

ENGL 352-01 – Spring 23

Writing in Digital Environments

Hybrid

Instructor information

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(she/her/hers)



Max Headroom

Course description

“This is a project-based course emphasizing digital and information literacy, online identity, and the analysis and production of digital texts. Students will gain the rhetorical and design skills necessary for becoming successful, engaging online writers who can respond effectively to the unique opportunities offered within digital environments.” Prerequisite: ENGL 120.

This course satisfies the General Education Digital Literacy course requirement.

ENGL 352 learning objectives

The term *digital literacy* can be defined as “the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.” We will become more digitally literate over the course of this semester by meeting the following objectives:

- Learn how to find information online, and how to evaluate online sources of information for accuracy and veracity.
- Learn how to create digital content that meets the needs of various online audiences. We will compose in a variety of digital media.
- Learn how to communicate information effectively online. This will be grounded in writing skills and combined with best practices for composing in a variety of digital media with various potential audiences in mind.

Hybrid class format

*Our hybrid format means that we will meet most Tuesdays; instead of meeting a second time, the rest of the work for the week will be completed online (Canvas discussion boards, creation of multimedia projects, etc). To be successful in this course, you need to attend our in-person class sessions, and you will need regular access to the Internet.

This syllabus is our blueprint for this semester. As the semester progresses, changes may become necessary (due to weather, COVID19, or other factors). These changes will be announced in class whenever possible, as well as on Canvas, and via email.

Required texts

- *Digital Storytelling Cookbook*. PDF format. Available from Storycenter.org.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *The Medium is the Message*. Any edition. ISBN: 1584230703.

Required materials

- Notebook to keep track of ideas for your projects, to sketch rough drafts before turning to digital tools. Lined, unlined, whatever works for you.
- Device(s) that can record audio and video. Smartphone!
- Regular, reliable access to the Internet.
- USB drive and/or access to cloud-based digital storage.
- Access to a computer that you can download software to. You should be able to use free software or apps to create all of our assignments.

ENGL 352 projects, course work, & evaluation methods

(Assignments & weighting.) You will receive more detailed instructions for each of these assignments, but here is a brief overview of the major projects this semester, and how they factor into your final grade for this course:

Mini Projects:

Visual response to <i>The Medium is the Message</i> .	5 points.
Visual essay – your relationship to technology.	5 points.
Juxtapositions – like memes, but not.	5 points.
Mini podcast – interview with a fellow student.	5 points.
Infographic – visual depiction of data.	5 points.
Curated collection of class resources – semester-long series of posts on Canvas.	5 points.

Discussion board posts – the OG digital environment for writing. 15 points.

Thirty second documentary – you will select a topic or problem; after researching the topic using reliable online / digital resources, you will create a 30 – 60 second video that communicates your findings. Videos should be accessible in various ways (close-captioned, transcript provided, description of images, etc). 25 points.

Multimodal information campaign – You will evaluate the various digital compositional tools at your disposal (learned as a result of the above projects) and will then create a campaign designed to communicate (raise awareness and call for action on) your chosen topic or problem. 30 points.

Evaluation criteria

The following general evaluation criteria will be used to evaluate the major projects, though we will discuss specific evaluation criteria for each project in class. These criteria should give you an indication of expectations for college-level digital writing in ENGL 352.

A: An excellent project meets all of the following: is designed with the needs of different audiences; is well organized; is written and designed appropriately for the goals of the project; multimedia and web site projects function on a variety of platforms (in the case of web sites and multimedia); web projects guide the user or are otherwise easy to navigate and understand. Multimedia projects function

throughout; meanings are easy to discern; creatively answer the assignment prompt; meet all requirements; Minimal if any typos and grammar errors no matter the format.

B: A good project has one or more of the following issues: does not take the needs of different audiences into account; is less well organized; does not meet all the goals of the project; minor issues with navigation. Multimedia projects may miss one or two requirements; may not show as much creativity; largely free of typos and grammar errors no matter the format.

