

Instructor: Jason Palmeri
Email: palmeri.2@osu.edu
AIM: jasonpalmeri367
<http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/palmeri2>

English 269:

Digital Media Composing

In our contemporary world, the nature of composing is changing rapidly. In addition to producing alphabetic texts (black letters on a white page), writers now increasingly use digital technologies to create multimodal texts that blend alphabetic words, images, and sounds. In this course, we will look intensively at the formal properties and social implications of numerous digital media texts (websites, digital audio essays, flash animations, word/image collages, digital videos). In particular, you will learn to:

- understand and apply fundamental rhetorical and design principles for the creation of digital media texts (DMTs)
- manipulate and critically interrogate numerous digital composing technologies (Dreamweaver; Flash, Audacity, Photoshop; iMovie)
- situate the development of DMTs historically, exploring how DMTs draw on older forms of media (print books, film, photography, radio)
- interrogate how DMT production can subvert and/or reinforce social hierarchies of gender, class, race, ability, sexuality, and nation
- explore how the experience of reading and writing DMTs impacts how we understand ourselves (as bodies, as social / political actors)

To get a handle on these questions, we will read some foundational scholarship in digital media studies and we will analyze numerous examples of DMTs chosen by the class. Extending this analytical work, we will also compose numerous kinds of DMTs. By creating texts that incorporate images, sounds, and words, you will have the opportunity to reflect critically on the complex rhetorical and ethical choices involved in DMT production.

No prior technology knowledge is expected for this course. Through in class workshops and independent on-line tutorials, you will be able to gain a basic familiarity with the digital composing tools we will be using. Because these tools may require specialized equipment, you should be prepared to spend some additional time working in the English department digital media lab or at the digital union.

Course Assignments

Note: More specific assignment prompts will be available on the course website.

Reading Response Blog:

During this course, you will keep a reading response blog (housed on the course website). When noted on the syllabus, you will post a reading response (answering a specific prompt) before class begins. These responses can be brief and informal; however, they must fully address the prompt and demonstrate specific critical engagement with the reading material. Blog responses will be evaluated holistically at the end of class, but I will email you privately at least once during the quarter to give you evaluative feedback and a tentative grade. If you would like more regular feedback, just email or IM me and I will provide it to you.

Technological Explorations:

Throughout the quarter, you will complete numerous *informal* technological explorations as a way of learning and critically analyzing digital composing technologies. Usually, these explorations will ask you to manipulate existing texts/images/sound (provided by the instructor). We will begin these explorations in class, but you may have to spend some time completing them outside of class. You will post all of your technological explorations to your blog. Once they are complete, you will write an extended blog posting (approximately 500 words), in which you analyze how your use of these tools drew upon and/or transformed your understanding of the “writing process.”

During the quarter, you will complete the following technological explorations:

- 1) Creating a one-screen visual argument in Photoshop (combining multiple images and text)
- 2) Developing a very simple, accessible personal website (combining text and image), using Dreamweaver and CSS
- 3) Combining text, image, and sound in Flash / Audacity
- 4) Editing video and sound in iMovie / Audacity
- 5) Developing accessible multimedia (captions, alt tags etc)

Group Presentation:

In groups of 3-4, you will sign up to give a presentation (approx 10 minutes) at some point during this quarter). In this presentation, you will show an example of digital media and then explain how it extends or complicates the theoretical readings we have done in the class.

Digital Media Project Proposal and Story Board / Script:

Before you complete your final digital media project (a website incorporating multiple forms of media), you will complete a project proposal. In this proposal (approx 5-6 pages), you will discuss the purpose and audience for your project, the media you will use (and why you chose them), and the resources and skills you need to complete the project. You will also analyze and point to numerous exemplary “models” of the kind of project you are proposing.

Your proposal will also include an informal story board (digital or paper), which sketches out the visual look of your project. Alternatively, you could write a tentative script that outlines the “sound” of your project.

Final Digital Media Project (and Reflection):

Your final project will be a multimodal website, which incorporates interactivity, sound, images, and words. Your project must have a clear rhetorical purpose in mind (and it must be doable in 10 weeks). We will especially focus our analysis on documentary and activist DMTs, but I am open to other possibilities. We will negotiate the parameters in individual conferences early in the quarter.

In addition to publishing your final project to the web (using the space I will provide), you will also write a reflective essay in which you outline the rhetorical, ethical, and technical choices that you made in your project and articulate what you learned from the process of producing it.

