Writing 105CD: Writing with Code -
Narrative Design in Interactive Media

Instructor: Dr. Brian C. Ernst
Office: ZOOM
Quarter: Winter 2025
Student Hours: TBD, an adjustable weekly schedule will be released
Place/Time: SSMS 1005, MW 9:30am – 10:45am
Enrollment Code: 49676
E-mail: bcernst@writing.ucsb.edu

Prerequisites: Writing 2 or 2E or 2LK; Upper-Division Standing.

Add/Drop Policy: Enrolled students who do not attend within the first ten minutes of the first day will be dropped automatically from the course (unless the absence has been cleared with me ahead of time). If you are not enrolled, please sign up on the crashlist. Students will only be added if they meet the prerequisites and space becomes available.

Drop Deadline via GOLD: Monday, February 3rd. After this date, you may only drop via petition to the Dean of Undergraduate Education via L&S Advising.

Grading Option: This course must be taken for a letter grade only and cannot be taken as P/NP.

Required course materials:

- Regular access to a computer with Internet connectivity and a UCSB Google account.
- Access to our course website on Canvas https://www.canvas.ucsb.edu/.
- Brock, Kevin. *Rhetorical Code Studies: Discovering Arguments in and Around Code*. University of Michigan Press, 2019. [PDF for this text is provided on Canvas]
- Vee, Annette. *Coding Literacy: How Computer Programming is Changing Writing* (Software Studies). MIT Press, 2017. [PDF for this text is provided on Canvas]
- Please setup ZOOM for Student Hours and consult this guide on how to join a meeting!

Course Description: This course prepares students to design digital / interactive texts that integrate both written and programming components, with a focus on how artifacts can be written, coded, and designed as successful persuasive texts, and how the coding behind the scenes contributes to the text's meaning. As such, this quarter focuses on the intersections between game play, design, and code, as well as an interrogation of the multiliteracies and rhetoricality of these fields.

Students can expect to read, analyze, and write digital games/interactive texts and their corresponding code in various genres, such as video games, data visualizations, web documents, and interactive narratives. While students will be required to work with code, the class should appeal to both novices and more experienced programmers – the emphasis is not on mastering a particular programming language, but on using code to solve rhetorical problems. The class should interest students across the disciplines, including not just computer science students, but those in communication, social science, and the humanities who want to apply their expertise to digital texts. The main assignment will be a long-term group project that incorporates writing, coding, audience analysis, and secondary research. However, students will also have the opportunity to play with coding strategies, analyze code, and reflect on the development of their

writing practices. By the end of the course, students should be better prepared for the challenges of the digital workplace, which weaves together coding and writing in complex ways.

It is important to understand the human role in the production, function, and revision of code. We will analyze and discuss the way code communicates, with consideration of the rhetorical effects of the choices we can make as programmers on both the back-end of the product as well as the form and function of the front-end of the product—how it looks, how it runs, how it makes statements or arguments. As a class, we will approach situations and solve problems in and understand how to interpret, plan, compose, revise, and circulate our code. Writing 105CD will focus on building digital literacy, rhetorical awareness, creativity, spatial reasoning, and design aesthetics. By learning about rhetoric, we will become more effective writers paying special attention to persona, audience, medium, genre, design, and persuasive appeals. Our projects and assignments will build on this knowledge, providing us with the scaffolding and tools needed to engage in digital creativity and literacy. The main emphasis is how code can tell effective stories.

Course Outcomes: This course is designed with the following objectives in mind –

- **Knowledge:** By the end of the course students will have an in-depth understanding of how code can be used to create and communicate, the relationships between the coding and writing processes, and increased awareness of how to produce and interact with digital texts across genres – mainly through narrative design.
- **Comprehension:** By the end of the course students will have comprehension of the critical and rhetorical elements that underlie the creation, revision, and communication of and with code and the composition process of digital texts.
- **Application:** By the end of the course students will create an extended, research-driven, code-based project, as well as a final reflection that recounts both this project and smaller, experimental projects via a coding journal.
- **Analysis:** By the end of the course students will be able to critically analyze a digital text in terms of code, medium, and genre, incorporating research into and rhetorical consideration of audience and discourse expectations.
- **Synthesis:** By the end of the course students will be able to synthesize rhetorical theory, form and functional considerations of code, and knowledge of digital environments in the production of code-backed digital texts.
- **Evaluation:** By the end of the course students will be able to articulate their role or position within a digital ecology as a consumer, scholar, and producer.

