

# Technologies of Humanism: Text, Hypertext, Hyperrealities

21L.708, CMS.910

Two sessions / week

1.5 hours / session

Spring 2003

---

## Syllabus

### Course Description

This course explores the properties of non-sequential, multi-linear, and interactive forms of narratives as they have evolved from print to digital media. Works covered in this course range from the Talmud, classics of non-linear novels, experimental literature, early sound and film experiments to recent multi-linear and interactive films and games. The study of the structural properties of narratives that experiment with digression, multiple points of view, disruptions of time, space, and of storyline is complemented by theoretical texts about authorship/readership, plot/story, properties of digital media and hypertext. Questions that will be addressed in this course include: How can we define 'non-sequentiality/multi-linearity', 'interactivity', 'narrative'. To what extent are these aspects determined by the text, the reader, the digital format? What are the roles of the reader and the author? What kinds of narratives are especially suited for a non-linear/interactive format? Are there stories that can only be told in a digital format? What can we learn from early non-digital examples of non-linear and interactive story telling?

Students will develop digital and non-digital collaborative projects that explore the complex relationships of narrative, structure, and reader/user experience to complement the readings and discussions. Goal of this course is to expand our understanding of narrative and refine our skills in the critical analysis of new media formats.

### Schedule

- CLASS #1. Introduction, Video: L'île aux fleurs  
Assignments: Read Vannevar Bush: "As we may think", read excerpts from Alan Lightman: *Einstein's Dreams* (see also handout)
- CLASS #2. Non-linearity and multiple perspectives  
Narrative design project  
Assignments: Read Theodor Nelson: excerpts from *Literary machines* (copies), watch Nelson video (Language Lab), read Robert Goldberg: Talmud (copies)
- CLASS #3. Multi-form narratives, design project  
Assignments: Read texts by Wolfgang Iser, Umberto Eco, Hans Jauss,

- George Poulet, Roland Barthes, develop narrative design concept (handout)
- CLASS #4. Authorship/readership & Experimental literature: Raymond Queneau, George Perec, Julio Cortázar  
Assignments: handout (Oulipo)
- CLASS #5. Experimental literature, read Joyce, Dante, Landow, Eco (excerpts: handouts)
- CLASS #6. Encyclopedic narratives: Dante's *Divine Comedy*, James Joyce: *Finnegans Wake*, Peter Greenaway: *Dante's Inferno*, Arno Schmidt: *Zettels Traum*
- CLASS #7. Transformations: Project 1 due, class presentations
- CLASS #8. First paper due – audio art, creating narrative spaces with audio
- CLASS #9. Walter Ruttmann: *Weekend* (1929) and *Remixes* (1998)
- CLASS #10. Paul Wühr: *Soundseeing Munich* (1987), Bill Fontana: *Sound-Bridge Cologne-Kyoto* (1993), Lev Manovich: Database, revision of first paper due
- CLASS #11. Lev Manovich: Database discussion, audio projects
- CLASS #12. Janet Murray: Authors @ MIT, Lev Manovich: Database discussion (cont.)
- CLASS #13. Audio projects presentations
- CLASS #14. Hypertext fiction, Net literature, reading: Janet Murray. Properties of digital media, second paper due
- CLASS #15. Hypertext Fiction, net literature, assignment: watch *Groundhog Day*, *Run Lola Run*, *Sliding Doors* (Film office)
- CLASS #16. Multi-linear narratives: *Run Lola Run*, *Sliding Doors*, *Groundhog Day*, assignment: watch interactive movie: *Tender Loving Care* (LLARC), read article on interactive narratives (handout)
- CLASS #17. Interactive narratives: *Berliner sehen*, interactive movie: *Tender Loving Care*, assignment: watch *Memento*
- CLASS #18. ELIZA and artificial intelligence projects (handouts)
- CLASS #19. Exploration and critique of interactive narratives, Conversation based narratives: *ELIZA* and *No recuerdo* (Douglas Morgenstern), read articles on narratives in games, select a game for presentation

- CLASS #20. Analysis of games and their narrative structures, game presentations, third paper due
- CLASS #21. Visit by conceptual artist, read Friedrich Schiller text on game and Henry Jenkins on narratives in games
- CLASS #22. Games as narratives/games as play – visit by Danish researcher
- CLASS #23. Project prototypes for final project
- CLASS #24. Fourth paper due
- CLASS #25. Final project presentations
- CLASS #26. Media Spectacle (Public presentations of final projects)

## **Requirements**

### *Attendance and Participation (25%)*

It is important that you take actively part in the discussions in class. Your participation will shape your understanding of interactive and non-linear narratives and your contributions will be vital to the whole group. Should you be unable to come to class contact me ahead of time so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

### *Summaries/presentations (20%)*

You are responsible for short summaries on your readings (as defined by the assignments and to be posted to server), short, 10 minute presentations in class on a theoretical text.

