

Digital Storytelling Syllabus

Course: CPSC 106: Digital Storytelling

Professor: Jennifer A. Polack

Location: The Internet

Term: Summer 2023

Email: jenniferpolack@gmail.com or canvas email

Office: Online

Office Hours: By appointment on Zoom

Course Description: The [Wikipedia article 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 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 various 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 several ideas and assumptions here that I will be interrogating over 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 narrative genre, 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 storytelling platform and placing yourself within a larger narrative of networked conversation on the Internet at large. This course will require you to design and build an online identity and narrate your process throughout the three-week semester. Given this, you will be expected to openly frame this process and interact with one another throughout the course and 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 around us that is increasingly defining how I communicate with others.

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 and interrogator of various new networking modes.
- To critically examine the digital landscape of communication technologies as emergent narrative forms and genres.

Course Calendar

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

- **Assignment 1 and 2 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 assignment, I go a bit deeper and give you the opportunity to practice telling stories in primarily visual form.

- **Assignment 3 Photography Design**

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

- **Assignment 4 Audio**

In this assignment 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 this assignment. 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 richest 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.

- **Assignment 5 Movies**
- **Assignment 6 Final Projects**

Digital Intensive Learning Outcomes:

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the Digital Intensive requirement are listed as headings below. Under each heading, bullet points delineate the specific features of an assignment or course that would allow students to complete that SLO.

Successfully locates and critically evaluates information using the Internet, library databases, and/or other digital tools.

- Uses digital technologies relevant to the discipline
- Uses digital information in an ethical manner
- Demonstrates awareness of legal, social, and/or cultural issues surrounding the use of digital information

Uses digital tools to safely, ethically, and effectively produce and exchange information and ideas

- Creatively uses digital text, media, and/or data
- Works collaboratively to exchange and share information
- Works with digital tools to produce new information resources
- Demonstrates knowledge of legal, social, and/or cultural contexts of digital information production

Creatively adapts to emerging and evolving technology

- Identifies and evaluates digital tools needed for the design and development of projects
- Develops an independent and critical approach to solving technology and information challenges
- Develops digital and/or professional identity in relation to different audiences

Course Materials

- **Internet:** There is no textbook for this class. However, individual readings/videos will be assigned and available online. Success in this class depends on a reliable, fast Internet connection.
- **Computer:** Do I even need to list this?
- **Web Accounts/Software:** You will need to set up accounts on various social media sites I will use for the class. For the most part, no specific software is required; you will need to use what you have or choose from web-based/trial software versions to create media. See the [DS106 Handbook](#) and [Digital Knowledge Center Guides](#)
- **Web Hosting Account:** [Domain of One's Own](#)
- **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. Throughout 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 throughout 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 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%

Assignment Grading Breakdown: that grade is broken into the following categories.

- Website 20%
- Daily Creates 10%
- Digital Media Introduction 20%
- Final Project 50%

Requirements for Writing the [ds106 Assignment bank](#)

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, outtakes, 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 should be embedded into your post's body, 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, and reference it. The most key thing is that you include the specific assignment tags on each assignment. For example, in [Animals doing funny things](#), you must add the tags `AnimatedGIFAssignments` and `AnimatedGIFAssignments1789` to your post. Feel free to add any other descriptive tags, but the base tags are required.
3. **Narrating the Process:** 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 who might want to recreate what you did. This part of the DVD extras menu, like “The Making Of My Groovy Assignment,” is a tutorial that someone else can recreate exactly what you did.

Also, remember that each assignment in the ds106 assignment repository has two tags. You are required to use both tags from each assignment correctly to receive credit. You are responsible for double-checking the tags' spelling and ensuring 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 completed.

When Asking for Reflections on Material

Reflection allows you to consider how your personal experiences and observations shape your thinking and acceptance of new ideas. I am asking you to write reading/video/audio reflections. **These are to encourage you to explore your 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 assumptions and preconceived ideas shape your thoughts; 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), AND PODCAST (S):

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

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 understand this topic better or explore this field of study/discipline?

Summary Blog Post

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

- How well do you feel you completed the requirements of the 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?

I will use these summaries to find your work as we determine your grade for that assignment. 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 post, we may not realize you've completed it. If you fail to submit a summary, you will get no grade for that assignment!

Contacting Me

I can be contacted in 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 need to e-mail me. If you're experiencing a technical problem, make every effort to solve it on your own (through a [Google search](#), [looking at the dkc video](#), 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 follow-up. 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 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 severe matter.

Online Accessibility

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

To this end, I will make every effort to make sure the media I create in these 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.
- The text should be legible and re-sizable.
- Using color should add interest and indicate interface choices but 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 Resources 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 Resources and require accommodations for this class, please provide me a copy of your accommodation letter via email or during a meeting. I encourage you to follow up with me about your accommodations and needs within this class. I will hold any information you share in the strictest confidence unless you permit me to do otherwise.

If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Resources and have reasonable accommodation needs, their office is in Seacobeck 005, their phone number is (540) 654-1266, and their email is odr@umw.edu. The office will require appropriate documentation of disability.”

Title IX Statement

University of Mary Washington faculty are committed to supporting students and upholding the University’s *Policy on Sexual and Gender Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence*. Under Title IX and this Policy, discrimination based upon sex or gender is prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex or gender based discrimination, we encourage you to report it. **While you may talk to me, understand that as a “Responsible Employee” of the University, I MUST report to UMW’s Title IX Coordinator what you share.** If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, please contact the below confidential resources. They can connect you with support services and help you explore your options. You may also seek assistance from UMW’s Title IX Coordinator. Please visit <http://diversity.umw.edu/title-ix/> to view UMW’s *Policy on Sexual and Gender Based Harassment and Other Forms of*

Interpersonal Violence and to find further information on support and resources.

The University of Mary Washington complies with Title IX 34 C.F.R. part 106 as it is amended from time to time and does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its programs, activities, admission or employment. Inquiries about the application of Title IX and 34 C.F.R. part 106 may be referred to the University of Mary Washington's Title IX Coordinator, Ruth Davison, at the contact information available on this website, to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, or both. The University of Mary Washington's grievance procedures and grievance process, including how to file a complaint of sex discrimination, how to report or file a formal complaint of sexual harassment, and how UMW will respond is available in the [Prohibited Conduct Policy](#).

Ruth Davison, Director of Compliance and Title IX/ADA Coordinator

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