Grading: Writing (and coding) is an ongoing creative process that requires constant revision before completion. I am here to encourage your work and provide feedback on the following:

- Code Review: A Rhetorical Analysis Paper - 15%
- The Weekly Coding Journal (the precursor to The Final Digital Project) - 10%
- The Final Digital Project (the culmination of our Weekly Coding Journal) - 20%
- The Multimodal Production Presentation - 30%
- Self-assessed effort-based participation grade, which includes preparedness for lecture, active engagement with all assignments / readings, and on-time submissions. - 15%
- The Final Reflection Essay - 10%

Attendance, Canvas Participation, and Effort Grade (15% of the final grade)

Attendance: In-person attendance will be mandatory with the exception of illness or emergency. Please come to class only if you are feeling well. Please do not come if you are feeling sick, even in the slightest way. I want you to come to class prepared, engaged, and feeling 100%. If you are sick or dealing with an emergency, please try to let me know as soon as you reasonably can. Failure to notify me of reoccurring absences in a timely manner will result in repercussions to your grade because the quarter system moves so quickly. However, everyone is allowed one un-excused absence, no questions asked, without any effect to your final grade. The second unexcused absence results in a 5% reduction to your overall grade (taken from the 15% effort grade). The third unexcused absence results in an additional 10% reduction to your overall grade (thus, effectively forfeiting the full 15% effort-based portion of your final grade). Anything beyond three unexcused absences results in an automatic failure for the entire course.

Further, please note that anything beyond three excused absences will automatically trigger a conference with me about how to proceed with the course. I am a former Academic Advisor and we will need to discuss options as to whether you can realistically complete all assignments.

That said, I will take role every class session before we begin. Please be on time (within five minutes) and ready to dive in with the day's material. If you miss a class and are excused with a valid medical or emergency reason, then there will be an opportunity to catch up on the material via the internet. Unexcused absences are not afforded this option. It should be noted that there is no online only or dual / hybrid option for this course. The expectation is that you will come to class if you are feeling well and are fully prepared. In short, this is a fully in-person course.

Canvas Participation: There will always be activities each week to complete on Canvas. These activities are related to our learning pattern, which is summarized as the following: 1) a designated reading will be assigned and completed, 2) class will reinforce the readings / ideas / concepts covered, and then 3) you will complete a Canvas activity that demonstrates the learning objective associated with the reading / class goals. Activity uploads – which will usually consist of the weekly coding journal, rough drafts, or peer review, etc. – typically occur by 11:59PM (midnight) on the Friday of a given week to Canvas. Extension requests (submitted via email) will only be granted for extraordinary circumstances after being cleared by me beforehand.

The course schedule will guide you through this process. The idea behind my strategy is this - reading informs writing / coding, while reflecting on the reading leads to new ideas (via class), which we will then implement with the Canvas activities and turn-ins through our big projects.

It is worth noting that I truly believe our class to be neither a lecture, nor a seminar. Instead, I think of this class as a coding workshop. Therefore, your constant engagement is a requirement for success because you will be frequently interacting with the readings, your own writing / coding, and the writing / coding of your peers – particularly during the Multimodal Production Presentation, which is an intensive group project. Please do your best not to fall behind! Again, if you do, then please let me know ASAP and we can work together toward a solution.

Effort Grade: In lieu of a traditional grade for participation (for both in-person attendance / engagement and the timely submission of Canvas activities), this component of the course (15% of the final grade) will be considered an effort-based grade. Toward the end of the quarter, you will self-assess and write a brief statement at the end of The Final Reflection assignment as to your effort regarding these participation components (whether you kept pace and responded sufficiently to the weekly assignments, and activities, etc.). Please note that you are only allowed to assign your own self-assessed effort-based grade if you have one or no unexcused absences. This will be an opportunity for us to collaboratively review what went well, what challenges you faced, and how you completed this journey involving our learning goals. The statement will end with your suggestion for an effort grade, which I will review and certify during Finals Week.

