

Digital Storytelling: Media, Identity, & Society

Wendy Perla Kurtz, Ph.D.
Fall 2022 - Digital Humanities 150
Wednesdays 9-11:50 PST



Image by Centre for Research in Digital Storymaking, London South Bank University

Class Location: Rolfe 2118

Class Meetings: Wednesdays from 10:00-11:50

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-11 am & by appointment ([zoom link](#))

Email: wpkurtz@ucla.edu

Slack: "Digital Storytelling"; URL <http://dhdigitalstorytelling.slack.com/>

Course Description:

Technology impacts the multiple ways we create and share stories. It facilitates and encourages identity formation from the individual to the national. Through engagement with multimodal texts, discussions, and workshops, this class explores how technology and social media influence, strengthen, and sometimes weaken the fabric of society. In turn, students will use concepts of digital storytelling (narrative conventions, multimodal applications, audio and video editing, non-linear and data-oriented storytelling) to create computer-based media and share stories about how technology mediates contemporary society (or a topic of their choosing).

Course Outcomes and Learning Objectives:

The objective of the class is to prepare students with the means to choose digital media that best express their ideas and to create work that is in accordance with their interests and purposes. Upon completion of this course, students will:

- learn more about the history of digital storytelling by reviewing particular projects, tools, methodologies, and reception histories
- consider the relationship between best practices in digital storytelling and their own professional, personal, and creative aims and interests
- Expand creative vocabulary with the development of digital media
- Become proficient with capturing and manipulating digital image, sound, and video
- Integrate different media (text, images, sound, video) into a seamless online environment
- Create narrative projects with digital media that reflect artistic and teaching practices
- Formulate an effective communication strategy to articulate one's design, from conceptualization, planning and visualization to development and execution
- Offer critique and their own perspective in analyzing different narrative works
- Develop critical skills to explore digital media

Class Dynamics

Following a hybrid framework, this course operates in a variety of formats, including lecture/demonstration, discussion/seminar sessions and studio sessions, with an emphasis on workshop and discussion of assignments leading to your final projects. Lectures will be recorded and posted to BruinLearn and workshops take place in-person from 10:00-11:50. **We will not meet in person from 9-10am.** The in-person workshops involve intensive learning of new multimedia tools. Just relax and absorb the general aspects as much as you can in class (and review these programs with handouts, online tutorials, etc. on your own.) The goal is to provide you with enough information so that you can start developing your own project.

- **Lecture sessions (recorded and posted on BruinLearn):** Lecture sessions explore ideas of storytelling with respect to the characteristics of digital technologies, including interactivity, non-linearity, etc. Drawing parallels from literature, film, sound and other time-based mediums, these sessions offer conceptual backgrounds for students to formulate ideas of what constitutes storytelling in contemporary society.
- **Seminar sessions:** Throughout the quarter, there will be discussions on readings, short film screenings, digital storytelling projects, etc. These discussions provide bases for dialogue where students bring their own experiences to the task of conceptualizing narrative projects. Students will also learn from presenting one's own work and offering constructive critiques of others' works.
- **Demonstration/Workshop sessions:** There will be ample time allocated for software demonstrations where students glean the essential elements of digital media. These sessions will allow you to integrate learned skills and theory as well as to experiment and visualize your concepts in class. As your works progress, we will focus on specific authoring tools that best suit one's needs and interests. As learning a new computer program is not unlike learning a new language, please be prepared to spend extra time going through on-line tutorials or forums in order to familiarize yourself with specific computer programs.

Required Texts and Components

No book purchase is necessary. Links to readings will be posted on the syllabus; feel free to read them online, download them to your computer or print them off so you can annotate them.

It is important to keep up with course reading and video material, as you will be discussing them with your classmates each week. They will provide a valuable theoretical and practical framework as you begin to work with the tools and methodologies.

- **Textbook:** *Digital Storytelling*, by Carolyn Handler Miller ([e-book available here](#) – you can download the entire PDF from the link. Must be signed into VPN.)

- **Documentaries & Films** (exclusive to Netflix; please contact me if you don't have access to this streaming service and we'll figure that out):
 - [The Social Dilemma](#) (Jeff Orlowski, et al., 2020)
 - [Black Mirror: Bandersnatch](#) (David Slade, Charlie Brooker, et al, 2018)
- **Podcast:** [Rabbit Hole](#) (Kevin Roose, *The New York Times*, 2020) (available for download on any podcast service or listen from the web)
- Selected chapters from:
 - *Data Feminism* (Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein, 2019)
 - *Weapons of Math Destruction* (Cathy O'Neil, 2017)
- Additional course readings as listed on the syllabus

Software Packages

We will be using a variety of open-source applications throughout the quarter. The laptops (all MacOS) in our classroom space will have all the necessary programs installed already, but you can also install them on your personal computers to work on the assignments from your own machine.

