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  
[Readings/screenings T.B.A.]

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: Madness, paranoia, life as we know it  
Articles on GamerGate and QAnon  
Chapters from Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies*  
First episode of *Mr. Robot*, Season 1

Week 5: The ludic turn  
Alexander Galloway, "Allegories of Control" from *Gaming*  
Thomas Malaby, "Beyond Play"  
Twine games: Kris Ligman’s *You Are Jeff Bezos*, Pierre Chevalier’s *Destroy/Wait*

Week 6: Allegory, parable...  
Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control"  
Alexander Galloway, from *Protocol*  
Wreden, *The Stanley Parable* (game)

Week 7: Metagames  
Boluk & Lemieux, from *Metagaming*  
Melissa Kagen on *Firewatch*  
*Firewatch* (game)

Week 8: Queergaming  
Laura Hudson on Twine  
Bo Ruberg, from *Video Games Have Always Been Queer*  
Claudia Lo on *Queers in Love*  
Anna Anthropy, *Queers in Love at the End of the World* (game)

Week 9: Game, ritual, television  
Mareike Jenner on "TV IV"  
[Additional readings TBA]  
Charlie Brooker et al., *Black Mirror* "Bandersnatch" episode  
Natasha Lyonne et al, *Russian Doll* (selected episodes)

Week 10: The other side of the tube  
T.L. Taylor, from *Watch Me Play*  
Twitch excerpts and livestreams  
Discussion with Serious Players
Week 11: Control voices and art crises  
Chris Marker, *La Jetée* (film)  
Bruce Kawin, "Time and Stasis in *La Jetée*"  

Week 12: Posthuman mediations  
M.B.N. Hansen, from *Feed-Forward*  
N. Katherine Hayles, from *Unthought* (Cognitive Assemblages)  
Steven Johnson, "Beyond Bitcoin"  
Folding Ideas, "Weird Kid Videos and Gaming the Algorithm" (video)

Week 13: Cthulu scenes  
Donna Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto"  
Donna Haraway, from *Staying with the Trouble*  
Porpentine, *With Those We Love Alive* (game)

Week 14: Radical/vital mediations (against the madness)  
Richard Grusin, "Radical Mediation"  
Sara Kember & Joanna Zylinska, from *Life After New Media*  
Alejandro Inñáritu, *Birdman, or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* (film)