Composing Digital Media

ENG 0610 // SPring 2016 // MW 9:00-10:15 // 435 CL // Jennifer Saltmarsh <u>Jrs203@PITT.eDu</u> / Course BLOG: <u>HTTP://CDMSPring2016.BLOGSPOT.COM/</u>

OFFICE HOURS: MW 10:15-11 and By appointment in 435 CL

"We tell ourselves stories in order to live. The princess is caged in the consulate. The man with the candy will lead the children into the sea. The naked woman on the ledge outside the window on the sixteenth floor is a victim of accidie, or the naked woman is an exhibitionist, and it would be 'interesting' to know



Magic Lantern. Source: Arthur Mee and Holland Thompson, eds. The Book of Knowledge (New york, NY: The Grolier Society, 1912)

which. We tell ourselves that it makes some difference whether the naked woman is about to commit a mortal sin or is about to register a political protest or is about to be, in the Aristophanic view, snatched back to the human condition by the fireman in priest's clothing just visible in the window behind her, the one smiling at the telephoto lens. We look for the sermon in the suicide, for the social or moral lesson in the murder of five. We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the

multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the 'ideas' with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience."

-- Joan Didion, "The White Album", 1979

Course Description:

What is a story? What is the difference between telling a story and documenting a phenomenon? In this course you will explore the line between documentation and storytelling, while also exploring the affordances that various media provide. Using Audacity, we'll begin with an audio-only story. As we progress, we'll use Premiere, and other Adobe programs, to add visual, sound, and textual layers to your story. As you think through these questions in a hands-on way, you will also develop a philosophy of storytelling, an attempt to define in your own terms what makes a story a story.

W CREDIT: This is a writing intensive class designed to help you learn the mechanics of revision, by working closely with others' work in the processes of creation and re-creation. To accomplish this you will share your work and comment on other's' work, both in class and outside of class.

Grading Breakdown:

Attendance/Participation: 20%
HW (blogging, informal writing): 20%
Audio Story 15%
Revision Draft (images, sound) 20%
Final Revision/Philosophy: 25%

PARTICIPATION: I expect you to share your knowledge and insights in a way that is comfortable and appropriate. Active listening, reading, and observation are just as important as speaking and writing when we discuss course texts and peer projects. Participation includes coming to class meetings and conferences prepared and on time, taking part in class discussions, workshops, and activities. Asking questions is vital to participation, as is doing the required reading, composing, and drafting for each class, to the best of your ability.

COURSE TEXTS/MATERIALS: I'll make most texts available online as we progress through the course. We will use the following two books in their entirety. They are available for purchase at the Pitt bookstore:

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. Trans. William Weaver. NY: Harcourt, 1978. Nelson, Maggie. *Bluets*. Wave Books, 2009

Make sure you have a set of headphones and a flash drive.

Other Resources

Lynda-- professionally produced technical tutorials that all Pitt students have access to-- a great resource for anyone learning how to use editing software (or trying to troubleshoot a specific problem) http://lynda.pitt.edu

Audacity wiki-- offers both tutorials and troubleshooting. To export files from Audacity in MP3 format, you need to download the LAME encoder; there are instructions for this in the wiki. http://wiki.audacityteam.org/wiki/Audacity-Wiki-Home-Page

Getting Started With Audacity (eBook):

http://site.ebrarv.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/lib/pitt/detail.action?docID=10441075

ADOBE SOFTWARE is available on a variety of lab computers. You may want to purchase a subscription to the Creative Cloud so you have greater working flexibility outside class and TA

hours. We'll begin by working with Audacity, free audio editing software, and we'll move on to Adobe Premiere around week 4, at which point you can decide whether to purchase a Creative Cloud subscription.

LATE/MISSING WORK: You will lose a full letter grade each day an assignment is late. If you foresee difficulty meeting a deadline, talk to me before the assignment is due. Deadlines are not negotiable after the fact.

ATTENDANCE is mandatory-- this is a small, discussion- and workshop-based course, and your classmates' experiences are directly impacted by your attendance and participation. Come to class on time, ready to ask questions and take part in conversation. If you arrive significantly late or without materials on a workshop day, or are not involved in class activities. If you miss a class, you must arrange for the day's assignments to be submitted on time. This class only meets twice per week so your fourth absence is grounds for failure. If you foresee difficulty adhering to this policy due to circumstances out of your control, please talk to me beforehand.