Evaluation Criteria

- 10% Participation
- 45% Mini-assignments
- 45% Final Projects

Judging criteria for assignments:

- **Concept:** The process of developing the idea is as important as the end project. We will examine how well the delivery method of the content was thought out. The idea, subject, purpose and message should be the most important issues driving your work.
- **Execution:** This includes the production value of the work and how well the concept is implemented. The aim of this class is to empower you by developing skills that compliment your content. Please be mindful of the elements of design and idea in creating your own voice.

Evaluation Tasks

1) Participation

This grade is derived from participation in discussion and group work, reference to course readings in discussion and is assigned based on observations of instructor.

2) Mini-assignments

Throughout the class, there will be a series of small projects where you experiment with audio and visual equipment and computer software. These mini-assignments familiarize you with multimedia tools and serve the purpose of documenting your experience with them. You can incorporate these mini-assignments into your final. These mini-assignments are designed as individual projects, although you are encouraged to explore methods of collaboration in small-group activities to learn from each other.

- Mini-assignment 1: Web publishing or short edited video (Due Monday of Week 5). Create a one-minute video documenting a day in your (or another person's) life OR webpage shell.
- Mini-assignment 2: Interactive fiction project (Due Monday of Week 7). Create an interactive story using Twine.

- Mini-assignment 3: Sound project (Due Monday of Week 9). Create a one-minute soundscape of a place.

3) Final Project

- Ideas for final projects can be found on this [document](#).
- Final project can be individually or as a group (maximum of 3 people). A one-page proposal detailing your rational, subject matter, technology used for the final needs to be submitted for approval by the instructor. If you decide to work as a group, please also write in your group members and what each individual's task will be.
- You are encouraged to explore the themes from the class into the final project or incorporate it with other classes that you are taking.
- The final is a culmination of skills and methods explored in the class, developed from a proposal, or diagnosis of a problem, to mock-up/storyboard/visualization and a final presentation.
- Try to get an early start of what you want to do for your final. This will help you focus and learn some specific aspects of multimedia tools.
- The final project should record your journey of learning and demonstrate your ability to articulate the concept that forms your work.
- Project and reflection paper are due during our final exam period 12/6 by 11:59pm
- See more details on the final project elements with deadlines on the [final project rubric](#).

Grades

Work is graded according to the highest professional standards. Grades in percentages are:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| • A = 93-100%, | • C = 73-76%, |
| • A- = 90-92%, | • C- = 70-72%, |
| • B+ = 87-89%, | • D+ = 67-69%, |
| • B = 83-86%, | • D = 60-66%, |
| • B- = 80-82%, | • F = 59% or below |
| • C+ = 77-79%, | |

Below is a guideline for how grades are described within this course:

- A, nearly perfect in execution, quality of work is exceptional
- A-, work is impressive in quality, very few problems in any area
- B+, very good performance, did more than required, might struggle in one area only
- B, solid effort, met all requirements, fair application of skill
- B-, needs a bit more polish, pretty good handle on things overall
- C+, good in one area of work, but consistent problems with another area
- C, followed instructions, seems to understand basics but did the minimum to pass
- C-, has glimpses of potential in a limited range
- D+, did not demonstrate understanding of the basics but tried
- D or F, did not demonstrate effort or understanding of basics, incomplete

Missed or Late Coursework

If your work is late, you'll receive a penalty on your grade. This is a course which samples several forms of digital storytelling, each one building on the previous form. If you miss assignments, this building isn't possible.

Student and Instructor Expectations

Creativity: There's a lot of room for curiosity and creativity in digital humanities, and there is no one "right" answer. This course is a place to explore connections between content and technology.

Failure: You will be working with disciplinary content and technology that may be unfamiliar to you, and at times you may struggle with tools or your research material. Often the most valuable learning happens during this time! The key to success with the technical components of this course (both learning-wise and grade-wise) is to make mistakes and fail as frequently as possible. If you're not, then you're simply not trying to push beyond your own limitations. Once you fail at something, we'll get you unstuck and moving forward again. Repeating this often will make the course more rewarding and you'll get a high grade for your effort. I will score your work in this course primarily on process rather than on the final product. Showing us something that doesn't work quite like you want/expect, and explaining your steps and what your goal is, indicates a level of engagement and curiosity we are all striving towards. You must be able to have fun while totally frustrated, even when everything takes way longer than it should.

