

IML_575_World building

Fall 2023 Syllabus

August 24 2023

JUNK

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

IML_575 | WORLD BUILDING | FALL 2023 | OVERVIEW

IML_575 FALL 2023 World Building is a cross-disciplinary class in research, storytelling and narrative design systems for platform-agnostic media.

In this semester, the 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 deep past.

The provocation on the title page sets up the conditions of the world. From this world of JUNK you will develop and produce single or multiple 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 on 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 constituents 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 multi-user ideation to fully immersive outcome.

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.

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JUNK imagines a lost archipelago, in a location to be determined, with a name to be discovered, and characteristics to be defined.

It is around (time is relative to the narrative) 300 years beyond the distant year 2023. The evolution of the world can be gauged by comparing its present to the remnants of the world it used to be.

Around 300 years ago a perfect storm of natural and human catastrophic events brought down the infrastructure of the world, irreparably. The full implication of this scenario is still being discovered.

In order to fully understand the foundation of our 300-year present world, its history and evolution need to be unearthed, and its stories to be discovered as they unfold from the discoveries made.

The questions asked and the knowledge gathered are recorded in a holistic system called the Mandala. The primary aspects of the world need to be considered, examined, explored, at multiple scales, and through multiple lenses. The Mandala is a repository for the research that forms the basis of the narrative development, logic, and Rules of the World.

As the rules are agreed and the details of the world begin to emerge, we enter the world more deeply until we are standing at its Street Corners. The street corner is a metaphor for the level of detail that is necessary for stories to emerge. When you stand in a street corner you can observe and understand the world in all its intersecting, holistic, complexity.

As more discoveries are made more narratives emerge, and the world evolves. Areas of the world begin to develop in great detail and the world is populated. The more focused the world becomes the more questions it raises; the answers to these questions are discovered as we populate it at ground level. As stories develop they make specific demands of the world, testing its logic and embedding its rules.

By this time full projects are emerging. The students may decide to build the world together or develop smaller group or individual narrative design projects.

Finally the world must demonstrate that its logic and rules have evolved into a unique platform for new stories tied to environment, context, time, and its storytellers.

IML_575 | WORLD BUILDING | FALL 2023 | SYLLABUS

WK 1: 8/25/2023

INTRODUCTION - What is world building?

The Street Corner. An Introduction to our imagination. We are all storytellers.

An overview of World Building at multiple scales through project examples.

Understanding the Mandala. Scale and ecosystems.

Investigating non-linear storytelling through the artifact.

The JUNK Scenario. The catastrophic events that lead to the collapse of infrastructure, and civilization, as we know it.

WK 2: 9/1/2023

CONTEXT

How do we define a world? An overview of Cartography.

Looking in detail at the conditions of the world through its terrain, archeology, climate, elements.

(A presentation by Jeffrey Linn).

How do we define Story?

Telling a story through the history of its environment and artifacts, and their connection to human stories, places and conditions.

(A presentation and discussion by Chantal Eyong).

Into the Black Hole.

The 50 years after the Collapse. Map the full implication of the breakdown of infrastructure on multiple aspects of the world. What stories emerge?

Students work in collaborative groups gathering research to support their ideas of the conditions on the ground and the inhabitants in the immediate aftermath and next 50 years of the recovery of the world.

WK 3: 9/8/2023**Defining the Foundational Rules of the World**

Define the Rules of the 50-year world. What are the conditions after the Disaster?
Inhabit that world as a child. Tell a street corner story.

WK 4: 9/15/2023**Exploring the world - 300 year (future present)**

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

In groups, the students will start to develop imaginary locations within the span of the archipelago and its islands. What are its relative conditions in different parts of the island world? Develop the history of the island. Develop the holistic characteristics of the environments and the stories they can support.

Develop the Mandalas.

[Following weeks of Syllabus to evolve based on the pace of the class.]

WK 5: 9/22/2023**WK 6: 9/29****WK 7: 10/06****WK 8: 10/13 FALL RECESS****WK 9: 10/20****WK 10: 10/27****WK 11: 11/03****WK 12: 11/10 VETERANS DAY****WK 13: 11/17**

WK 14: 11/24 THANKSGIVING

WK 15: 12/01 CLASSES END

WK 16: 12/08 FINAL EXAMS

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

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

World building as it is taught in this class is hands-on training in a process, method and outcome that can transform traditional media and other practices.

