Ryerson University
School of Image Arts
MFA in Documentary Media

COURSE OUTLINE
Spring 2008

Course Code: **DM 8106**

Course Name: **Production III: Narrative and Interactive Forms**

Calendar Description: The course examines ways in which narration and interactivity animate all forms of image gathering and documentary production. The role of editing in moving images, the role of scripting in narrative media, and the use of sound will all be explored. In addition, the roles of programming and software applications in interactive and web-based documents (particularly image databases and user-adaptive moving image sources) will be examined.

Lecture/ Seminar: 3 hours.

Course objectives: This course will:

- Encourage technical exploration and experimentation for creative communication
- Provide exposure to diverse examples of contemporary media that introduce alternative documentary approaches
- Develop an understanding of established, emerging and potential new media documentary practices
- Foster collaborative practices

Course Philosophy: We will teach this course from a conceptual perspective. Students will be introduced to open-ended platforms and given working solutions to problems at hand. Students are expected to extend prepared materials and to develop unique solutions while exploring avenues of future work.

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Two classes will be given each week and will be organized as follows:

6 hrs class breakdown:

Lecture/Lab:
Monday: 1pm-3pm: 2 hrs: Technology Workshop A-B (except for week 1)
Wednesday 1pm-5pm: 4 hrs

2 hrs: Technology Workshop B-A
2 hrs: Discussions, Introduction to subjects
Regular Lab Locations:
Workshop A: RCC 357
Workshop B: RCC 359B

Two scheduling variation
No class on Wednesday May 7th
Class will take place Friday May 9th instead

Change of room on Wednesday May 14th
Workshop A: IMA 322
Workshop B: IMA 204

Two hours of the course will be dedicated to discussions, lectures and updates.

The remaining four hours will be dedicated to technology workshops. One Workshop will deal with virtual database technologies and the other workshop will deal with installation technologies. These workshops aim to introduce tools and skills required to achieve the final project for the course.

Weekly exercises will help students focus their learning and allow for discussion on specific issues related to new media practices.

But it is expected that each student will develop a unique set of skills related to the goals of their projects.

Assignments Grade breakdown:

Grade breakdown			
Blog contributions	See descriptions below	50%	
Production	See list below	50%	
Total			100%

Assignments Description

A. Blog entries 50%:

Weekly reflections:
Every week, students are to respond to the discussions and concepts addressed in class, by entering reflections on how does a new media image differ from an optical image.

Each student should reflect on creative new media applications and enter reflections related to how these emerging media forms relate to you documentary manifesto.

Students should look for applications in a variety of categories such as but not limited to the following:

a) Social networking: knowledge sharing: Small stories/micro-documentaries
b) Content sharing: telecommunication narratives
c) Screen based interactivity: distributed multimedia
d) Mobile and GPS based applications
e) Data visualization
f) Artificial intelligence
g) Experiential media
h) Gaming

B. Production Project 50%
This production assignment is designed to get students to explore how new media images differ from optical images. New media practices differ from an image making tradition that the unique characteristics of computing and networks become central to design paradigms. A unique element of experience design is that it no longer only creates messages that are image based. The technology used to create new media messages no longer only rely on lens based technologies such as cameras. Sensors, data and algorithms have joined the image as communication tools.

To examine this question, the course follows two parallel technological threads, web 2.0 technologies and installation technologies. Both platforms establish relationships and

associations between subjects and objects that differ greatly from traditional media designs.

In both cases, the creation of meaning is no longer restrained to an optical frame. First, as the use of networks influence new media practices, topographic representations are often becoming topological. Second, as live data streams replace static data, algorithms and people co-create instantaneous content, which often represents visualization of live relationships. Third, as experiential media becomes accepted as a main cultural voice, experience and simultaneous meaning making practices coexist with representation and image making practices, thus changing the nature of media discourses. Finally, emerging modes of production and distribution can bypass the dominant social class image making norms. What are the emerging narrative and aesthetic norms and what ideologies do they support?