Respect: You'll be interacting with your classmates in person and in an online environment. The expectation is that interactions will be respectful, kind and constructive at all times.

Academic Integrity: As a student and member of the University community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors. You are evaluated on your own merits. Be proud of your accomplishments and protect academic integrity at UCLA. As specified by University policy, violations or attempted violations of academic dishonesty include, but are limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions, or facilitating academic dishonesty (See *University of California Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students, 102.01*). Violations of the academic integrity policy are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. For more information, please visit the Office of the Dean of Students.

University Resources

Precarity

Your highest priority should be your well-being and the well-being of your loved ones. We're living in difficult times, and students, staff, and faculty are encountering unprecedented levels of financial hardship, illness, death, housing insecurity, caregiving responsibilities, and so on. Any student facing housing, food, or health challenges that they believe will affect their performance in this course is urged to contact me or CAPS for support and accommodation. We operate best only when our basic needs are first met. If you are struggling with food or housing insecurity, please visit the [UCLA Basic Needs](#) services page for resources. I am more than happy to connect you with these resources if you need support!

One of the best strategies you can have is to tackle issues before they become a crisis: it's OK to ask for assistance! If you can't make a meeting or can't get your work done, do your best to let me know as soon as you can so we can make adjustments.

Accommodations

To help me better foster your success, please contact the [Center for Accessible Education](#) (CAE) if you need—or suspect you may need—accommodations as soon as possible. Regardless of whether you are registered with the CAE, please let me know if you have ideas for cultivating a learning environment more conducive to your success.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the CARE Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 1st Floor Wooden Center West, CAREadvocate@careprogram.ucla.edu, (310) 206-2465. You can also report sexual violence or sexual harassment directly to the University's Title IX Coordinator, 2241 Murphy Hall, titleix@conet.ucla.edu, (310) 206-3417. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD at (310) 825-1491.

Mental Health Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

We all face times when life is particularly challenging, and we need someone to talk to or additional support to cope with stress, grief, and other issues that crop up. [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) is here to support your mental health needs as you pursue your academic goals. In addition, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides confidential counseling to all students and can be reached 24/7 at (310) 825-0768.

Meditation and mindfulness resources may also be helpful, [available here in a number of languages](#). Take a break when you're feeling stressed and try a meditation exercise.

If you are concerned about a friend, classmate, or other members of the UCLA community, please [let a professional know](#). You may do so anonymously.

Covid-19 & UCLA

Ensuring a safer campus depends on each of us following the latest UCLA health and safety guidelines. While campus policies must be modified to address changing local, state, and national orders and guidance, the most current information is available at covid-19.ucla.edu.

As of September 20th, 2022, the recommendations are as follows: "Wearing a highly protective mask (i.e. surgical, N95, KN95 or KF94) while indoors with others is still strongly recommended at UCLA, and supplies remain available free of charge for students, faculty and staff at the [UCLA PPE Store](#), the John Wooden Center, residence hall front desks, the Student Activities Center and in Ackerman Union at the A-level information window (next to the post office). Outdoor masking remains optional though strongly recommended when in large crowds and at events."

Course Schedule

This class is responsive to student needs and class interests, which means that some of the readings and themes listed below may change. You are expected to complete the assigned readings, install necessary software, complete tutorials and any recorded lectures prior to our meeting. For the most up-to-date reading and assignment schedule refer to the course syllabus on the BruinLearn site.

Week 1: Introductions

Week 2: Intro to Digital Storytelling & Publishing Multimedia Stories

Readings & Viewings	Digital Storytelling Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapters 1 and 4 <i>Digital Storytelling</i> (Carolyn Handler Miller)• "Ira Glass on Storytelling 1," "Ira Glass on Storytelling 2," and "Ira Glass on Storytelling 3"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Snowfall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek" (John Branch, <i>NY Times</i>)• Roxham Road (National Film Board of Canada)• Bear 71 (National Film Board of Canada)• Hollow: The Documentary (Elaine McMillion, et al.)• GenerAsians of speaking out (Rima Abdelker, et al., April 20, 2021, NBC News)• Covid-19: Six Months on the Frontline (Deborah Evanson and Joanna Wilson)• Pillars of Strength (Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research; World Health Organization, 2021)• Hiroshima Archive

Workshop: Publishing Digital Stories with HTML/CSS & GitHub Pages

Workshops Prep:

- Install text editor [I recommend [Atom](#), but there are many other popular options, like [Sublime](#) (Mac/Windows/Linux), [Text Wrangler](#) (Mac), and [Notepad++](#) (Windows)].
- Sign up for a free [GitHub](#) account, if you don't have an one. (If you don't want to do that, please talk to me for alternatives.)