C: An average project has one or more of the following issues: a broken link or some non-functioning multimedia; focuses on a single audience; difficult to navigate, forces user to figure out the purpose of elements. Multimedia projects may make the viewer struggle to understand the meaning; may only address one of the requirements. A pattern of noticeable typos and grammar errors, no matter the format of the project, will likely bring a project down into this grade.

D: A poor project has more than one broken link; in the case of multimedia, the project is impossible to easily navigate; is poorly organized; has so many typos and grammar errors that they become a distraction. Multimedia project doesn't function across platforms or forces the reader to make wild guesses as to the meaning of the project. May include multiple pieces (images, templates) created by other people.

F: A substandard project uses pre-made templates with no attempt to revise, or repurpose; relies so heavily on work created by other people, Creative Commons-licensed or not, that it constitutes a case of plagiarism; or doesn't function (not uploaded, multimedia doesn't work, etc.).

No evaluation: Projects receiving no grade (no points) will completely fail to address the topic or assignment, or shows evidence of plagiarized writing, or are submitted without other required assignment elements that demonstrate participation in the composition / drafting process.

Technology & Our Course

- **Lost files or computer problems will not excuse late work.** There are computer labs and other resources on campus if you have problems with your Internet connection, computer hardware, and the like.
- Major assignments will be submitted via Canvas. **If a submitted file will not open, or is otherwise corrupted, the work will be counted as not turned in.**
- You will want to bring a laptop or tablet to class sessions when we collaborate on projects.
- I am not outlawing the presence of smart phones because I want you to develop positive work habits with these devices present. Think of our classroom as a professional environment. In the workplace, you would set your phone to vibrate or silent; you might use your device to look up something related to a discussion you're having with coworkers about a project, but you would not start texting during an important meeting or while your supervisor is making a presentation. Do the same here.

- Multimedia projects take more time. Expect to put in extra time outside of class familiarizing yourself with apps or programs with which you are not familiar to complete projects. There are many online resources to help you, and you're encouraged to share information with each other.
- Learn how to learn; cultivate patience with yourself as you learn new skills. Be willing to help each other during and after class.
 - Please read the file "Technology Tips" in Canvas > Files > Week 1 Readings for more information.

Instructional Uses of Technology

The content, delivery and assessment of this course is supported by the use of the following academic technologies:

- Canvas Learning Management System for assignments, tests, grades, discussion boards, and similar class activities.
- Readings other than the required textbooks will be available on Canvas as files or as links to online material.
- Students will use common productivity tools such as Microsoft Word, Google Docs, or Libre Office – whatever word processing software you like to use.
- Students will also use programs like Garage Band and/or Microsoft Movie Maker, along with other multimedia creation apps or programs.
- In the event of increased COVID19 safety protocols or weather, class may meet via Zoom. You will need a free Zoom account to access the class if this is the case.

Teaching & Learning Methods

This is a project-based course; the assignments are designed to give you hands-on experience using various technologies, both hardware, and software. The assignments will teach you how to learn how to use technologies. This is handy because software and apps often change, so you will need to be comfortable with teaching yourself how to use new tools. The idea is to provide you with basic instruction on the tools necessary for our assignments, which should provide you with a comfort level to teach yourself how to learn technology.

Class Attendance

This hybrid class only meets in person once a week, so you should plan on attending every class session. You may miss up to three class sessions with no penalty. There are no excused vs. unexcused absences. **You don't have to tell me why you were absent.**

Having said that, we are still in the midst of a pandemic. Don't come to school sick. Follow campus guidelines if you have any COVID symptoms.

Missing more than four sessions (over a month of in-person class meetings!) means you are at risk for failing the course.

If you have an illness or family emergency that keeps you from attending classes for an extended period, email me and contact the Dean of Students office right away.

When you have to miss a class session

You don't have to tell me that you missed class, or why you were absent. If you miss a class – after reading through the course Canvas site, if you have specific questions related to what we did in class, please email me those questions. I will likely not answer emails that only tell me you missed (or are going to miss) a class, or ask the too-general and poorly worded question, “Did you do anything important while I was absent?”