Code Review: A Rhetorical Analysis Paper (15% of the final grade)

The goal of this assignment is to help you learn how to articulate your growing rhetorical awareness as both a creator and consumer of digital content and its underlying code. In this assignment, you will present to us a digital artifact, such as a game, app, or website. You will then lead us through a thorough rhetorical analysis of this artifact and its underlying code, offering answers to these questions and more: What is the nature and purpose of this artifact? Whom is it for? Who is the targeted demographic? What choices were made in the front-end (the aesthetics, design, and feel of the artifact, etc.) to meet these goals? What choices were made in the back-end (the coding language, formatting, use of coding commands and procedures, use of comments, etc.) to meet these goals? What problems or challenges did the programmers face? What choices did they make to solve those problems? How might they have made different decisions here? Your assignment should include at least 2,000 words of writing as well as a clear presentation—with screenshots (JPEGs) or GIFs--of the artifact you are rhetorically analyzing.

The Weekly Coding Journal (10% of the final grade)

Almost every week, in response to the readings and topics discussed that week, you will create a Canvas forum post, which will function like a journal. The goal of each entry is to summarize the ideas of what you have read, critically reflect on them, and synthesize points together with what you already know, what you are learning, and what you are working on in the creation of a digital artifact. The digital artifact component of the journal will not be assigned every week, but when it is the code experiment can take on many genres or forms. This means you will be solving programming puzzles, making HTML documents, making games, etc. The goal of this exercise is to let you reflect and practice the ideas that we discuss in class, via a low-stakes environment that doesn't penalize you for trying things out and experimenting. Each entry, regardless of whether or not a coding experiment is included, should be at least 500 words.

The Final Digital Project (20% of the final grade)

This is your culminating project for this class. Guided by the things you are learning in the books and beyond, you are going to produce a thorough digital text—a text that functions or is formed in part or entirely by your coding—designed to explore or advocate for a position on an issue that is relevant and important to you. Moving across genres such as text, website, video, game, etc., you will use thorough research to contextualize and present the current state of an issue,

overview the conversations that currently situate the issue, and present an argument as to what needs to be done to make things better, help us move forward, advance the conversation, etc. The project must be based on your coding journal projects on a foundational level and this is an extension of that assignment. Therefore, it is a necessity to be careful and deliberate with your coding journal entries, since they form the basis of your code for this final project. Whatever the choice and cause you advance your coding journal toward, it should be a chance for you to study the genre, develop a mastery of the conversations surrounding it, and develop your own skills in coding and composition as you work on your own take on it. In addition, you will produce an author's note that explains and justifies all the choices you made in producing this artifact. Research will be used to support your claims in either or both of these documents. The author's note should represent an amount of content and work equal to a 1,000-word researched term paper, and should have at least five cited sources as part of your efforts.

The Multimodal Production Presentation (30% of the final grade)

In five groups of five, students will work together to code in HTML, Javascript, Twine, Ink and / or a comparable language to create a game or app. The group will decide on the overall theme, audience, and purpose the artifact serves by researching market share, exigency, and procedural rhetorics. The research and creation of the artifact will demonstrate collaborative digital writing, spatial reasoning, and once completed, marketing and presentation materials--posters, box art, promotional videos, business cards, sales sheets, website, etc.-- will be composed to "sell" their app/game. The artifact will then be presented in a "Shark Tank" style presentation with other students in the class. This, in many ways, is considered the main assignment of the course.

The Final Reflection (10% of the final grade)

Write an essay of at least 1,000 words that proudly and professionally discusses your final project and the best of your code experiments / multimodal texts. You should also reflect on what you have gotten out of the class, how you have developed and revised these projects, and how you have grown as a digital writer/coder over the course of this quarter.