### *Papers (30%)*

This is a CI-M subject. There will be four papers with a total minimum of 20 pages. Two papers need to be revised. The last one can be combined with your final project. Essays must be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, and adequately margined, should include a title, and need to observe the conventions of grammar and spelling. Revisions should include a brief statement summarizing the process of revision.

### *Digital Projects (25%)*

Three projects; they can consist of a well-developed concept, a prototype, designs, an actual digital or non-digital implementation, and a report. All projects need to be presented in class. The final project can be a combination of the other two class projects or an extension of one.

### *Statement on Plagiarism*

Plagiarism attacks the freedom and integrity of thought. Especially in a class that will depend to some extent on online research, you must know what constitutes plagiarism and avoid it. The Literature Department has formulated this statement and policy for all plagiarism cases:

Plagiarism — use of another's intellectual work without acknowledgement — is a serious offense. It is the policy of the Literature Faculty that students who plagiarize

will receive an F in the subject, and that the instructor will forward the case to the Committee on Discipline. Full acknowledgement for all information obtained from sources outside the classroom must be clearly stated in all written work submitted. All ideas, arguments, and direct phrasings taken from someone else's work must be identified and properly footnoted. Quotations from other sources must be clearly marked as distinct from the student's own work. For further guidance on the proper forms of attribution consult the style guides available in the Writing and Communication Center and the MIT Website on Plagiarism located at: <http://web.mit.edu/writing/Special/plagiarism.html> MIT's academic honesty policy can be found at the following link: <http://web.mit.edu/policies/10.0.html>

### **Literary Texts**

Alan Lightman: *Einstein's Dreams*, New York: Warner, 1993, 8-22, 38-42, 61-65, 75-84

James Joyce: Excerpts from *Ulysees* and *Finnegans Wake*

Raymond Quenau: *Cent Mille Milliard de poems*

Dante: Inferno, from: *The Devine Comedy*

Raymond Queneau: *Exercises in Style*

Georges Perec: *Life - A user's manual*

Georges Perec: *53 days*

Georges Perec: *Exercises in Style*

Vladimir Nabokov: *Pale Fire*

Jorge Luis Borges: *Ficciones*

Julio Cortázar: *Hopscotch*

Mark Danielewski: *House of Leaves*, Pantheon Books, 2000

Milorad Pavic, et al.: *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel in 100,000 Words*, Vintage Books, 1989

E. T. A. Hoffmann: *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*

Arno Schmidt: *Zettels Traum*, Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer, 2002, Zettel 3-10 & sound recording

### **Hypertext fiction**

Michael Joyce: *Afternoon, a story*

J. Yellowlees Douglas: *I have said nothing*

Stuart Moulthrop: *Victory Garden*

Jelly Jackson: *Patchwork Girl*

Diane Greco: *Cyborg. Engineering the Body Electric*

Stephanie Strickland: *True North*

*StorySpace 2*

(all in the LLARC)

*ELIZA*

*ZORK*

### **Films/Videos/interactive movies/projects**

*Groundhog Day*

*Sliding Doors*

*Memento*

*Berlin: Symphony of the city* (Walter Ruttmann)

*The Man with the Movie Camera* (Vertov)

*Prosperos' Books* by Peter Greenaway  
*Dante's Inferno*, by Peter Greenaway and Raul Ruiz  
Recordings of Douglas Engelbart, Ted Nelson, and Tim Berners-Lee  
*A la rencontre de Philippe*, Gilberte Furstenberg  
*Berliner sehen*, Ellen Crocker & Kurt Fendt  
*No recuerdo*, Douglas Morgenstern

### **Audio works**

Walter Ruttmann: *Weekend* (1992) and *Remixes* (1998)  
Paul Wühr: *Soundseeing Munich*  
Bill Fontana: *Sound-Bridge Cologne-Kyoto* (1993)

### **Theoretical texts on narrative and interactivity:**

Wolfgang Iser: "The Reading Process", in: *The Implied Reader*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974, 274-294  
Lev Manovich: "Database", in: *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002, p. 213-243  
Umberto Eco: "Intentio Lectoris", in: *The Limits of Interpretation*, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990, 44- 63  
Robert Goldenberg: "Talmud", in: Barry W. Holtz (ed.): *Back to the sources. Reading the classic Jewish texts*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984, 129-151  
Roland Barthes: "The Death of the Author", in: *Image, Music, text*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1988, 142-148  
Vannevar Bush: "As we may think", in: *The Atlantic Monthly*  
Ted Nelson: *Literary Machines*  
Tim Berners-Lee  
Janet Murray: *Hamlet on the Holodeck*  
Henry Jenkins: "Game design as narrative architecture" and other texts  
Goerge Landow: *Hypertext 2.0*

### **Net Fiction & Games**

List on the web site