Suggested Further Readings:

- Chapter 13: "Making Meaning, Making Culture: How to Think about Technology and Cultural Reproduction" (Anne Balsamo, [The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities](#), 2018) (VPN required)
- "Hearing Ordinary Voices Cultural Studies, Creativity, and Digital Storytelling" *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* (Jean Burgess, 2007)
- "[Before You Make a Thing](#)" (Jentery Sayers, 2018)

Module 1: Data-Oriented Storytelling

Week 3: Surveillance

Readings	Watch	Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapters 5, 6, and 9 <i>Digital Storytelling</i> (Carolyn Handler Miller) "Data" (Melissa Gregg and Dawn Nafus, <i>Keywords for Media Studies</i>, pp. 55-58 2017) (VPN required) ** "Introduction" and "Chapter 1: Bomb Parts: What is a Model?" (pp. 1-31) <i>Weapons of Math Destruction</i> (Cathy O'Neil, 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Social Dilemma (Jeff Orlowski, et al., 2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brexit by Numbers (Carmen Aguilar Garcia, et al., Sky News) Aotearoa in 20 (Stuff)

Workshop: Publishing Digital Stories with Static site generators

Prep: Download and install [Publii](#) on your computer

Suggested Further Reading:

- ["Habits of Leaking: Of Sluts and Network Cards"](#) (Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Sarah Friedland, *differences*, 2015)
- [We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves](#) (John Cheney-Lippold, 2017) (pp 19-32).
- ["Markup Bodies: Black \[Life\] Studies and Slavery \[Death\] Studies at the Digital Crossroads"](#) (Jessica Marie Johnson, *Social Text*, 2018)
- Projects: [Quantifying Kissinger](#) (Micki Kaufman, 2012-18)

Week 4: Absences

Readings	Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "On Rational, Scientific, Objective Viewpoints from Mythical, Imaginary, Impossible Standpoints" (Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein, <i>Data Feminism</i>, 2019 - online, socially annotated version or published PDF) "Mapping Segregated Histories of Racial Violence" (Monica Muñoz Martinez, <i>American Quarterly</i>, 2018) "All Eyes on The Border" (Shannon Mattern, <i>Places</i>, 2018) "Flowchart of the Declaration of the Occupation of NYC" (Rachel Schragis, <i>Justseeds Artists' Cooperative</i>, 2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'A long way to go': ethnic minority NHS staff share their stories (The King's Fund, July 7, 2020) 5 facts about the EU's goal of climate neutrality (European Council, December 11, 2020) Minority Report: The Jews of Lebanon ("Arab News")

Workshop: Visual storytelling (video editing); **Prep:** Download [Shotcut](#)
Due (Monday of Week 5): [Mini-assignment #1](#)

Module 2: Interactive Storytelling

Week 5: Interactive Digital Storytelling in the Twenty-First Century: *Bandersnatch* and Twine

Readings	Viewings	Interactive Fiction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3 <i>Digital Storytelling</i> (Miller) “Introduction” to Videogames for Humans: Twine Authors in Conversation (merritt k, 2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Mirror: Bandersnatch (David Slade, Charlie Brooker, et al., 2018) <p>*** Content warning. This film contains scenes of self-harm and suicide. This content is disturbing, so I encourage you to prepare yourself emotionally beforehand. If you believe that you will find the film to be traumatizing, you may choose to watch it.</p>	<p>Pick 2 to play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colossal Cave Adventure (Willie Crowther and Don Woods, 1975-77) Free Downloads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mac; Windows Hints (try not to use!) Acadia: A Pastoral Tale (Jonas Kyratzes. 2012) Depression Quest (Zoe Quinn, Patrick Lindsey, and Isaac Schankler, 2013)

Workshop: Making a digital story with [Twine](#); Prep: download Twine to your computer.