COMMUNICATION/OFFICE HOURS/EMAIL: Due to the nature of the course, it makes most sense to meet right after class, in our computer lab, when possible. If not, I am available by appointment. I'm available to help you work through any ideas about the readings, your project, tech issues. I can also answer questions via email. I will check my email at least once a day most weekdays, but I won't always be able to reply right away, so don't wait til the last minute to ask for help on an assignment.

Beginning the second or third week of the semester, I will begin meeting with pairs of students to workshop projects. This meeting is mandatory and part of your homework grade. I hope to have met with each of you by the end of week seven. I'll make appointments as we go, so try to schedule yours when you have a genuine project or conceptual issue that you'd like to discuss with me.

TECHNOLOGY ETIQUETTE: I expect you to shut off your phone's ringer and to not text during class, as a show of respect for the work you and your classmates will produce. When we're in the lab, I expect you to be logged onto a computer only if our class activity requires it. Your active engagement in class is crucial to everybody's performance.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows: "plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source." We'll talk about how to handle other people's creations responsibly, but it is important to note now that images don't often come "from Google" and that changing a few words or lines in a quotation does not constitute avoiding plagiarism. All instances of plagiarism will result in an automatic zero on the assignment and a report to the Dean.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE/RESOURCES /TA HOURS: Once this semester gets going, the English department will hire a student with significant media production experience as a TA/lab monitor. He/she will keep our studio space open for you during non-class hours and be available to help you troubleshoot. I'll let you know about this when I have more details.

THE WRITING CENTER: Located in 317-B Student Center, 4024 O'Hara St., the Writing Center is a resource that allows you to work on your writing with an experienced writing consultant. While WC consultants are not necessarily familiar with the media production tools we're using or all of the modes that we're composing in, consultants can provide fresh eyes, help you with invention, the structure of stories, and persuasive moves. They can work with you on a one-time basis, or on a consistent basis throughout the term. Their services are free, but you should call ahead of time (412-624-6556) or make an appointment online at www.writingcenter.pitt.edu

OTHER SERVICES: If you have a disability for which you would like to request accommodation, contact both me (your instructor) and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, 412-228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. Pitt offers free personal and academic counseling at the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Specialized counseling services are available to victims of sexual assault; you can contact the sexual assault services coordinator via the main UCC phone line during weekday business hours or at 412-648-7856 (after 5 pm, Monday-Friday or on weekends). In a crisis situation, university police can also connect you with an on-call counselor affiliated with the UCC.

Course Outline: Under Construction

I have left the course outline relatively unstructured past the third week because much of the course plan will depend upon the audio stories you produce during the first few weeks. You will use two primary methods to tell your story visually: you will record video and/or photos with your cell phone, and you will experiment with remixing images and video you find on the internet or in print media. Afterwards, you will incorporate sound (music, ambient noise, audio clips, etc.) that you create or find to add another layer to your original story. The last few weeks you will revise and polish your project with an external audience in mind.

I share this syllabus with you as a Google doc because, just as you will constantly revise and update your project, I will constantly revise and update this syllabus. We will discuss all updates and homework in class, and I will post them on the syllabus regularly.

Week 1

Wed Jan 6: storytelling discussion:

"At Pegasus"-- Terrance Hayes (print) http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/pegasus# (audio)http://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/audioitem/549

"Joan"-- Eileen Myles

(print) http://www.loa.org/images/pdf/304/Joan by Eileen Myles.pdf (audio) http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poetsorg/poetsorg/poem/joan-audio-only

HW due by Mon Jan 11: Create a Blogger Account (not an actual blog of your own, this is just so you can post on the course blog):

https://support.google.com/blogger/answer/41375

- -Write down some story ideas/methods you're interested in for your course project story.
- -Download Audacity onto your laptop, peruse introductory materials on Audacity if you have time
- -Jot down some notes about what stands out to you in **one** of the following Eileen Myles poems, and come to class Monday prepared to discuss:

"Vulcan":

http://www.eileenmyles.com/mp3s/Myles-Eileen o3 Vulcan.mp3

"I Don't Know":

http://www.eileenmyles.com/mp3s/Myles-Eileen 12 I-Dont-Know Close-Listening 3 -24-09.mp3