Success in Writing 105CD

In order to succeed, students must take the initiative to challenge themselves, take risks, and reflect on failures. You will be taken out of your comfort zone and be presented with challenges that you will have to come up with creative solutions which can result in failure, but that is okay. Failure is part of the learning process. I want to promote a culture of experimentation and play that does not punish risks, but rewards effort. With this in mind, if you feel the desire to revise or modify your work, come talk to me. If you have an idea for a new project, course policy, or approach to a project, share your ideas. As I am demonstrating with the pedagogy of this course, I encourage you to lead with your interests and passions. We will be using a lot of technology this quarter, but it is not the mastery of the software that is important, it is your ability to think through creative solutions to problems in multiple modes. Remember, I am your ally; I want you to come out of this class with the grade you want, pride in completed projects, and the skills you need to continue writing and researching at the academic and professional level.

Technology in the Classroom

We will be interacting with a variety of sites and programs over the course of the quarter; this is a class in composing in digital environments after all and that is why we are in a computer lab! Please let me know if you need help using the internet or any computer program. When using a computer, save work frequently, always make backup copies through a cloud service and / or using a thumb drive, and plan all projects with extra time allowed for unexpected difficulties. Also, the use of your own computer, tablet, or e-reader is strongly encouraged, and at times mandatory. All in-session use of technology should be focused on class-related activities, such as note-taking, research, and reading. As long as all students are respectfully attentive when others are speaking, in-session technology use will not be a problem. Finally, since coding and writing are directed toward an audience, you should consider the writing and coding that you do in this course "public," that is, material that others will read in this class.

Contacting Me and Concerns Receiving Comments or Feedback

I am here to help! Please feel free to email me with any questions or concerns about the course. When emailing, please allow up to twenty-four hours for me to respond on weekdays and forty-eight hours on weekends. Further, please observe some level of formal conduct in your emails; otherwise, I might not answer them! Also, if you feel an email is not sufficient enough, then please reach out so we can set up a Zoom meeting outside of the posted Zoom office hours.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately passes off another's words or ideas without acknowledging their source. For example, turning in another's work as your own is plagiarism. If you plagiarize in this class, you will fail the assignment and your case will be passed to the university for additional disciplinary action. Because of the design and nature of this course, it will take as much (or more) effort for you to plagiarize than it would to actually complete the work on your own merit. Furthermore, that your work is not your own will be noticed almost immediately; as above, the consequences will be dire. Do not do it. It is not worth it.

Plagiarism is different from **misuse of sources**, occasions when a writer does not properly cite a source, misuses quotations, includes too much of an original source in a paraphrase or summary, or commits similar *unintentional* violations of academic protocol. If you misuse sources, we will work together on appropriately incorporating and/or citing the sources. Note that some audiences or instructors will consider misuse of sources to be plagiarism; for this reason, it is *extremely* important for you to accurately cite the source or information in any class (or writing situation). Since I am a humanities-based scholar, we will cite in the MLA format and I will refer you to Purdue's OWL (Online Writing Lab) if you need any help. Please, when in doubt, just ask me!

A.I. Policy Statement

The UCSB Writing Program recognizes the swift growth and widespread use of artificial intelligence (A.I.) writing technology such as large language models (LLMs) and chatbots. As writing and rhetoric specialists committed to preparing students to write for academic,

professional and civic engagement, we emphasize the importance of rhetorical, communicative, and continual engagement with developing writing throughout the process of composition. Given the expanding role that large language models will undoubtedly play in our students' lives, we encourage highly mediated, critically-aware, and transparent use of A.I. writing technology.

The Writing Program has developed the following policy statement, focusing on four key points, which can be read / accessed here: https://www.writing.ucsb.edu/resources/faculty/ai-policy. In short, I please prefer you relegate any A.I. usage for editing or grammar purposes only. All composition should be original and personally authored by you, especially in a class like this! If you have any questions about proper AI usage in the class, please simply ask me ahead of time!

