

ENG 1131: Writing Through Media—Ergodic Literature

Section 1983
MWF, 6; W, E1-E3
ARCH 116

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Office Hours: (by appointment)

Course Description

Ergodic literature, according to media theorist Espen J. Aarseth, are those works for which “nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text,” demanding responsibilities beyond just “eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages.” In this course, we will investigate important historical and more recent examples of ergodic texts, paying particular attention to the ways they require us to engage with and interact with the work. Our assigned texts should demonstrate that ergodic literature is not medium specific, as we investigate print literature, film, hypertext fiction, and games that all merit consideration as “cybertexts.”

As we read and play these works, we will “write through media” by composing our own exercises of ergodic writing and reading through assignments that test limits of print and digital media. Course screening times will be dedicated to collaborative reading/viewing works that test ergodic and interactive possibilities, and to workshopping with print craft and required software for composition. We will regularly “read together” to emphasize the diversity of experiences ergodic texts may solicit, and to compare the differing resolutions each of you may reach to the shared resolutions we arrive at as a group. You should thus gain appreciation for the analysis and composition of ergodic literature in its many forms.

Required Texts

All required print texts for this course will be available through the UF Bookstore in the Reitz Union, or online via www.uf.bkstr.com.

Aarseth, Espen J. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. ISBN: 0801855799.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *Writing Machines*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002. ISBN: 0262582155.

Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. New York: Pantheon, 2000. ISBN: 0375703764.

Pessl, Marisha. *Night Film*. New York: Random House, 2013. ISBN: 0812979788.

(You must also download the *Night Film Decoder* app from the iTunes or Google Play store)

In addition to these print works, you will need to create a STEAM account at store.steampowered.com to purchase two digital games we will be discussing at length.

Miller, Robyn and Rand. *Myst*. Cyan, 1993.

Gaynor, Steve. *Gone Home*. Fullbright, 2013.

Other assigned print and electronic readings will be made available via Sakai

All electronic texts we will study in this course are compatible with current versions of the Mac OS and Windows operating systems.

Assignments

(1000 total points possible)

200 Twine Composition

You will create an interactive text through the hypertext editor Twine (twinery.org) to demonstrate how to sustain an argument, theme, or chain of ideas through non-linear storytelling strategies and electronic platforms. Your work should engage the equivalent effort of **1500** words.

250 Print Project

You will create a participatory paper project that tests the limits of the medium as a viable format in our purported “late age of print.” This assignment may take many forms as long as it establishes its compositional basis in what we have discussed in class. Your work should engage the equivalent effort of **1750** words.

300 Academic Paper

You will compose an academic paper that takes up an issue discussed in our critical texts and demonstrated in our literary texts. Your paper should present an original argument that engages larger critical conversations by citing Aarseth, Hayles, and at least *three* other scholarly sources in its discussion of one of our assigned ergodic works. It must be at least **2000** words.

150 Blog Posts

You will contribute *five* posts to our class blog that discuss the ergodic concepts we raise in class. Each post must attempt an interactive rhetorical device in its composition (e.g. footnotes, hyperlinks, embedding, etc.). They must all be at least **150** words, for a total of **750** words.

100 Participation

You must be an active and engaged part of each day's class to not only participation credit but to ensure that our course will be an academically fruitful experience. This grade will be gauged by group activities and larger class discussions. **To guarantee receipt of a full grade, you must contribute to class meaningfully at least once a class period.**

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week 1:

8/24 Course Introduction

8/26 *Cybertext*, Espen Aarseth: Chapter 1

8/28 *Writing Machines*, N. Katherine Hayles: Chapters 1, 2

Week 2:

8/31 "As We May Think", Bush; "A Future Device for Individual Use", Terry Harpold

9/2 "The Babysitter", Robert Coover

(screening) "The Mother of All Demos," Douglas Engelbart

9/4 *House of Leaves*, Mark Z. Danielewski: Foreword - 97

Week 3:

9/7 (Labor Day)

9/9 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapters 2, 3

(screening) Showcase of Aarseth's "textonomy"

9/11 *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 97 - 246

Week 4:

9/14 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapter 3; *The Jew's Daughter*, Morrissey

9/16 *The Jew's Daughter*, Judd Morrissey and Lori Talley

(screening) *The Jew's Daughter*, Morrissey and Talley

9/18 *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 246 - 370

Week 5:

9/21 *my body—a Wunderkammer*, Shelley Jackson

9/23 *my body—a Wunderkammer*, Jackson

(screening) *my body—a Wunderkammer*, Jackson

9/25 *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 370 - 491

Week 6:

9/28 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapter 4; *Twelve Blue*, Michael Joyce

9/30 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapter 4; *Twelve Blue*, Joyce

(screening) *Twelve Blue*, Joyce

10/2 *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 491 - 587

Week 7:

10/5 *Twelve Blue*, Joyce

10/7 *Howling Dogs*, Porpentine

(screening) Twine tutorial

10/9 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapter 8; *House of Leaves*, Danielewski: 587 - 709

Week 8:

10/12 Twine Presentations
- **Twine Compositions DUE**

10/14 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapters 5, 6

(screening) *eXistenZ* (1999), David Cronenberg

10/16 *Night Film*, Marisha Pessl: Prologue - 91

Week 9:

10/19 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapter 5; *Galatea*, Emily Short

10/21 *Galatea*, Short

(screening) *Tender Loving Care* (1997), David Wheeler

10/23 *Night Film*, Pessl: 91 - 168

Week 10:

10/26 *Ad Verbum*, Nick Montfort

10/28 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapter 6

(screening) Showcase of Montfort's computational poetry

10/30 *Night Film*, Pessl: 168 - 269

Week 11:

11/2 *Ad Verbum*, Montfort

11/4 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapter 7

(screening) Print Project workshop

11/6 (Homecoming)

Week 12:

11/9 *Night Film*, Pessl: 269 - 422

11/11 (Veteran's Day)

(no screening)

11/13 *Game, game, game, and again, game*, Jason Nelson

Week 13:

11/16 Print Project Presentations
- **Print Projects DUE**

11/18 *Myst*, Robyn Miller & Rand Miller

(screening) *Myst*, Miller and Miller

11/20 *Night Film*, Pessl: 422 - 483

Week 14:

11/23 *Gone Home*, Gaynor

11/25 (Thanksgiving Break)

(no screening)

11/27 (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 15:

11/30 *Writing Machines*, Hayles: Chapter 7

12/2 *Cybertext*, Aarseth: Chapters 8, 9

(screening) *Her* (2013), Spike Jonze

12/4 *Night Film*, Pessl: 483-593

Week 16:

12/7 Research Paper Peer Review

12/9 Course Conclusion

(no screening)

12/11 (Reading Day)

- **Academic Papers DUE**