"Autumn in New York":

http://www.eileenmyles.com/mp3s/Myles-Eileen o5 Autumn-in-New-York Close-Lis tening 3-24-09.mp3

"Aunt Anne":

http://www.eileenmyles.com/mp3s/Myles-Eileen o5 Aunt-Anne.mp3

"An American Poem":

http://www.eileenmyles.com/mp3s/Myles-Eileen o6 American-Poem.mp3

Week 2

Mon Jan 11

Introductions; discuss Myles; storytelling vs. documenting; brainstorm story ideas;

HW: -By Monday night post about what story or documentation you're thinking of writing. Choose one specific moment/strategy from one of Myles' poems to discuss what you may do in your own piece (~250 words)

-By Tues, 5pm: respond to 3 posts (~100 words each); help with idea generation

-Write a story or document some event, pondering. 1 min max, timed beforehand.

Bring your story to read aloud on Wed.

Wed Jan 13

In class: listen to stories, respond

Icebreaker responses:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/11yAB01FPPSdP7AkB23q-pvkNlqDpzMYxPvPjnFaj5sg/edit?usp=sharing

HW: -Listen to This American Life episode, "20 acts in 60 minutes":

http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/241/20-acts-in-60-minutes

-Choose one or two acts that have some element of storytelling or documentation you enjoyed, and post about it in ~250 words on course blog **by Fri night.**Respond to 3 posts **by Sunday night** (~100 words each)
Write/respond in the context of revising/expanding/beginning fresh your projects

- -Listen to BBC smartphone recording tips (https://youtu.be/q8ngvpZwxDg)
- -Look up microphone specifications and recording tips for your phone

Due Wed Jan 20, a recorded story/documentation (~2 minutes long) for in-class response:

-Revise, expand (or scrap and start fresh), record your story (~2 minutes). Import into Audacity. As you record, you can leave in flubs and start over, then edit them out later with Audacity. Watch the relevant portions of this Audacity tutorial:

http://www.lynda.com/Audacity-tutorials/Up-Running-Audacity/111697-2.html ?org=pitt.edu

If you prefer books, check out "Getting Started With Audacity" (eBook): http://site.ebrary.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/lib/pitt/detail.action?docID=10441075

Week 3

Mon Jan 18: Martin Luther King Jr. Day--no classes Wed Jan 20/

HW:

1)Watch: https://pitt.app.box.com/s/byuyfvzorpw30938lp36yrsy1v7eyk7m

2)What questions (explicit or implicit) are emerging from your story? Articulate these questions in a way that asks for a response that is more than a "yes or no" answer. Post on the course blog by Friday night.

3)Interview at least one person, with your question or set of questions. You could ask a stranger in a strategic location, or a close friend, depending on the context and the question(s). Bring in a recording of the answers to your question(s), along with your ~2 min recording. We'll discuss weaving them together on Monday. Bring headphones.

Week 4

Mon Jan 25

Listen to projects and interviews. Directions for revision.

HW: for Wednesday, bring in a working revision of your project, ~3 minutes, and/or new material for consideration

Wed Jan 27

Considering Audience/Project goals Listen to projects in progress

HW: find one or two outside sources (blog post, article, book, film, etc.) that relate to your project in some way. The source can be related loosely and conceptually, or can even be a writing model you could imitate in some way to help you create a certain feeling in your audience.

Due Wed/Fri: Post links to your source(s) on the course blog; write a ~200 word response to one source by Weds night, detailing how it will help to develop, or push your project in a new direction. Write 3 responses to other students' posts (~100 words each) by Fri night.

Due Monday: ~4 minute project draft, plus a numbered, line-by-line transcript of your project

Week 5

Mon Feb 1

~4min project plus transcript due today (for in-class editing)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rm8lCjWIojpCdHkri2GGInk FMaMS9QKJ6 C nsEMJ4o/edit?usp=sharing

Tips on writing for the ear:

http://ericrolson.com/writing/your-ears-are-stupid-my-top-ten-tips-when-writing-for-the-ear/

HW: Read *Invisible Cities*, section 1 (up to pg. 23)

Watch "Drawing with a Mouse": https://youtu.be/IYcau4rs4K4

Or, if you have a drawing tablet, watch: https://youtu.be/Ffw5NBR-BzM

Sketch one of the cities in photoshop or gimp, save as a jpeg. Bring your sketch to class on weds.