Individually or in groups no larger then 3 students, create a new media 'associative' experience. In other words, we want you to construct meaning by structuring non linear relationships between media elements. This project should be created using web 2.0, max/msp or a non technological platform.

Limitation: The final project can not be a traditional linear moving media piece or photograph.

Course Content/Schedule:

Week 1: The new media image
Day 1: May 5th
Lecture: New media: moving from a topographic to topologic media system.
- Introduction to the course

Reading:
Moggride Bill (2007). Multisensory and Multimedia: Interviews with Hiroshi Ishii, Durrell Bishop, Joy Mountford and Bill Gaver in Designing Interactions. Boston: MIT press.

Day 2: May 9th
Technology workshops
(Friday for this week only)

Workshop A: max and projectors
Workshop B: Introduction to web 2.0: del.icio.us, flickr, YouTube.

Exercise 1: Space as Context of Presentation Exercise

Context both physical and social is a driving force in New Media works. For this exercise, students will use media already in hand; it can be of any visual form. Students will identify and realize a unique presentation of this work by experimenting with a physical and virtual version.

Physical version: Use multiple projections or use a single projection into a space of 12x12in. Use media previously shown in an alternate context. Describe original presentation (bring documentation if available).

Students should bring materials to serve as projection surfaces and image modifiers.

Virtual Version: Using a social media platform, distribute existing work. Post a visual piece in a social media forum, such as flicker or Youtube.

After 2 weeks, examine how the introduction of social media has altered viewing of the work. What are the potentials of collective intelligence and/or connective intelligence processes to your practice.

Reading:
Garrelts, N. (2005). Introduction: Negotiating the digital game/gamer intersection. In Garrelts, N. Digital Gameplay. McFarland & Company.

Shinkle, E. (2005). Corporealis Ergo Sum: Affective response in digital games. In Garrelts, N. Digital Gameplay. McFarland & Company.

FOR NEXT WEEK:
Pick a video sequence and bring four clips to use in a database driven piece (320x240).

Week 2: User centered narratives
May 12, 14

Technology workshops / Exercise 2 (in Class):
Physical Version: Non-linear max patch.
Using the provided Max patch play your sequence in linear and nonlinear modes.

Virtual Version: Introduction to wordpress and podcasting. You will create a podcast, using your sequence.

Reading:
Vesna, V (1999): Database Aesthetics: Of Containers, Chronofiles, Time Capsules, Xanadu, Alexandria and the World Brain in VESNA, V., GILL, K., SMITH, D. & VAUX, J. (editors). "Database Aesthetics: Issues of Organization and Category in Online Art". in: AI-Society: The Journal of Human-Centred and Machine Intelligence. Springer. February/March.

Kac, E. (1993). Telepresence Art. Originally published in English and German in Teleskulptur, Richard Kriesche, Editor (Graz, Austria: Kulturdata, 1993), pp. 48-72.

Blog entry: user triggered narratives: Consider how non-linear and distributed presentation alters the work. What design problems arise? Examine how the introduction of physical and virtual space has altered your understanding of the work. How does it change public engagement and how does participation change the nature of the work?

The first entry in your blog should be the documentary manifesto.

Exercise 3 (for next week):
Physical:
For next week, design and shoot a sequence of four clips specifically for this non-linear system.

Virtual:
Using the sequence created for the physical exercise, create a distributed documentary that incorporates text, images or video, within a blog that displays feeds from a podcast or flickr and del.icio.us.

Blog entry: Category: user triggered narratives: Answer the following question: how do you have to organize and design your shooting to accommodate user driven narrative?

Discussion: The user paradigm.
Peer to Peer unified ecologies competes with centralized media systems, aggregation competes with broadcasting, meshed networks competes with centralized media networks, telecommunication is becoming a new media, ubiquitous media environments and associated non-linear, social, Interactive and user-triggered narratives are emerging.

Reading:
Whitlock, K. (2005). Beyong Linear Narratives: Augusto Boal enters Norrath. In Garrelts, N. Digital Gameplay. McFarland & Company.