Grade Breakdown

Reading Response Blog: 15%

Technological Explorations: 20%

Project Proposal: 15%

Final Project and Reflection: 40%

Presentation: 10%

Classroom Policies

1. Attendance: Your successful completion of this course and development as a digital media composer is dependent on your active and continual attendance. Thus, each unexcused absence (after two) will result in the lowering of your final grade by one-third. Excused absences with documentation (i.e. illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or inter-collegiate athletics) will not affect your grade. Please note that four unexcused absences will automatically result in failure for the course.

2. Lateness: Two late arrivals (more than five minutes) will equal one unexcused absence.

3. Student Work: I expect that all assignments will be handed in on time (unless you have made prior arrangements with me). Any late assignments will be lowered by one letter grade each day it is late. To receive full credit on an assignment, you must turn in each

assigned draft. If you fail to turn in an assigned first draft, your final grade will be lowered by one letter.

4. Cell phones must be turned off. The computers in the classroom are for academic use only. Checking email and instant messaging are NOT permitted.

5. Readings: All reading assignments are due on the day listed on the course schedule.

Accessibility / Accommodations

We all have varying abilities; we all carry various strengths and weaknesses. Some of these might even be “documented” with a place like the OSU Office for Disability Services (ODS). If so, please just let me know. With or without documentation, it is my intent to make our learning experience as accessible as possible. With documentation, I am especially interested in providing any student accommodations that have probably been best determined by the student and an ODS counselor in advance. Please let me know NOW what we can do to maximize your learning potential, participation, and general access in this course. The Office for Disability Services is located at 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue, phone 292-3307 (TDD 292-0901). See: <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

Required Materials

1) A coursepack with *selections* from:

Bolter and Gruisin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*.

Crowley and Hawhee, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*.

Chion, “Projections of Sound on Image.”

Ellis, “Broadcast TV as Sound and Image.”

Faigley et al, *Picturing Texts*.

Goggin and Newell, *Digital Disability: The Social Construction of Disability in New Media*.

Heller and Vienne, *Citizen Designer: Perspectives on Design Responsibility*.

Johnson-Eilola, *Designing Effective Websites*.

Manovich, "Generation Flash."

Selfe, "Lest We Think the Revolution is a Revolution: Images of Technology and the Nature of Change."

Sorapure, "Five Principles of New Media: Or, Playing Lev Manovich."

Williams, *Non-Designer's Web Book*.

Wysocki, "With Eyes that Think and Compose and Think: On Visual Rhetoric"; "Openings and Justifications"

- 2) On-line technology tutorials (to be announced)
- 3) Digital media texts (chosen by class)
- 4) A portable storage medium with large capacity. (We will discuss options in class).

Daily Schedule

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| D1 | Introduction |
| D2 | Rhetorical Theory: Classical Traditions
Read: Hawhee and Crowley
Due: Reading blog entry |
| D3 | Rhetoric and/as Design
Read: Wysocki, "With Eyes"; Faigley et al
Due: Reading Blog Entry |
| D4 | Manipulating Images
Due: Techno Exploration #1 |
| D5 | Defining Digital Media I
Read: Bolter & Gruisin; Manovich
Due: Reading Blog Entry |

- D6 **Basic Web Design Principles / Learning Dreamweaver**
Read: Williams; Johnson-Eilola
Due: Reading Blog Entry
- D7 **Rhetoric of Web Typography / Learning CSS**
Read: Williams
- D8 **Studio: Web Development**
Due: Tech Exploration #2
- D9 **Defining Digital Media II**
Read: Wysocki, "Openings"; Sorapure
Due: Reading Blog Entry
- D10 **Assembling Images, Words, and Sounds: Flash / iMovie / Audacity**
Due: Tech Exploration #3
- D11 **Assembling Images, Words, and Sounds: Flash / iMovie / Audacity**
Due: Tech Exploration #4
- D12 **Defining / Developing Projects**
Due: First Draft of Project Proposal
- D13 **Politics / Ethics of Digital Media**
Read: Selfe; Heller & Vienne
Due: Reading Blog Entry
- D13 **Disability Studies and Universal Design**
Read: Goggin and Newell
Due: Reading blog entry; technological exploration 5
- D14 **Studio: Developing and Analyzing Digital Media**
Due: Final Project Proposal
- D15 **Sound Theory: The Difference Audio Makes**
Read: Chion, Ellis
Due: Reading Blog Entry
- D16 **Studio: Developing and Analyzing Digital Media**
- D17 **Studio: Developing and Analyzing Digital Media**
- D18 **Peer Critique Workshop**
Due: First Draft of Digital Media Project

- D19 **Studio: Developing and Analyzing Digital Media**
- D20 **Studio: Developing and Analyzing Digital Media**
- D21 **Performance: Presenting and Analyzing Projects**
Due: Final Draft of Digital Media Project