English 887: Understanding Participatory Media
Spring 2020 Preview

Stuart Moulthrop: Spring 2020
Thursdays, 4:00 – 7:00 pm

This seminar explores artforms and media that require active, consequential engagement, starting with "post-cinematic," trans-media narrative, moving through computer games and metagames, neo-network TV, (anti)social media, and play-as-performance, looping back finally to screen and theatre. In this excursion we trace permutations of media under the influence of digital computing and data networks, returning persistently to questions of embodiment, agency, identity, and meaning.

The course is designed for graduate students in all areas of English studies who are concerned with mediation, particularly in digital contexts. We encounter key texts -- Davey Wreden’s games, walking simulators, "Bandersnatch," the Twine insurgency -- that may be useful in your teaching and research. The course encourages those with interests in film, literature, and rhetoric to build conceptual connections between traditional and emergent forms. For students in creative writing, the course introduces emerging aesthetic and expressive possibilities. Here is a first outline of the syllabus, subject to revision. If you have questions, please contact moulthro@uwm.edu.

If possible, all readings will be provided online. For commercial games and Netflix episodes, alternative video links will be provided. Twine games are generally free to play. Some films and TV episodes may require streaming from Amazon or other provider at minimal cost.

Week 1: Introduction: course plan and key concepts
  Jenkins on Participatory Media
  Kember & Zylinka -- after new media -- "vital media"
  Media object TBA

Week 2: Post-cinematic media
  Steven Shaviro from Post-Cinematic Affect
Richard Kelly, *Southland Tales* film

**Week 3: Media crossings**

Kelly et al., *Southland Tales* graphic novel

[Critical text TBA]

**Week 4: People's media, part 1 (YouTubers)**

YouTube clips:

*The Right Opinion*

Black YouTube Creators' Summit

Folding Ideas (VidMe and platforms)

Critical reading: from Nagle, *Kill All Normies*

**Week 5: People's media, part 2 (YouTube, gaming, Twitch)**

Media examples:

TreeSicle on the fall and rise of ProJared

Twitch examples TBA

Critical reading: T.L. Taylor on Twitch and broadcasting

**Week 6: Ludologies**

Game: The Fullbright Company, *Tacoma*

Readings:

Galloway, "Allegories of Control"

Deleuze, "The Control Society"

**Week 7: Queer and metagaming**

Game: Anna Anthropy, *Queers in Love at the End of the World*

Readings:

Claudia Lo, "Everything is Wiped Away"

Ruberg, from *Video Games Have Always Been Queer*

Boluk & Lemieux, from *Metagaming*

**Week 8: Wandering games**

Game: *Eighty Days*

Readings:

M. Kagen on walking sims

Mukerjee on post-colonial play

**Week 9: Beyond Play**

Games:

Kris Ligman, *You Are Jeff Bezos*
Pierre Chevalier, *Destroy/Wait*
Reading: Malaby, "Beyond Play"

Week 10: Game, Ritual, Television

Media examples:
"Bandersnatch" from *Black Mirror*
*Russian Doll* (selected episodes)

Readings:
Jenner, "TVIV"
Levi-Strauss on game and ritual

Week 11: Control Voices, part 1
Film: Chris Marker, *La Jetée*
Reading: Kawin, "Time and Stasis in *La Jetée*"

Week 12: Control Voices, part 2
Game: Davey Wreden, *The Beginner's Guide*
Readings: Kagen, SM on *Beginner's Guide*

Week 13: Nothing You Can Do is Wrong
Game: Porpentine, *With Those We Love Alive*
Readings:
Emily Short on WTWLA
Laura Hudson on Twine

Week 14: Make America
Readings TBA