

Syllabus 2020

Digital Storytelling Syllabus

Course: CPSC 106: Digital Storytelling

Professor: Jennifer A. Polack

Location: The Internet

Term: Summer 2020

Email: jenniferpolack@gmail.com or canvas email

Office: Trinkle B21

Office Hours:

- Summer Session I: Online and By Appointment
- Summer Session II: Online and By Appointment

Course Description: The [Wikipedia articles on Digital Storytelling](#) defines it rather succinctly as “using digital tools so that ordinary people can tell their own real-life stories.” It then goes on to elaborate as follows: *Digital Storytelling is an emerging term, one that arises from a grassroots movement that uses new digital tools to help ordinary people tell their own ‘true stories’ in a compelling and emotionally engaging form. These stories usually take the form of a relatively short story (less than 8 minutes) and can involve interactivity. The term can also be a broader journalistic reference to the variety of emergent new forms of digital narratives (web-based stories, interactive stories, hypertexts, fan art/fiction, and narrative computer games). As an emerging area of creative work, the definition of digital storytelling is still the subject of much debate. There are a number of ideas and assumptions here that I will be interrogating over the course of this semester, namely the idea of “ordinary people,” “true stories,” and the debate around the meaning of this term. The above article is rather*

vague about the details surrounding this emerging genre of narrative, and it is our responsibility to examine the term digital storytelling within the cultural context of our moment. This means each of you will be experimenting with your own digital platform for storytelling, as well as placing yourself within a larger narrative of networked conversation on the Internet at large. This course will require you to both design and build an online identity and narrate your process throughout the five-week semester. Given this, you will be expected to openly frame this process and interact with one another throughout the course as well as engage and interact with the world beyond. In many ways this course will be part storytelling workshop, part technology training and, most importantly, critical interrogation of the digital landscape all around us that is increasingly defining the way I communicate with one another.

Course Objectives

- To develop skills in using technology as a tool for networking, sharing, narrating, and creative self-expression
- To frame a digital identity wherein you become both a practitioner in and interrogator of various new modes of networking
- To critically examine the digital landscape of communication technologies as emergent narrative forms and genres

Course Materials

- Internet: There is no textbook for this class, however individual readings/videos will be assigned and will be available online. Success in this class is very much dependent on a reliable, fast Internet connection.

- Computer: Do I need to even list this?
- Web Accounts/Software: You will need to set up accounts on various social media sites I will be using for class. For the most part, no specific software is required; you will need to use what you have or choose from web-based/trial versions of software to create media. See the [DS106 Handbook](#)
- Web Hosting Account: You will be expected to manage a web hosting account with a LAMP/cPanel Web environment; this will be provided for free to all registered UMW students.
- Class Web Site: The locus of the course's online activity will be cpsc106. You should always use this URL to enter the course; it is where you will find information about assignments and activities all summer. Over the course of the summer, I will also make use of two other important ds106 sites:
 - [ds106 Assignment Repository](#): This collection of digital storytelling assignments has been developed over the course of the last few years. I will frequently be drawing upon this collection for course assignments. You will also be creating assignments as part of your coursework.
 - The Daily Create: These daily creative assignments ask you to spend no more than 10-15 minutes experimenting with either photography, video, audio, or text based on a pre-defined assignment.

Department of Computer Science Grading Scale

If applicable, here is the grading scale:

A 92-100% | A- 89- 91% | B+ 87-88% | B 82-86%| B- 79-81% | C+ 77-78% | C 72-76% | C- 69-71% | D+ 67-69% | D 60-66% | F 0-59%

Weekly Grading Breakdown: You are graded once a week but that grade is broken into the following categories.

- **Participation 15%**
- **Daily Create 15%**
- **Digital Storytelling Assignments 40%**
- **Reflections 15%**
- **Summary 15%**

Participation 15%

This class will in many ways be anchored around your ongoing, regular participation through the various technologies you will be experimenting with. If you are not present, you will compromise the success of the class (as well as YOUR success in it). I expect active and engaged participation.

