratives. Synopsis of the work. Define the final character participants. Lock the media format you will be developing for your final project.

WK 14: 4/14
Production

WK 15: 4/21
Production

WK 16: 4/28
Production

EXAMS 5/3-10

Full presentation of students' final and packaged work. Assume there will be an audience comprising experts, faculty, and members of the JUNK Consortium.

RECOMMENDED READING AND REFERENCE

NOVEL **Riddley Walker** / Russell Hoban

Hoban, Russell 1980

Nominated for the Nebula Award for Best Novel in 1981

Roughly two thousand years after a nuclear war has devastated civilization, Riddley, the young narrator, stumbles upon efforts to recreate a weapon of the ancient world.

NOVEL, TV SHOW **Station Eleven** / Emil St. John Mandel

St. John Mandel, Emily 2014

Kirsten is part of a nomadic group of actors and musicians known as the Travelling Symphony. Kirsten, who was eight at the time of the outbreak, can remember little of her life before Year Zero, but clings to a two-volume set of graphic novels given to her by Arthur before his death, titled Station Eleven. The troupe operates on a two-year cycle touring the Great Lakes region, performing Shakespeare plays and classical music, while Kirsten scavenges abandoned homes for props, costumes, and traces of Arthur in tabloid magazines.

GRAPHIC NOVEL **Here** / Richard McGuire

McGuire, Richard 2014 Pantheon

The first panel of "Here" shows an unadorned corner of a room in a house. The 35 panels that follow all show the location in space depicted in the first panel at different points in time, ranging from the year 500,957,406,073 BCE to the year 2033 CE. The panels are not ordered chronologically, and most of the panels are subdivided into multiple panes to show different points in time within the same panel.

NOVEL **The City and the City** / China Miéville

Miéville, China. McMillan 2009

Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel, Arthur C. Clarke Award, World Fantasy Award, BSFA Award; tied for the 2010 Hugo Award for Best Novel, nominated for a Nebula Award

These two cities actually occupy much of the same geographical space, but via the volition of their citizens (and the threat of the secret power known as Breach), they are perceived as two different cities. A denizen of one city must dutifully "unsee" (that is, consciously erase from their mind or fade into the background) the denizens, buildings, and events taking place in the other city – even if they are an inch away. This separation is emphasised by the style of clothing, architecture, gait, and the way denizens of each city generally carry themselves. Residents of the cities are taught from childhood to recognise things belonging to the other city without actually seeing them.

PDF **World Building and the Future of Media** / Laura Cechanowicz, Brian Cantrell, Alex McDowell
Cechanowicz, Cantrell, McDowell 2016
Available from Chantal Eyong

WORLD BUILDING WEBSITES

Museum of Rilao
<http://museumofrilao.com/>

Dry City
<https://worldbuilding.usc.edu/projects/dry-city/>

World In A Cell : An ArtScience Collaboration
<http://worldinacell.com/>