story development for interactive media

40-3732 -- 3 Credits
Tuesdays from 6 – 8:50 PM,
Alexandroff Center, 600 S. Michigan, room 719
Columbia College Chicago
http://www.colum.edu

Instructor Name: Tom Dowd
E-Mail Address: tdowd@colum.edu

Office/ Mailbox: Interactive Arts and Media, 623 South Wabash, room 400-B;
hours W: 11AM – 3PM, TH: 12N – 4PM (and by appointment)

Course Description: The increasing impact of interaction on the narrative (stories) told in today and tomorrow’s educational and entertainment media require a different perspective on story development. This class begins with an overview of the area and its history from the writer’s perspective, and then moves on to review and analysis common interactive structures and narrative requirements. Students are also exposed to the basic types of interactive narrative and media being created today. The final third of the class has students developing their own interactive narrative projects and presenting them to the class.

Course Rationale: In the future, with the proliferation of DVD/HD-DVD technology, video on demand and other delivery formats, the growth of interactive media will be incredible. The ability to write the basic script and plot the complex and branched narratives of tomorrow’s games, educational and entertainment programs will be invaluable for writers emerging into today’s market.

Course Prerequisites: Screenwriting I or Writing for Television

Course Objectives:
1) To refine the skills involved in producing a multimedia script from start to finish.
2) To work within a production group and take a script from concept to prototype.
3) To expand the variety of types and formats of multimedia that have been mastered from a writing perspective.

Course Work: In addition to the general work discussed above, your performance in this class will be judged in part on participation, small writing assignments, and a final project.

Course Work Percentage Breakdown
Writing Assignments (total) 40% (120 points)
Final Project 40% (120 points)
Attendance/Class Participation 20% (60 points)
This is a writing intensive course and we will spend much time sharpening your writing and development skills. Turning in writing assignments on time is critical: late papers will be docked at least a letter grade per day. PROBLEMS WITH COMPUTERS (PRINTERS OR EMAILS) DO NOT SUFFICE AS EXPLANATION FOR LATE ASSIGNMENTS. In the event that you email an assignment because of an absence, you must confirm receipt of that email and still turn in a hard copy to my mailbox upon your return to campus.

(PLEASE NOTE: GRADES ARE ASSIGNED AS FOLLOWS)

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% and above</td>
<td>(279 points and above)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 - 92%</td>
<td>(270 - 278 points)</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87 - 89%</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83 - 86%</td>
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<td>80 - 82%</td>
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<td>60 - 69%</td>
<td>(180 - 209)</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>(179 points and below)</td>
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**NOTE:** Students taking this class as part of their Major must finish with a “C” grade to get credit for the course.

**Incomplete Grade:** An Incomplete Grade (I) can only be issued for an undergraduate student who has met the following criteria:

The student has successfully completed all course requirements to date but is faced with unexpected circumstances during the final weeks of the semester resulting in the inability to complete course requirements by the end of the semester. The student must have, in the instructor’s estimation, the ability to complete missed course requirements outside of class and by the end of the eighth week of the following semester. The instructor must agree to evaluate the student’s work and replace the Incomplete grade before the end of the following semester. An agreement specifying work to be completed and a due date must be signed by both instructor and student and approved by the Department Chair. In the event that an instructor is no longer employed by the College, a program Coordinator, Director, or the Department Chair can evaluate the work and assign the course grade.

**Academic Honesty:** Academic honesty is expected of all students. Any inappropriate use of materials or plagiarism will not be tolerated. (See Academic Integrity Policies on pg. 18 of the Columbia Catalog.)

**Attendance Policy:** 3 absences = Failure; 2 tardies = 1 absence

**Text:** Writing for Multimedia by Timothy Garrand

Readings are due to be read by the next class, unless otherwise noted in class.

**MediaWiki:** (for handouts and related media)

http://imamp.colum.edu/mediawiki/index.php/Story_Development_for_Interactive_Media

**Departmental Archival Policy:** On the final day of class you must submit all work and documentation (including proposals) on two CD-ROMs. You will not pass the course without fulfilling this requirement. The CD will not be returned – create a backup copy for your files.

**Course Outline & Schedule:**

**Week One (September 5, 2006)**

- Class Introduction and Course Overview
- History of Interactive Media
- Defining Narrative

**Reading:** Garrand, Chapters 1, 18

**Assignment:** Narrative Activity 1 (due 9/12)

**MediaWiki:** Littlejohn, “The Need to Adapt the Tools of Drama to Interactive Storytelling”

**Week Two (September 12, 2006)**

- Old-School Narrative Structure
- Storybuilding (M.I.C.E.)
- Alternative Narratives

**MediaWiki:** Hammer; “Shared Authorship”

**Assignment:** Narrative Activity 2 (due 9/19)
Week Three (September 19, 2006)
Narrative Activity 1 review
Narrative Elements/Shared Authorship
“Jackpot”
Reading: Garrand, Chapters 2-3
Assignment: Narrative Activity 3 (due 9/26)

Week Four (September 26, 2006)
Narrative Activity 2 review
Deconstructing “Jackpot”
Forms of Interactive Narrative
Reading: Garrand, Chapters 5-6, 19
Assignment: Narrative Activity 4 (due 10/3)

Week Five (October 3, 2006)
Narrative Activity 3 review
Non-Linear Narrative: Branching Narrative
Tools and Techniques
POV Introduction
Reading: Garrand, Chapters 21-23 (+CD-ROM)
Assignment: POV review (due 10/10)

Week Six (October 10, 2006)
POV review review
Non-Linear Narrative: Dynamic and Emergent
Building the Better Protagonist
Dialogue and Conversations
MediaWiki: Littlejohn, “Agitating for Dramatic Change”
Assignment: Narrative Activity 5 (due 10/17)

Week Seven (October 17, 2006)
Narrative Activity 4 review
Expanding “Jackpot”: Characters
Technological Tyranny
Reading: (to be assigned)
Assignment: Case Study Analysis (due 10/24)

Week Eight (October 24, 2006)
Case Study review
Interface and Control
Environments and Interaction
Reading: (to be assigned)
Assignment: Narrative Activity 6 (due 10/31)

Week Nine (October 31, 2006)
Narrative Activity 5 review
The Role of the Player
Discuss Final Projects (Project Packets)
MediaWiki: Crawford, “Video Games are Dead”
Assignment: Final Project Ideas (due 11/7)

Week Ten (November 7, 2006)
Assign Final Project Groups
Games and Game Genres
Expanding “Jackpot”: Interactivity
Reading: (to be assigned)
Assignment: Final Project Idea Sheets (due 11/14)

Week Eleven (November 14, 2006)
In Class Work on Final Project
Interactive Projects and Children
Reading: (to be assigned)
Assignment: Final Project work

Week Twelve (November 21, 2006)
Expanding Horizons and the Shared World
Exploring Media Boundaries
Shared Worlds, Shared Stories
Reading: Garrand, Chapters 3-4
Assignment: Final Project work

Week Thirteen (November 28, 2006)
In Class Work on Final Project
Group Project Meetings
Real World Project Development
Reading: (to be assigned)
Assignment: Final Project work

Week Fourteen (December 5, 2006)
In Class Work on Final Project
Additional Lecture TBD
Reading: (to be assigned)
Assignment: Final Project work

Week Fifteen (December 12, 2006)
Final Class Presentations
Wrap-up

Note: This syllabus may be amended as the course proceeds. You will be notified of all changes.