Hand, R. (2005). Theatres of Interactivity: Video Games in the Drama Studio. In Garrelts, N. Digital Gameplay. McFarland & Company.

Moggride Bill (2007). Services interviews with Takeshi Natsuno, Live/work, and Fran Samalionis in Designing Interactions. Boston: MIT press.

Week 3: Embodiment as a new media aesthetic

Technology workshops
Day 1: May 19th -- Electronic Sensors
Day 2: May 21st -- Camera as Sensors

Exercise 4: In groups of no more the 4 create a responsive environment using sensors and non-linear max patch.

Discussion (Weeks 3 / 4): Social media and responsive environments: data based works.
The introduction of databases to new media practices separates content into media (image, sound,), embodiment (form), relationships (sequence, non-linearity, generative algorithms) and behavior (interactivity --> experience). Data visualization becomes a key aesthetic tool since media can now be data in the sense that input is not limited to an image. Sensors that capture motion, action in space and data feeds all become distributed content.

Blog entry: Category: distributed narratives: Answer the following question: how do you have to organize and design your shooting to accommodate distributed narrative?

Reading:
Hellsten, I., Leydesdorff, L., Wouters, P. (2006). Multiple presents: how search engines rewrite the past. New Media & Society, Vol. 8, No. 6, 901-924 (2006)

Cuff, D., Hansen, M., Kang, J. (2007). Urban Sensing: Out of the Woods.

Penny, S. (1997). The Virtualisation of Art Practice: Body Knowledge and the Engineering World View. CAA Art Journal Fall1997.
http://ace.uci.edu/penny/texts/virtualization.html

Week 4: Embodied social environments
Day 1: May 26th
Workshop: Second Life: avatars

Reading:
Giddings, S. (2007): Dionysiac Machines: Videogames and the Triumph of the Simulacra in Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, Vol. 13, No. 4, 417-431

Day 2: May 28th
Workshop: Machinima
Exercise 5: Using your avatar and machinima creative a narrative of your experiences in second life.

Blog entry: Category: Social narratives: Discuss how the avatar changes the notion of media engagement. Can this avatar become a documentary dissemination form?

Break

Week 5:
Day 1: June 2nd
Brainstorm / Begin Production

Day 2: June 4th
Production time

Week6: Final presentation of work

Day 1: June 12th

Production time

Day 2: June 14th
Critiques

Suggested Readings:

Amerika, M (2007): Cyberpsychogeography in META/DATA: A Digital Poetics, The MIT Press.

Chalke, S (2007): Early Home Cinema: The Origins of Alternative Spectatorship in Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies 2007

Gordon, J (2007): The Mobile Phone and the Public Sphere: Mobile Phone Usage in Three Critical Situations in Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies 2007

Kusahara, M. (2007): Device Art: A new Form of Media Art from a Japanese Perspective, Intelligent Agent, 06.02.

Poremba, C (2007): Point and Shoot: Remediating Photography in Gamespace, in Games and Culture, Vol. 2, No. 1, 49-58 (2007)

Sauvé, L., Renaud, L., Kaufman, D., & Marquis, J. S. (2007). Distinguishing between games and simulations: A systematic review. Educational Technology & Society, 10 (3), 247-256.

Evaluation:

Each student will be provided with a written assessment at term-end as well as a letter grade.
Grades will be assigned in accordance with the Course Performance Designations published in the Ryerson Calendar for 2007-2008.

The Ryerson University course survey will be administered on-line towards the end of the term.

All academic policies related to the course and the program are available on the MFA and Ryerson websites.

Instructors:

Alexandra Bal
Office: IMA 317
416-979-5000, ext. 6880
abal@ryerson.ca; www.imagearts.ryerson.ca/abal
Office hours by appointment.

Steve Daniels
Office: IMA 403
416-979-5000, ext. 6876
s2daniel@ryerson.ca; www.imagearts.ryerson.ca/sdaniels
Office hours by appointment.