Writing Support

CLAS (Campus Learning Assistance Services) offers additional writing support through the help of peer advisors. If you are interested in working on the improvement of a specific writing skill, then consider taking a look at http://www.clas.sa.ucsb.edu. CLAS does not edit your work for you, but provides you with a new perspective on your writing and suggestions for areas of improvement. Writing and Language Services are available for drop-in during normal business hours on campus. On-line / Zoom appointments are also available up until the late evening at 10:00pm. The CLAS Writing Lab is located in SRB Room 3231 while Language Services can be found in SRB Room 3280. Please use the MyCLAS portal to create an appointment!

Students Requiring Support for Disabilities

I am committed to ensuring that all students have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed in this course. Providing academic accommodations to students with disabilities is a shared responsibility of the campus. Students with disabilities are responsible for ensuring that the Disabled Students Program (DSP) is aware of their disabilities and for providing DSP with appropriate documentation. The DSP staff works in an advisory capacity with a variety of campus departments to ensure that equal access is provided to all disabled students. Please consult http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/ for more information regarding accommodation.

Counseling Services

College is a very special time in your life, and it can also include some new and unique challenges. The folks at CAPS are here to help you. If you have never reached out before, then I recommend stopping by and making an appointment. Life can be tough, especially right now, and it is normal to ask for help. Please contact Counseling and Psychological Services at 805--893-4411, which is available 24/7 or visit their web site https://caps.sa.ucsb.edu/.

Academic Advising

Fun fact: I was the English Undergraduate Academic Advisor for several years here at UCSB! Therefore, I believe in the mission of academic advising and highly encourage you to make an appointment with your college advisor (Letters & Sciences; Creative Studies; Engineering) for degree requirements or your departmental advisor for questions specific to your major. If you

have any questions about the Writing Program, including our Professional Writing Minor (which this class counts toward), please contact Audrey Youngblood (wpinfo@writing.ucsb.edu).

Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity

The RCSGD works with students, staff, and faculty to ensure that LGBTQ identities, experiences and concerns are represented and addressed at UCSB. The center aims to create a vibrant and engaging environment through social and educational programming, volunteer and leadership opportunities, a comfortable and welcoming social and study space, and professional and student staff members for support and advocacy. For more info, please see http://rcsgd.sa.ucsb.edu/.

First Generation Students

Over 40% of UCSB students will be the first in their family to graduate from a four-year college! We have some great resources for first generation students here: http://www.ondas.ucsb.edu/.

Associated Students Food Bank

The Food Bank is a free service that offers food, toiletries, and other basic need items. They also have a Seed Bank program where you are given everything needed to start a garden. Please check out their website at https://foodbank.as.ucsb.edu/ for the full range of services. Registration is easy and the staff is ready to help you access some amazing resources.

Non-neutral Educator Statement: I condemn white supremacy. I condemn anti-Blackness. I condemn racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, land theft, Native genocide, ableism, and all forms of hate and discrimination. I will not encourage you to consider both sides of an argument if one side is the oppressor. I will infuse every moment of our time with joy, truth, and empathy.

Course Schedule: [I will let you know -ASAP- if any due dates or readings change via email!]

Week 1

Monday, 1/6 – Welcome and Syllabus Review. Discussion: "Hello, World" and AI.

Wednesday, 1/8 – Intros and formation of Coding Teams for the Multimodal Production.
Read and Discuss: Brock, "Introduction," pgs. 1-7.

Friday, 1/10 – **Assignment Due:** Coding Journal Entry #1 – due on Canvas by midnight.

Week 2

Monday, 1/13 – Introducing Coding Experiment #1.
Read and Discuss: Brock, Chapter 1: "Toward the Rhetorical Study of Code," pgs. 9-31.

Wednesday, 1/15 – Coding Workshop / Drafting Day.
Read and Discuss: Vee, "Introduction: Computer Programming as Literacy," pgs. 1-11.

Friday, 1/17 – **Assignment Due:** Coding Journal Entry #2 (which includes the completion of Coding Experiment #1) via Canvas Upload (by midnight).

