**LMC 3408: The Rhetoric of Technical Narrative**

**Telling Stories Beyond Storybooks**

School of Literature, Media, and Communication

Georgia Institute of Technology

Spring Semester, 2011 ~ Tuesday–Thursday, 12:05pm – 1:25pm

Skiles 302

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**Course Prerequisite**: English 1102

**Course Description**

This course focuses on the rhetorical problems posed by such narrative documents as technical proposals, recommendations reports, grant proposals, and marketing studies. Emphases include document design, graphics, navigation systems, and editing.

Every technical topic has stories to tell. Students in this course will create narratives (traditional oral and written stories as well as graphic novels, photo essays, podcasts, and videos) to educate a range of audiences about critical technical topics. In order to better understand narrative, students will discuss narrative theory; examine culturally and historically diverse narratives; explore ways in which narratives bound representation; and consider political and ideological implications of technical narratives. More specifically, students will examine the relationship of narrative to various traditions of science, culture, and rhetoric, analyzing the rhetorical challenges of using narratives in a range of technical genre. Students will select their own topics, modes, and media for instructor-approved projects.

**LMC Learning Outcomes Addressed in LMC 3408**

***Communication Skills***: Gather, organize, and express information clearly and accurately, with sensitivity to will be able to do so both by using traditional media and by tapping the potential of new digital media.

***Textual/Visual Analysis***: Read, analyze, and interpret not only cultural projects such as film, literature, art, and new media, but also scientific and technical documents.

***Interpretive Frameworks***: Become familiar with a variety of social, political, and philosophical theories and be able to apply those theories to creative and scientific texts, as well as to their own cultural observations.

**Course-specific Learning Outcomes addressed in LMC 3408**

***Understand history, culture, and concepts***

* Articulate theoretical explanations for the power of narratives and apply those explanations to a range of artifacts
* Using literature, psychology, aesthetics, art, and design, engage in well-informed, multimodal discussion about a range of cultural and technical issues related to narratives.
* Analyze the role, development, and use of narratives
* Conduct academic research to investigate a topic related to narrative and prepare a formal paper and  presentation
* ***Create narratives for varied purposes*** 
  + Create original narratives related to science/technology that demonstrate a range of multimodal techniques.
  + Use narrative: (a) to describe key concepts or processes, (b) to tell a story of invention or discovery, (c) to represent an abstraction, and (d) to reduce risk/increase safety related to science/technology
  + Use appropriate software to create artifacts.
* ***Discuss and publish narratives***
* Present your narratives to interested audience(s)
* Write and speak about your narratives
* Provide informed, thoughtful critique of the work of your classmates
* Reflect on your processes and artifacts
* **Required** **Textbook**
* Herman, David, Manfred Jahn, Marie-Laure Ryan ***(eds).*** *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (referred to as *RENT* for reading assignments)
* **Other Required Texts (provided on T-Square)**
* Dobson (2005) Narrative Competence and the Enhancement of Literacy: Some Theoretical Reflections
* Amkersmit (2010) Truth in History and Literature —Grishakova (2009) Beyond the Frame: Cognitive Science, Common Sense and Fiction
* van Haaster (2007) Narrativity and multimodality in social work: Designing the ‘future positive’ —[review] Berkenkotter (2008) *Patient Tales. Case Histories and the Uses of Narrative in Psychiatry*
* Wright (2007) Graphic-Narrative Play: Young Children’s Authoring through Drawing and Telling
* Scolari (2009) Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers, Narrative Worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media Production
* Iedema (2003) Multimodality, Resemiotization: Extending the Analysis of Discourse as Multi-semiotic Practice
* Hull & Nelson (2005) Locating the Semiotic Power of Multimodality — Narrative Photography <http://www.pbase.com/scared_of_the_dark/major_projects>
* UC Berkley, CSTMS (Center for Science, Technology, Medicine & Society) <http://cstms.berkeley.edu/content/narrative-metaphor-and-medicine>
* Cyborg Thoughts, A Blog by Michael Chorost <http://www.michaelchorost.com/blog/2010/12/integrating-technology-with-personal-narrative-in-science->
* **Other Required Materials**
* **LAPTOP.** Bring it to class. You’ll use it every session — taking notes, looking up questions, drafting text, learning application conventions. You will not, of course, do non-class related activities of any kind on your computer during class.
* **SOFTWARE.** You need software and cables for downloading images onto your computer. During this semester, you’ll need regular access to this software: MSWord, iPhoto and/or Aperture, Picasa2, Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign
* **EQUIPMENT.** You will need to have convenient access to a digital camera and a digital recorder. They don’t need to be your own camera and recorder, but you need to be able to use them regularly at various times during semester. Check resources at the library!