Suggested further reading:

- Chapter 16: “Game Mechanics, Experience Design, and Affective Play” (Patrick Jagoda and Peter McDonald, [The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities](#), 2018) (**VPN required**)
- “The Pleasure of the Text Adventure” (Nick Montfort, [Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction](#); 2003)
- [“Somewhere Nearby is Colossal Cave: Examining Will Crowther’s ‘Adventure’ in Code and in Kentucky”](#) (Jerz, 2007)
- [“Black Mirror: Bandersnatch could become Netflix’s secret marketing weapon”](#) (Jesse Damiani; 2019)
- [“How the surprise new interactive Black Mirror came together”](#) (Hendry, 2019; paywalled / 5 article per month limit, but it discusses the use of Twine on *Bandersnatch*; I’ll provide other access if interested and discuss relevant bits in class)

Week 6: Networked Storytelling

Readings	Interactive Fiction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 47: “Building Interactive Stories” (Anastasia Salter, The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities, 2018) (VPN required) Chapter 8 <i>Digital Storytelling</i> (Miller) “A Networked Public,” Chapter 1. Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest (Zeynep Tufekci, 2017) The Rise of Twitter Fiction The Great American Twitter Novel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Boat (animated graphic novel based on the short story, 'The Boat' by Nam Le) <p>Pick 2 to play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galatea (Emily Short, 2000) (about Galatea from the author) Winter’s Heart The first two chapters of Tally Ho (scroll to bottom of page and click on “Play for Free”)

Workshop: Making a digital story with [Twine](#)

Due (Monday of Week 7):

- [Mini-assignment #2](#)
- [Final Project Proposal](#)

Suggested Further Reading

- “Introduction” and “A Society, Searching” [Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism](#) (Safiya Umoja Noble, 2018) – (Book chapters available for download on JStor – **VPN required**)
- “Is Twitter any Place for a [Black Academic] Lady?” (Marcia Chatelain, [Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and Digital Humanities](#), 2018)
- [Measuring Race on The Internet: Users, Identity, and Cultural Difference in the United States](#)” (Lisa Nakamura, [Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet](#), 2007) (**VPN required**)
- [“#GirlsLikeUs: Trans advocacy and community building online”](#) (Sarah J. Jackson, Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles, *New Media and Society*, 2017)
- [How Kevin Kruse Became History’s Attack Dog](#)” (Emma Pettit, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2018; access via VPN or free *Chronicle* login) and [@KevinMKruse](#) (Twitter)

Module 3: Audio Storytelling

Week 7: The Age of the Podcast

Reading	Listening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 22: “Approaching Sound” (Tara Rodgers, <i>The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities</i>, 2018) (VPN required) “The Walkman Effect” (Shuhei Hosokawa, <i>Popular Music</i>, 1984)(VPN required) “New Food for iPods: Audio by Subscription” (Cyrus Farivar, <i>New York Times</i>, 2004) (paywalled, download PDF here) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Rabbit Hole” (NY Times podcast, Kevin Roose, et al., 2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One: Wonderland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional: finish Caleb’s story by listening to episodes Two and Three Seven: ‘Where We Go One’ Eight: ‘We Go All’

Workshop: Podcasting with Audacity (recording); **Prep:** Install [Audacity](#)

Due (Monday of Week 8): [Final Project Storyboard / Outline](#)

Suggested Further Reading

- “[History on the Download: Podcasting the Past](#)” (Sadie Bergen, *Perspectives on History [AHA]*, 2016)
- “[Podcasting Historical Timeline and Milestones](#)” (*International Podcast Day*, 2018)
- “[Podcasts in American Studies](#)” (*H-Net*)

Week 8: Oral Histories & Audio Storytelling LA

Readings	Listening	Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral History + Podcasting: Best Practices (Davidson College Library) The Secrets of Successful Podcast Music (“Pitchfork,” 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “There Goes the Neighborhood” (<i>select one episode</i>) “Home: Stories from LA” <i>select one episode from the following:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episode 12: Home with A Side of Fries (about the West LA institution, The Apple Pan) Episode 13: A Pod To Call Your Own Episode 19: Almost Utopia Episode 26: Going Tiny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Gateways to Newark” (Talking Eyes and DreamPlay Media, <i>Newest Americans</i>, 2016) Soundhouse: Intimacy and Distance (Barbican, Exhibition took place from 28 October 2020 until 28 February 2021)

Workshop: Podcasting with Audacity (editing)

Due: (Monday of Week 9): [Mini-assignment #3](#)

Suggested Further Reading

- [How to Podcast: The ULTIMATE Guide](#) (Fire Nation, 2020)

- [*Oral History in the Digital Age*](#) (Various Contributors, Michigan State University / IMLS, 2012)
- [*"WBUR Oral History Project"*](#) (Various Contributors, *Our Marathon: The Boston Bombing Digital Archive*, 2013-14)
- [*"Telling Stories: A Reflection on Oral History and New Media"*](#) (Steven High, *Oral History*, 2010)
- [*Putting Oral History on the Map*](#) (Andrew Shaffer, *OUPBlog*, 2016)

Week 9: Work on final projects

- Play catchup, if needed. Workshops on request for specific techniques & technologies

Weeks 10: Final project presentations