Week 3

Monday, 1/20 – **NO CLASS – School Holiday, DR. MLK JR. Day Recognized!**

Wednesday, 1/22 – Introducing Coding Experiment #2 and the Code Review assignment prompt.
Read and Discuss: Brock, Chapter 2: "Rhetoric and the Algorithm," pgs. 33-69.

Friday, 1/24 – **Assignment Due:** Coding Journal Entry #3 – due to Canvas by midnight.

Week 4

Monday, 1/27 – Coding Workshop / Drafting Day.
Read and Discuss: Vee, "Making Room for Computer Programming Outside of Computer Science," pgs. 11-19 and "Programming as Writing," pgs. 19-23.

Wednesday, 1/29 – Coding Workshop / Drafting Day.
Read and Discuss: Vee, "Computation Intertwines with Writing," pgs. 23-26, "Sociomaterialities of Literacy," pgs. 27-34, and "Literacy and Power," pgs. 34-38.

Friday, 1/31 – **Assignment Due:** Coding Journal Entry #4 (which includes completion of Coding Experiment #2) via Canvas Upload (by midnight).

Week 5

Monday, 2/3 – Coding Workshop / Drafting Day.
Read and Discuss: Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture."

Wednesday, 2/5 – Drafting Workshop for Code Review: A Rhetorical Analysis Paper.
Read and Discuss: Brock, "Chapter 3: 'I Have No Damn Idea Why This Is So Convoluted.' Analyzing Arguments Surrounding Code," pgs. 71-113.

Friday, 2/7 – **Assignment Due:** Coding Journal Entry #5 via Canvas Upload (by midnight).

Week 6

Monday, 2/10 – Introducing Coding Experiment #3 and The Final Digital Project/Reflection.
Read and Discuss: Ferrara, "Games for Persuasion."

Wednesday, 2/12 – **Peer Review** for the Code Review Paper **(bring your completed draft)!**

Friday, 2/14 – **Assignment Due:** Code Review Paper via Canvas Upload (by midnight)!

Week 7 (please see next page)

Monday, 2/17 – **NO CLASS – School Holiday, President's Day Recognized!**

Wednesday, 2/19 – Coding Workshop / Drafting Day.
R&D: Vee, Chapter 4, "Surrounded by Computation" to "Conclusion," pgs. 196-214.

Friday, 2/21 – **Assignment Due:** Coding Journal Entry #6 (which includes completion of Coding Experiment #3) via Canvas Upload (by midnight).

Week 8

Monday, 2/24 – Introducing Coding Experiment #4.
Read and Discuss: Burke and Kafai, "Programming & Storytelling: Opportunities for Learning About Coding & Composition."

Wednesday, 2/26 – Coding Workshop / Drafting Day / Prep for Multimodal Presentations.

Friday, 2/28 – **Assignment Due:** Coding Journal Entry #7 via Canvas Upload (by midnight).

Week 9

Monday, 3/3 – Course Wrap-Up Session. Closing thoughts on coding! Further preparations.
Read and Discuss: Gee, "Are Video Games Good for Learning?"

Wednesday, 3/5 – Final preparation day for all remaining activities in the course. QA session.

Friday, 3/7 – **Assignment Due:** Coding Journal Entry #8 (which includes completion of Coding Experiment #4) via Canvas Upload (by midnight). Now the journal is done!

Week 10

Monday, 3/10 – **Multimodal Production Presentations Part 1: Presenting Teams TBD.**

Wednesday, 3/12 – **Multimodal Production Presentations Part 2: Presenting Teams TBD.**

Friday, 3/14 – **Assignment Due:** All Multimodal Materials via Canvas Upload (by midnight).

Finals Week

Thursday, 3/20 – **Assignment Due:** The Final Digital Project and The Final Reflection Essay (which includes your self-assessed effort-based grade) via Canvas Upload (by midnight).

Friday, 3/21 – Last day to file an Incomplete with the Registrar (continuing students only)!

Remember, there is NO Final Exam for Writing 105CD! The completion of The Final Digital Project and The Final Reflection concludes your work for this course! I sincerely thank you for your efforts this quarter and I hope you have a fantastic Spring Break!