Late work policy

Please do your best to meet the posted due dates. This course is designed so that the work builds upon what we do each week; we work toward our final major project by doing smaller versions of its components throughout the semester.

Late work is subject to a penalty that will increase depending upon how often your work is late, and how late the work is. Please don't wait for me to tell you whether or not I will accept the work late; just turn it in and take the penalty.

Learning during stressful times

We're all coping with the stressful environment we find ourselves in as best as we can. If you need extra help, or if you need more time with something, or if you feel like you're behind or not understanding everything, please do not suffer in silence – talk to me! I will work with you. If you tell me you're having trouble, I will not judge you or think less of you. You never owe me personal information about your health (mental or physical) or your personal circumstances. All the ways to contact me are listed at the top of this syllabus. Please don't wait until the last weeks of the semester to come to me for help!

Course calendar

Week 1 – Jan. 10 in class: Discuss what the heck “digital writing” even means! Review syllabus; quickie review of technology tips. Sneak peak at assigned reading for next week. Discuss Mini Project 1, Visual response to *The Medium is the Message*.

Weekly work: Introduce yourselves (Canvas discussion board). Read McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message*. Create and post your visual response to *The Medium is the Message*.

Week 2– Jan. 17 in class: Discuss McLuhan and *The Medium is the Message*. Share our visual responses to the reading. Defining technology and our relationship to it. Visual essay examples. Discuss Mini Project 2, Visual essay – your relationship to technology.

Weekly work: Read Gabriel, “History of Writing Technologies” in Files. Compose visual essay. Curated collection board opens.

Week 3– Jan. 24 in class: Discuss Gabriel, “History of Writing Technologies” in Files. Share visual essays.

Weekly work: Read [“A Brief History of Memes”](#); other readings tba. Share your favorite memes and reaction gifs on Canvas (discussion board). New discussion board – experiment: Go without the Internet (no apps, no games, no social media either!) and document the results.

Week 4– Jan. 31 in class: Discuss memes; Discuss Mini Project 3, Juxtapositions, Video and discussion, [how the Internet works](#). begin work on the assignment.

Weekly work: Complete and post Mini Project 3; complete assigned readings on podcast creation. Share your favorite podcasts on Canvas.

Week 5– Feb.7 in class: Review Juxtapositions work. Discuss podcasts and podcast creation; introduction to interview techniques; begin work on Mini Project 4, Mini Podcast.

Weekly work: Connect with podcast partner and continue work on the project.

Week 6 – Feb. 14 no class meeting. Use the time to finish interview and create podcast.

Weekly work: Complete mini podcast. Begin listening to posted podcasts.

Week 7 – Feb. 21 in class: Intro to online research; advanced Google search; alternatives to Google – ego surfing and what is out there online about us! Brainstorm topics for Mini Project 5, Infographic – visual depiction of data. Conduct preliminary research.

Weekly work: Complete assigned readings tba; post to Google discussion board; collect data and begin preliminary design for infographic.

Week 8 – Feb. 28 in class: Discuss infographics and software / apps to build them. Time in class to work on infographics.

Weekly work: Complete infographic.

Week 9 – March 7 SPRING BREAK

Week 10 – March 14 in class: brainstorming: what story do you want to tell? Digital / multimedia / multimodal definitions. 30 second documentary project and multimodal information campaign project intros. Examples of 60 second docs.

Weekly work: Reading, *Digital STORYTELLING Cookbook*; conduct preliminary topic research.

Week 11 – March 21 in class: tips on video and photography; means of video production. Small group work – topic pitches.

Weekly work: Finish topic proposal. Schedule online instructor conference (March 23, 28).

Week 12 – March 28 no class meeting – finishing conferences and working on videos.

Week 13 – April 4 in class: Video workshop, come to class prepared to work on video.

Weekly work: Finish video; begin preliminary work on multimodal information campaign.

Week 14 – April 11 in class: 30 second video screenings; multimodal information campaign discussion.

Week 15 – April 18 in class: We will decide if we want to work in class or work solo on multimodal information campaign projects.

Week 16 – April 25 in class: multimodal information campaign show (tentative).

Final exam week is May 1-6.