Students will learn to build a visual language through design and narrative systems using the most versatile tools of multiple disciplines to translate complex ideas and tell new stories. Students will learn to develop capabilities in deep research, platform-agnostic collaboration, multi-scale holistic ecology, and the creation of a robust world as a generator of environmental narratives and origin stories. And a lot of other stuff.

COURSE STRUCTURE

World building is a rigorous discipline that follows a strict framework of non-linear production. Students will be expected to align with each phase of the world build and collaborate in its development. The class will be provided with the resources to outline a timeline, design system, storytelling and methodology at the start of the semester.

TECHNOLOGICAL PROFICIENCY AND HARDWARE/SOFTWARE REQUIRED

Capability in platforms for remote collaboration, communication, curation and shared research will be required. For shared and individual project development students should exploit their proficiency in the tools of their discipline or choice. There are no constraints on the platform, media, tools the students choose, provided they are fully exploited - students will be expected to maximize their respective skills to convey the multiple stories and characters that emerge from the world.

RECOMMENDED READING AND RESEARCH

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

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.

<https://amp.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2017/nov/14/finding-your-way-around-riddley-walkers-world>
<http://riddley-walker.narod.ru/Book/RussellHoban-RiddleyWalker.html>

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

St. John Mandel, Emily 2014

<https://collider.com/how-to-watch-station-eleven-online-streaming-hbo-max/>

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 [wikipedia].

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Here_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Here_(comics))

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.

<https://refugeehosts.org/2019/04/05/speculative-borders-china-mievelles-the-city-the-city/>

BOOK **Everything We Touch: A 24-Hour Inventory of Our Lives** / Paula Zuccotti

Zuccotti, Paula International Edition 2015

What's the first thing we touch when we wake up? How do our favourite things reveal our hopes and fears? Can objects tell the story of our lives? Imagine how your day would look if you recorded everything that you touched. From smartphone to soap, from spice to spoon... what if they were all brought together in one place? Would they tell a bigger story? Driven by this idea, Paula Zuccotti travelled around the world to find people from an incredible array of ages, cultures, professions and backgrounds. From a toddler in Tokyo to a cowboy in Arizona, from a cleaner in London to a cloister nun in Madrid, Every Thing We Touch is their story told through the objects they own, consume, need, choose, treasure and can't let go. Each image is mystery, a story, a work of art. Each is a moment in time: a life and a world reflected back at us.

Every-thingwetouch.tumblr.com

BOOK **Mr. Wilson's Cabinet Of Wonder** / Lawrence Weschler

Weschler, Lawrence 1995

<https://www.nytimes.com/1995/10/29/books/true-lies.html>
<https://lawrenceweschler.com/books/mr.-wilsons-cabinet-of-wonder>

MUSEUM **Museum of Jurassic Technology** / David Hildebrand Wilson and Diana Drake Wilson

9341 Venice Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232

<https://www.mjt.org/>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/inside-las-strangest-museum-180954803/>

WORLD BUILDING WEBSITES

Museum of Rilao

<http://museumofrilao.com/>

Dry City

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

<https://joshua-dawson.com/caustico>

World In A Cell : An ArtScience Collaboration

<http://worldinacell.com/>

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY

Weekly assignments will be completed and submitted 24 hours before class. Each assignment is designed to increase the knowledge of the world, and assignments are progressive. A coherent through-flow of knowledge, narrative and visual context is required from week to week. Students are expected to cross-pollinate their work by accessing and collaborating in shared workspaces and within a common framework.

PARTICIPATION POLICY

MA+P classes often depend on group work and in-class critique, which makes participation crucial. 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. All classes will be recorded and students who miss class will be expected to view video.

For students attending class virtually in Zoom, please log in using your USC-enabled Zoom account for security purposes. It is also expected 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.

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 MINIMUM PASSING GRADE FOR MEDIA ARTS + PRACTICE MAJORS
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62 MINIMUM PASSING GRADE FOR USC
F	59 and below

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>.

Note: students may supplement their research and development using current and beta AI tools such as GTPChat and Midjourney. Students should discuss any confusion or concerns around the use of these tools with the class TA.

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. 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 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>

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](#).

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.symplicity.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.