For the purpose of this entirely online version of ds106, presence and participation are determined by the degree to which you are actively and thoughtfully engaged with your classmates and the course materials via the various online spaces used for the class. Participation will be evaluated based upon the following kinds of activities:

- Narrating your course experience. Throughout the summer, you are required to use your blog to regularly provide updates about your course activities. These posts should be thorough and reflective.
- Commenting upon your classmates' work. You are expected to respond thoughtfully and critically to the work that others in the class are creating.

This will be accomplished in several ways, primarily through regular, thoughtful blog comments and feedback on Twitter. You should focus your commenting energies most explicitly upon the work of your proximal zone mates. But I encourage you to actively review and comment upon the work of anyone in ds106.

Keep in mind comments are distributed, and while I have certain mechanisms for tracking comments, they are imperfect. I will be expecting you to keep track of your feedback on your classmates work and share it with us in the assessment

conferences I have during the semester.

- Engagement with social media. The online nature of this course requires us all to work especially hard to build a learning community. In large part, I expect this community to emerge out of various spaces and tools that you will be asked to use. I will be looking for your regular presence in spaces like Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube. Complaining that you “don’t understand” the tool is not a suitable excuse. You will only begin to understand by using and engaging.

The Daily Create 15%

Regular, creative exercises are at the heart of ds106, and to this end over the course of the semester I will be expecting every student to complete anywhere between 3 and 4 Daily Create each week. In order to get full credit for this assignment you will need complete it the day the assignment was posted as well as tag it according to the directions given with the prompt.

Digital Storytelling Assignments 40%

Throughout the semester, I will assign a number of digital storytelling projects using a variety of tools, techniques, and technologies. You are expected to complete all of these assignments in a timely fashion and share them on your blog. Your grade on these will reflect both your success at completing these assignments as well as a detailed commentary on your blog describing your process and any difficulties you encountered. In other words, you will be expected to not only complete an assignment, but also share with everyone how you did it. What’s more, if you have difficulty with an assignment I will always expect you to attempt it, but you can use your blog to share insight into what you found challenging and how you negotiated the requirements.

Generally speaking, as long as I see a commitment to completing an assignment creatively and sharing your process thoroughly, you can expect to do well on it. If you don't complete an assignment, you will receive a zero. If you complete an assignment, but you have failed to document your process (and have not explained to us why you did not meet the requirements), you can expect to receive partial credit.

Writing up the assignment needs to include the following

When writing up your assignment it is more than just saying, "here is my assignment". Just posting the results without anything else is not satisfying the criteria for writing up your work.

The three main portions students must cover to receive full credit include:

- 1. Telling the Story Behind the Story:** As part of your write-up, we want to see evidence of the thinking behind it. Use a few paragraphs to describe why you chose the assignment or the topic, or what the thing you made means to you. What is its context? What is the story it tells? What does it mean to you? To society? To other media? Why did you even make it? Think of this part as the part of a DVD that includes the extras- behind the scenes, out takes, director's commentary or a piece of Artwork that the artist personally writes about and why he created it.
- 2. The Work Itself:** What you created ought to be embedded into the body of your post, not just hyperlinked. See [Blogging Tips](#) to learn how media is embedded when you write your posts. You will want to write an introduction to your creation, more than "My assignment" – see what happens if you make your assignment part of a larger narrative. Write around the media, reference it. The most key thing is that you include the specific assignment tags that are provided on each assignment.

For example, the [Design Your Dream Animal assignment](#), you must add the tags DesignAssignments and DesignAssignments394 to your post. Feel free to add any other descriptive tags, but the base tags are required.

3. **Narrating the Process:** Again, your task is more than the final product. Include in your assignment blog posts a description of how you created it, the software used, techniques/tools within the software, the sources of any media, etc. Think of it as a guide to someone else who might want to recreate what you did. This part of the DVD extras menu like “The Making Of My Groovy Assignment” This is a tutorial that someone else can recreate exactly what you did.

All blog post in this category will be graded with the following rubric.

