Writing in Digital Environ ments Honors

Yeah, it's kind of like . . .

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"Life can be much broader once you discover one simple fact, and that is, everything around you that you call life was made up by people that were no smarter than you ... the minute that you understand that you can poke life ... that you can change it, you

can mould it ... that's maybe the most important thing."
                              -Steve Jobs

Required Texts:

Heller, Steven, and Véronique Vienne. *Citizen Designer: Perspectives on Design Responsibility*. Skyhorse Publishing Inc., 2003. Print.

Stolley, Karl. *How to Design and Write Web Pages Today*. Greenwood, 2011. Print.

Various texts available online and through course reserves.

Course Introduction

As a culture, our understanding of the rhetorical situation (i.e. the static communication triangle of author, text, and reader) and writing is radically changing in a world shaped by information networks, global economies, and new communication technologies. This course will focus on how different types of semiotic systems interact with or are constructed by texts produced and distributed in nonlinear ways that alter our understanding of how writers influence readers and carry out their intended purposes.

We will be reading theories on the complex systems that make up our world today, but we will also be putting those theories into practice by analyzing and producing texts that contribute to the rhetorical ecologies around us. The focus of this course is actually a question: What is writing in digital environments? We will approach this question with a subquestion: How do reading and writing practices change in digital environments? After all, the Internet is made of writing. Code is writing. Protocols are writing. Web pages are writing. What we call "social media" is usually just a bunch of people writing to each other in a specific genre, say one that has 160 characters or less. Like all writing, writing in these digital environments organizes human behavior. Unlike other forms of writing, however, writing in digital environments also organizes machine behavior. Machines and tools influence the way humans write as much as the way we write influences machines and together we make the world.

Writing in Digital Environments is a class that explores digital writing for both humans and machines. As such, the class will ask you as students to approach a variety of writing and coding situations not from a "coder" mentality but from a "writers" mentality. Some parts of this class are "technical" in nature but you should not let that scare you off (alternatively, you should not think this class will be a cake walk because you know Python!). Approaching digital environments from a "writers" perspective means paying attention to code but also paying attention to things like digital rhetoric, cultivating communities both online and off, access, and network logic.

The topics we cover, the readings we do, and the discussions we have in this course should help us to:
- explore and understand digital writing spaces as deeply rhetorical spaces;
- better understand the multiple and layered elements of digital writing conventions and digital documents;
- learn to use social media tools for collaborative work;

- learn the modes, consequences, some of the responsibilities and dangers of different kinds of digital participation, from curation to blogging;
- understand the sociocultural dynamics of digital writing spaces;
- distinguish the characteristics and methods, advantages and pitfalls, of virtual communities, smart mobs, collective intelligence, crowdsourcing, social production, collaborative consumption and wiki collaboration;
- recognize the ways the structure and dynamics of networks affect the behaviors of populations, the elements of applying of social network analysis to online culture, the dynamics of social capital online, the steps necessary to cultivate personal learning networks;
- become more effective writers and communicators in print and digitally mediated spaces;
- become familiar with competing perspectives on social media practices and their effects; learn how to make analytic arguments regarding key debates around the use of social media;

Policies: *The management regrets to inform you . . .*

- I will use e-mail to communicate important information about the class. Make sure your Knights email account is working and check it regularly. Please contact me via my gmail wallsphd@ucf.edu (rather than via Webcourses) when you need to reach me. I'm usually pretty good at getting back to student's quickly but I don't check my work email on the weekend (and you wouldn't either).
- Feel free to bring a laptop or tablet PC to class. Laptops and cell phones: If you have a laptop, bring it to class as often as you can. Of course, there will be times where I'll ask you to close your laptop and to pay attention to the face to face conversation, and obviously you shouldn't use a laptop to goof off on Facebook, ESPN.com, etc.
- Increasingly, I find students using cell phones– particularly smart phones– for useful tasks like taking notes, looking things up online, etc. I'm okay with that, but please refrain from using your phone to be distracted and/or goof off (e.g., texting with friends, surfing Facebook, etc.), and please put your phone on silent and do not take or make calls.
- Your work in this class is public. Please don't write things you wish to remain private.
- All out-of-class work must be typed.
- I will not accept late assignments for credit unless you discuss problems with me well in advance.
- If an assignment is lost or missing, you must provide another copy no matter whose fault it is (so keep back ups of everything!).
- Absences beyond three will severely affect your participation and professionalism grade (as explained below). Four absences may result in a D (60/100). Five absences may result in an F (0/100) points. Be on time. Two tardies equal one absence.
- Technology breakdowns happen. Be flexible (don't freak out if Webcourses goes down) and aware (backup your files--try Dropbox--and use anti-virus software) in order to keep our stress level as low as possible.