Assignments and Grading

1. Participation, Attendance, Quizzes/Exams, and Homework 10%

2. Short Papers (#1 – #10) 20%

3. Oral Tutorial Presentation 5%

4. PROJECT #1: PODCAST 20%

5. PROJECT #2: RESEARCH PROJECT 20%

6. PROJECT #3: MULTIMODAL SUITE 25%

**Attendance Policy**

Attending class is part of your professional responsibility. You’re expected to be in class when it is scheduled to meet. This class meets twice a week for 15 weeks, for a total of 30 class meetings.

What happens if you miss class?

* Regardless of your actual grades and regardless of the reasons for your absences, 4 absences (2 weeks or ~13% of the course) will lower your grade one letter grade (i.e., A-­‐ becomes B-­‐; B becomes C).
* Regardless of your actual grades and regardless of the reasons for your absences, 6 absences (3 weeks or ~20% of the course) will lower your grade two letter grades (i.e., B becomes a D; C becomes F).
* Regardless of your actual grades and regardless of the reasons for your absences, 8 absences (4 weeks or ~27% of the course) will result in automatic failure of the course.

You are responsible for keeping track of your own absences. I take attendance; you can check with me anytime to ensure our records agree, but my attendance record is the official one. You are tardy if you arrive after I take attendance. Three tardies greater than 10 minutes = one absence.

I urge you not to take self-indulgent absences (e.g., not bothering to come to class, wanting to sleep in). I encourage you to plan your time so that you don’t disadvantage this class for other parts of your life (e.g., studying for an exam, participating in a sports event, going away for a long weekend). Academic work is important, so you don’t want to miss this class. Schedule jobs, study groups, team meetings, and other important commitments at some time this class doesn’t meet. Schedule job interviews so they do not conflict with this class.

If you miss a scheduled oral presentation, you will receive a grade of 0 (that’s “zero”) for that presentation. If you miss any exam, you will receive a grade of 0 (that’s “zero”) for that exam.

As a professional courtesy, please call or leave a message if illness, an unexpected personal emergency, or business obligations prevent you from attending class or a team meeting (just as you would if you were going to miss work). Providing a reason is a profession courtesy, not an excuse. Regardless of the reason for your absence, you are responsible for information presented in classes you miss. Please check GA Tech’s position about class attendance: http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4b.php

Try to avoid late assignments. However, you can receive an extension for good cause if you (1) contact me *before* the assignment is due by means of an e-mail in which you explain the reason for the delay and (2) propose in the memo a reasonable deadline (less than one week), which you then keep. The email in which you propose an alternative date is a contract. Failure to keep the new deadline breaks the contract, and I won't accept your assignment unless you can document extraordinary circumstances (e.g., you’re hospitalized). ***NB:*** *Use this option no more than twice in a semester. Oral presentations are excluded from this option; they are always due on the assigned date. Emergencies will be dealt with on an individual basis.*

Any assignment that is not submitted will be recorded as a 0 (“zero”) and averaged with the rest of your grades. This can damage your course average severely: For example, if you have completed five assignments with an A- average but don’t submit a sixth assignment (which is counted as a “zero”), your overall average will be a C.

Occasionally an assignment will receive an "R" as a grade. "R" indicates that you are required to re-do the assignment or a section of the assignment. If you do not revise an assignment that receives an R, you will receive a “0” (zero) for the assignment—as if you had not done it.

Do not assume that I have noted every error on your documents, so revise thoroughly. Although I will identify some errors and places where you ignore conventions, I do not copyedit your papers.

**Discrimination and Accommodation Policies**

This class does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, disability, or status as a veteran. Alternative viewpoints are welcome; however, statements that are deemed racist, sexist, homophobic, classist, or otherwise discriminatory toward others in the class or outside the class will not be tolerated.

Georgia Tech supports students through ADAPTS (Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students). Any student who may require an accommodation for a documented disability should inform me as soon as possible or as soon as you become aware of your disability. Anyone who anticipates difficulties with the content or format of the course due to a documented disability should arrange a meeting so we can create a workable plan for your success in this course. ADAPTS serves any Georgia Tech student who has a documented, qualifying disability. Official documentation of the disability is required to determine eligibility for accommodations or adaptations that may be helpful for this course. Please make sure I receive a Faculty Accommodation Letter form verifying your disability and specifying the accommodation you need. ADAPTS operates under the guidelines of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Visit: Smithgall Student Services Bldg, Suite 210 on 353 Ferst Drive

Email: [adapts@vpss.gatech.edu](mailto:adapts@vpss.gatech.edu)

Call: 404-894-2563 (V); 404-894-1664 (TDD); 404-894-9928 (fax)