	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing
Blog Affordances, use of media (10%)	Creative title that attracts interest, assignment and related media embedded, relevant and extra information provided via contextualized hyperlinks	Original title, assignment media embedded, some hyperlinks present and contextual	Title paraphrases assignment, media is linked; none to minimal use of hyperlinks; most hyperlinks via URL
Narration of Idea and Storytelling Elements (30%)	Inspiration, influences and evolution of idea narrated, linked to related concepts; connected to larger ideas or works included; strong connection of storytelling elements	Inspiration for the idea described as well as how it evolved; connection cited to storytelling elements.	Singular source of idea described; Storytelling elements not clear.

<p>Media Created for Assignment (30%)</p>	<p>Media created is a novel or even opposite interpretation of assignment, justified in write up, shows experimentation with special features/techniques of tools; fine attention to media assemblage, graphic details, transitions, sound levels (where appropriate).</p>	<p>Media created uses a creative interpretation or unexpected view of assignment, shows experimentation with features of tools; Media assemblage shows effort to blend together.</p>	<p>Media created satisfies literal interpretation of assignment, makes use of basic features of tools. Media assemblage is linear, cut and paste.</p>
<p>Narration of Creative Process (30%)</p>	<p>Techniques and methods are explained in sufficient form to help someone else do a similar assignment, explained as narrative steps, with supporting screenshots or screencasts. Sources of external media cited by name and URL.</p>	<p>Specific techniques listed as narrative with screenshots. Sources of external media cited by URL.</p>	<p>Lists name of tools used, brief text summary of steps. General sources of external media used listed</p>

Also, keep in mind each assignment in the ds106 assignment repository has two tags. You are required to use both tags from each assignment correctly to receive credit. It is your responsibility to double check the spelling of the tags and ensure they are correct for each and every assignment you create.

Remember, each assignment has to be tagged correctly to receive credit—and those tags will be created immediately

after you submit the assignment. Don't forget to tag your example of the assignment you complete.

Reflections 15%

Reflection offers you the opportunity to consider how your personal experiences and observations shape your thinking and your acceptance of new ideas. I am asking you to write reading/video/audio reflections. **These are to encourage you to explore your own ideas about a text, a video or a podcast to express your opinion rather than summarize the opinions of others.** Reflective writing can help you to improve your analytical skills because it requires you to express what you think, and more significantly, how and why you think that way. In addition, reflective analysis asks you to acknowledge that your thoughts are shaped by your assumptions and preconceived ideas; in doing so, you can appreciate the ideas of others, notice how their assumptions and preconceived ideas may have shaped their thoughts, and perhaps recognize how your ideas support or oppose what you read.

ASSESS THE TEXT (S), VIDEO (S), PODCAST (S):

- What is the main point? How is it developed? Identify the purpose, impact and/or theoretical framework of the text.
- What ideas stood out to me? Why? Were they new or in opposition to existing scholarship?

DEVELOP YOUR IDEAS: DEVELOP YOUR IDEAS:

- What do I know about this topic? Where does my existing knowledge come from? What are the observations or experiences that shape my understanding?
- Do I agree or disagree with this argument? Why?

MAKE CONNECTIONS: MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- How does this text reinforce my existing ideas or

assumptions? How does this text challenge my existing ideas or assumptions?

- How does this text help me to better understand this topic or explore this field of study/discipline?

Summary (15%)

Every week, you will be required to submit a summary post by the weekly deadline (generally due on Sundays at midnight). These posts should include links to or embedded media from all the work you have done for the week: storytelling assignments, daily creates, reflections etc. In addition, you should use this post to reflect upon your activity of the week:

- How well do you feel you completed the requirements of the week's assignments?
- What gave you trouble? What did you enjoy most? What did you learn?
- What would you do differently? What questions do you have?
- What are some of the larger issues surrounding your work? Cultural/Societal implications?

These weekly summaries are what we will use to find all of your weekly work as we determine your grade for that week. In addition, they are an opportunity for you to tell us how you feel you are doing and what's giving you trouble, overall, in the course. If you forget to include something in a weekly post, we may not realize you've completed it. If you fail to submit a weekly summary, you will get no grade for that week!