Plagiarism

As the Council of Writing Program Administrators puts it, "Plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately passes off another's words or ideas without acknowledging their source. For example, turning another's work as your own is plagiarism." Don't do this. If you plagiarize

in this class, you will likely fail the class and your case may be passed to the university for additional disciplinary action. (Taken from Steve Krause's blog. See how easy that is?)

Citation/Documentation Style:

We will be using MLA (Modern Language Association) style citation. Here are a few online resources for this style:

> The Purdue University Online Writing Lab @
> http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html
> or, a personal favorite, Research and Documentation Online @
> http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities.html
> A MLA sample paper
> http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c08_s5.html

Assignments:

Personal Digital Ecology Project- 100 points

Digital writing acts on you. In this assignment, you will research your own current digital writing practices and identities, and reflect on when and where you typically interact with digital media. We will refer to this as your personal digital media ecology. After conducting research, you'll create an infographic to represent your findings & draw on what you learned to create a personal/professional blog site of your choice. Your blog site will become your public digital writing outlet for the remainder of the semester, and you will share your infographic there as your first required posting.

Collaborative Wiki Book Review - 100 points

In this assignment, we will work as a class to review *Citizen Designer: Perspectives on Design Responsibility*, an edited collection that addresses the cultural implications and responsibilities of technological design. We will draft the review on a wiki, and you will practice writing and editing in a wiki forum. After the writing process, you'll create an individual blog posting that reflects on collaborative process and what you learned from it.

Grade	Percentage
A	100 - 94 percent
A-	93 – 90 percent
B+	89 – 87 percent
B	86 – 83 percent
B-	82 – 80 percent
C+	79 – 77 percent
C	76 – 73 percent
C-	72 – 70 percent
D+	69 – 67 percent
D	66 – 63 percent
D-	62 – 60 percent
F	59 and below

Course Reflection Memo - 100 points

For this final, reflective project, you will work individually to prepare a brief reflective piece, in which you critically approach and consider the work we've done this semester. It can be a memo. It can be an essay. It can be a short story. It can be a digital movie. It can be a slideshow. It can be something else entirely... The tools you use and the document you create are entirely up to you. What the document must do, regardless of its format, is provide space for you to consider the readings we've done, the goals of the course, the discussions we've had, and the work you've done this semester.

Participation and Professionalism - 100 points

Participation and professionalism are a must in this class. Your participation grade will be determined by factors such as your preparedness (bringing drafts to class, being ready for informal process reports), your willingness to be a good class citizen (working in groups, reviewing papers effectively, participating in class conversations), and your presence in class as well as in technologies that extend the class like our class twitter feed.

Microtasks - 100 points

Through out the semester, usually on Fridays, I will ask you to make things that to some degree extend what we are working on or the ideas we are discussing for the class. These will me small assignments that will involve reflection and, many times, some sort of new digital writing tool use. Each microtask will ask you to do something then write a brief reflection on the task drawing on sources from class to put the task in dialogue with other ideas.

Semester Schedule of Events by Week

This schedule is bound to change. For a more accurate and up to date version of the class schedule see the public google calendar for the class at http://4932hwidefall12.wordpress.com/schedule/

Date	Day	Work Due
Week 1 Developing a Theory of Technology & Writing		
8/20	Mon.	Introductions
8/22	Wed.	Latour, Bruno. "Where Are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts."
		Latour, Bruno. "Mixing Humans with Non-Humans: Sociology of a Door-Closer".
8/24	Fri.	Thompson, Clive. "We're All Coders Now"
		Stolley, Karl. Ch 1, "Why Write for the Web?"
Week 2 Digital Rhetoric		
8/27	Mon.	Bolter, Jay David. "Writing as Technology."
8/29	Wed.	Losh, Elizabeth. "Digital Rhetoric"
8/31	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 2, "Reading the Web"
Week 3 Complex Rhetorical Ecologies		
9/3	Mon.	Cooper, Marilyn. "The Ecology of Writing"
9/5	Wed.	Lehrer, Jonah. "The Buddy System"
9/7	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 3, "Creating Web Content"
Week 4 Visual Rhetoric		
9/10	Mon.	Ball, Cheryl E. "Show, not tell: The value of new media scholarship".
9/12	Wed.	TBA
9/14	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 4, "Standards-Based Web Pages"