**Academic Misconduct**

One serious kind of academic misconduct is plagiarism, which occurs when a writer, speaker, or designer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, images, or other original material or code without fully acknowledging its source by quotation marks as appropriate, in footnotes or endnotes, in works cited, and in other ways as appropriate (modified from WPA Statement on "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism"). If you engage in plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct, you will fail the assignment in which you have engaged in academic misconduct and be referred to the Office of Student Integrity, as required by Georgia Tech policy. I strongly urge you to be familiar with Georgia Tech’s Honor Challenge— http://www.honor.gatech.edu/ —as well as the Office of Student Integrity—http://www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/integrity/ You should be familiar with the process for academic misconduct— http://www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/integrity/academic\_misconduct.php

*A Fair(y) Use Tale:* Professor Eric Faden of Bucknell University provides this humorous, yet informative, review of copyright principles delivered through the words of the very folks we can thank for nearly endless copyright terms. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJn\_jC4FNDo

**Weekly Schedule**

Week 1

* Course Introduction
* Definition of narrative and personal narratives

Week 2

* DUE: *RENT (Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory)*Discussion of concepts: narration, narrative, narrative situations, narrator
* DUE: SHORT #1—Review three podcasts, identifying both the shared and distinctive narrative elements and production details that are effective. (See T-Square assignment sheet.)
* DUE FOR PROJECT #1 (PODCAST): Draft of proposal memo for in-class review

Week 3

* DUE FOR PROJECT #1 (PODCAST): Proposal memo
* DUE: TUTORIAL PROPOSAL MEMO (See T-Square assignment sheet)
* DUE: SHORT #2—Characterize your podcast as a new subgenre of radio narratives; consider other features of your podcast as well. (See T-Square assignment sheet)

Week 4

* DUE FOR PROJECT #1 (PODCAST): Draft for in-class workshop
* DUE: SHORT #3
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 1: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected topic PRESENT TUTORIAL 2: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected topic PRESENT TUTORIAL 3: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected topic
* IMPORTANT: Your TUTORIAL CRITIQUES MEMOS should be emailed to each individual presenter within 24 hours of the presentation, with a copy to the instructor. TUTORIAL REFLECTION is due within 48 hours of your presentation, placed in appropriate T-Square slot.

Week 5

* DUE FOR PROJECT #1 (PODCAST): Final Artifact
* DUE FOR PROJECT #1 (PODCAST): Reflection
* DUE FOR PROJECT #2 (RESEARCH PROJECT): Draft of proposal memo for in-class review PRESENT TUTORIAL 4: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected topic PRESENT TUTORIAL 4: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected topic
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 6: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected topic

Week 6

* MIT World: Narratives of Science, featuring presentations and discussion by Robert Kanigel, Thomas Levenson, and Alan Lightman <http://mitworld.mit.edu/video/284> Listening to this tape will help you prepare for SHORT #3-4
* DUE FOR PROJECT #2 (RESEARCH PROJECT): Proposal memo
* DUE: SHORT #3-4

Week 7

* Class work day
* Class work day

Week 8

* DUE: SHORT #5
* DUE FOR PROJECT #2 (RESEARCH PROJECT): Draft of project for in-class review, minimally full TOC, introduction, chunk of text, and sources cited
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 7: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected topic
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 8: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected topic
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 9: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected topic

Week 9

* DUE: SHORT #6
* DUE FOR PROJECT #2 (RESEARCH PROJECT): Draft of project for in-class review, minimally revised TOC, introduction, full text, and revised sources cited
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 10: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 11: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 12: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected

Week 10

* DUE FOR PROJECT #2 (RESEARCH PROJECT): Final paper
* DUE FOR PROJECT #2 (RESEARCH PROJECT): Reflection
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 13: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 14: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected
* PRESENT TUTORIAL 15: Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – student-selected

Week 11

* SPRING BREAK
* SPRING BREAK

Week 12

* DUE: SHORT #7
* DUE FOR PROJECT #3 (MULTIMODAL): Draft of proposal memo for in-class review

Week 13

* DUE: SHORT #8
* DUE FOR PROJECT #3 (MULTIMODAL): Proposal memo
* Class Work Day

Week 14

* DUE: SHORT #9
* DUE FOR PROJECT #3 (MULTIMODAL): Draft for in-class workshop
* DUE: SHORT #10

Week 15

* DUE FOR PROJECT #3 (MULTIMODAL): Draft for in-class workshop
* DUE FOR PROJECT #3 (MULTIMODAL): Final artifact DUE FOR PROJECT #3 (MULTIMODAL): Reflection

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 3, 11:30am-2:30pm