Other Non-Graded but Important Course Elements

Attendance

As this class is online, attendance is not required for synchronous sessions, but you are expected to be regularly active in your own blog, commenting and offering critiques on others, and sharing ideas and resources via Twitter.

Weekly readings or reviews of video/web sites are expected to be written up as blog posts.

Twitter

I strongly encourage you (that's more than a hint) to regularly use Twitter for this class. If you already have an account, you may use it. Otherwise, creating an account is easy! Simply tweet class-relevant content with the hashtag **#ds106**. These tweets will be harvested and displayed on the course website. In addition, Twitter can and should be integrated with your class blog. For example, when you complete a new entry, post a link on your twitter account.

Contacting Me

I can be contacted many ways, but e-mail is the easiest
Jennifer Polack: jenniferpolack@gmail.com. Our correspondence will be much more productive if you follow a few simple guidelines:

- First, consider whether you really need to e-mail me. If you're experiencing a technical problem, make every effort to solve it first on your own (though a Google search, a call for help blog post, etc.). If you do need to ask for technical help, your message should indicate that you've already tried available means to solve the problem, including specific steps you've already taken.
- Don't forget to identify yourself. If you have a question about an assignment, please make sure I know who you are, what section you're in, and the exact assignment about which you have a question.
- Please send a followup. If an explanation helped, or if the technical suggestion worked, please send a note. This way, I know whether or not to make the same suggestion to someone else when they come to me with a similar problem.

Decorum

Students are expected to treat the instructor and fellow students with the appropriate degree of respect in all interactions. Communication, either in person or through electronic media that is deemed abusive, threatening, or harassing in nature will not be tolerated.

The Honor Code

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the letter and spirit of the Honor Code. A violation of the Honor Code is a very serious matter.

Online Accessibility

The University of Mary Washington is committed to ensuring that all students have the same opportunities to successfully participate and learn in online courses as they do in traditional, face-to-face courses.

To this end, I will make every effort to make sure the media I create in this online courses should be developed and presented in ways that are universally accessible

- Images should be optimized and include descriptive “alt” tags
- Written transcripts of audio files and video files should be made available.
- Whenever possible, alternative formats of materials should be made available to students who require them (e.g. optional print packet of extensive online reading materials, CD of audio clips)
- Web sites and Web-based tools should adhere to accessibility “best practices”
- Mechanisms should be available for including “alt” texts when images are uploaded or used.
- Text should be legible and re-sizable
- Use of color should add interest and indicate interface choices, but should not disadvantage those with color blindness.

- When approached by a student with an unanticipated access concern, online faculty should make every attempt to address the concern by adjusting requirements, providing extensions, or making additional accommodations.

Disability Service Statement

The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through the Office of Disability Services and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your needs. I will hold any information you share with me in strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise.

Course Calendar

The following schedule lays out the basic structure of the class and the units and topics we'll cover over the semester.

▪ Week 1 Intro and Photography Visual

In doing your ds106 Daily Creates you've already been using photography and drawing skills, plus you've had some practice on doing visual stories for our introduction to storytelling. In this week I go a bit deeper and give you the opportunity to practice telling stories in primarily visual form.

▪ Week 2 Photography Design

We've wrapped up our week on visual storytelling and photography, and this week we're diving into design. You'll spend some time this week thinking about the way the world around you is designed, as well as creating some of your own design projects.

▪ Week 3 Audio

This week in ds106 we're going to be diving into our first storytelling genre: audio. Working with audio can be a bit daunting and unfamiliar, so we'll be easing you into it this week. We'll ask you to do some listening exercises as well as begin to create your own. It's time to make movies! Video is perhaps the most rich of storytelling forms, and I want you to focus explicitly now on video storytelling. The only assignments on your plate are to work on video assignments, and all of which are due in two weeks time.

- **Week 4 Movies**
- **Weeks 5 Final Projects**