Week 5 The Age of Complex Networks		
9/17	Mon.	Blakesley, David, and Thomas Rickert. "From Nodes to Nets."
9/19	Wed.	Rheingold, Howard. "Network Literacy," Part One & Part Two
9/21	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 5, "Preparing to Write and Design"
9/22	Sat.	**Personal Digital Ecology Project Due**

Week 6 Exploring Social Networking		
9/24	Mon.	Nardi, Bonnie A., Steve Whittaker, and Heinrich Schwarz. "It's Not What You Know It's Who You Know."
9/26	Wed.	Anderson, Chris, and Michael Wolff. "The Web Is Dead. Long Live the Internet".
9/28	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 6, "Accessibility"

Week 7 Access & Social Justice		
10/1	Mon.	Eubanks, Virginia "Trapped in the Digital Divide"
10/3	Wed.	boyd, danah. "White Flight in Networked Publics"
10/5	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 7, "Usability"

Week 8 Virtual Community & Social Production		
10/8	Mon.	Benkler, Yochai. "Coase's Penguin, or, Linux and 'The Nature of the Firm'"
10/10	Wed.	Kreiss, Daniel, Megan Finn, and Fred Turner. "The Limits of Peer Production."
10/12	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 8, "Sustainability"

Week 9 The Power, Crowds, Participation, & #Riots		
10/15	Mon.	DeVoss, Dànielle Nicole, and James E. Porter. "Why Napster Matters to Writing: Filesharing as a New Ethic of Digital Delivery."
10/17	Wed.	Wasik, Bill. "#Riot: Self-Organized, Hyper-Networked Revolts—Coming to a City Near You."
10/19	Fri.	(no class) Stolley, Karl. Ch 9, "Structured Content: XHTML Overview"

Week 10 Curation		
10/22	Mon.	Diehl, Amy et al. "Grassroots: Supporting the Knowledge Work of Everyday Life."
10/24	Wed.	Robert Scoble, "Seven Needs of Real-time Curators," Scobleizer.com, March 27, 2010, Blog post. Robin Good, "Real-time News Curation, Newsmastering, and Newsradars: The Complete Guide, Parts 1–6," MasterNewMedia.com, September 7, 2010, Blog posts. Rheingold, Howard. Robin Good on Curation (video) Rheingold, Howard. Robert Scoble on Online Curation (video) Henry Lowood on Curation (video)
10/26	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 10, "Presentation and Design: CSS Overview"
10/27	Sat.	**Collaborative Wiki Book Review**

Week 11 Collective Intelligence and Crowdsourcing		
10/29	Mon.	Wooley, Anita Williams, et al. "Evidence for a Collective Intelligence Factor in the Performance of Human Groups,"

10/31	Wed.	Tiziana Terranova. "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy"
11/2	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 11, "Rapid Prototyping"

Week 12 'bots as audience, 'bots as authors		
11/5	Mon.	Kennedy, Krista. "Textual Machinery"
11/7	Wed.	Lohr, Steve. "In Case You Wondered, a Real Human Wrote This Column" Pinola, Melanie. "Everyday.me Is a Journaling App for iPhone That Writes Itself."
11/9	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 12, "Writing with Source in a Text Editor"

Week 13 Community Informatics		
11/12	Mon.	TBA
11/14	Wed.	TBA
11/16	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 13, "Page Metadata"

Week 14 Wild card: TBA		
11/19	Mon.	Wilde card: TBA
11/21	Wed.	Wilde card: TBA
11/23	Fri.	(no class) Thanksgiving

Week 15 Wild card: TBA		
11/26	Mon.	Wilde card: TBA
11/28	Wed.	Wilde card: TBA
11/30	Fri.	Stolley, Karl. Ch 14, "Branding"

Week 16 Wilde card: TBA		
12/3	Mon.	Personal Course Reflection Memo Due
12/5	Wed.	FINAL

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Losh, Elizabeth. "Digital Rhetoric." Web. 11 Aug. 2012.

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Nardi, Bonnie A., Steve Whittaker, and Heinrich Schwarz. "It's Not What You Know It's Who You Know." text. 1 May 2000. Web. 11 Aug. 2012.

Pinola, Melanie. "Everyday.me Is a Journaling App for iPhone That Writes Itself." *Lifehacker*. Web. 14 Aug. 2012.

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Voyagers and Voyeurs: Supporting Collaborative Information Visualization. 2009. Film.

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