You can either use photoshop in the computer labs, or download GIMP, the free and open source version of photoshop: https://www.gimp.org/downloads/

Wed Feb 3

HW: read Invisible Cities up to pg 69. Choose another city to sketch. This time, select one sentence or phrase that strikes you, and work that portion of text into the body of your sketch, in a way that is meaningful to your interpretation of the text you selected. Bring a file of your sketch Monday, before class begins.

DUE Mon: your audio project. See below for posting instructions.

Week 6

Mon Feb 8

Due: Audio Project (4 minutes or less/15% final grade, no late submissions)
See the audacity tutorial sections on compressing/amplifying & exporting:
http://www.lynda.com/Audacity-tutorials/Up-Running-Audacity/111697-2.html?org=pitt.edu

First: compress and/or amplify your project if you're having volume or evenness of volume issues (see ch. 4)

Then: Export it as a way file (see ch. 3)

Next: Create a Soundcloud Account: https://soundcloud.com/signup, and post your way file to Soundcloud.

Finally: Create a blog post— paste a link to your soundcloud file (in the html tab, not the compose tab!) and hit publish. Due midnight on Sunday. http://shareandembed.help.soundcloud.com/customer/portal/articles/2167172-embedding-a-track-or-playlist-

Also due: have read *Invisible Cities* up to pg 69. Bring a photoshop sketch that includes text (see feb 3)

HW due Feb 10: finish *Invisible Cities* and select one city to visually represent.

This time you will begin by finding an existing image online. I suggest either using the archive.org image search: https://archive.org/details/image, or doing a google image search. Use the image you found as your canvas, and using only the eraser and/or mask tool, create your own image of the city you selected: http://blog.digitaltutors.com/understanding-photoshop-eraser-tool/

http://design.tutsplus.com/tutorials/quick-tip-layer-mask-vs-the-eraser-tool-in-adobe-photoshop--cms-24392

Wed Feb 10

Discuss erasure images

Interact with Invisible Cities opera website: http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/

HW:

- 1. Philosophy of storytelling, ~300 words, due on course blog, before Monday's class. *Bring in a hard copy for me so I can comment!*
- 2. Find a music video that uses primarily literal image representation of the lyrics. *Embed* the video in *the same blog post as your philosophy,* before class begins on Monday.
- 3. Begin collecting archival video footage to put together with your audio story.

Here are some useful sites to browse:

Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/movies

Prelinger Archives: https://archive.org/details/prelinger
Public Domain Project: http://www.pond5.com/free

Flickr CC:

https://www.flickr.com/search/?q=&l=commderiv&ss=o&ct=o&mt=videos&w=all&adv =1

Wikimedia Commons: Video:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Free media resources/Video

You can also search YouTube for things tagged "creative commons." (Here's a tutorial.)

(15 second max excerpt for each source in your final project)

Week 7

Mon Feb 15

Discuss music videos

HW:

- Find a music video that uses primarily *figurative* representation of the lyrics. Embed the video on the course blog by Tuesday night. **Also!:** in this same post, embed your 3 *Invisible Cities* photoshop images.
- Get a copy of *Bluets*
- Continue collecting archival video footage to add to your audio project

Wed Feb 17

Discuss figurative music videos

HW: — Collect archival video footage

— Watch Premiere intro tutorials:

Ch 3: Starting From Scratch: Setting Up Your Project; and Identifying and Organizing Media in the Project pane

Ch 4: *Playing and Marking Shots in Prep for Editing*; and *Performing Insert Edits*http://www.lynda.com/Premiere-Pro-tutorials/Premiere-Pro-CC-Essential-Training-20
14/170630-2.html

— *Read up to p 50 in Bluets*. Locate one section that you think speaks to the larger project of the book, so far. What is Nelson trying to accomplish with this section? With this book? Write a ~250 word blog post by Sunday night.

Bring a flash drive with your archival footage and your audio project (wav, mp3, etc— not an audacity file)

Week 8

Mon Feb 22

HW for Wed: Finish *Bluets*. Discuss a specific excerpt that struck you in the last part of *Bluets* (pg 50 or after), and riff on what that and/or the overall form can help you to do with your own project. Do this as a response to someone's first *Bluets post*.

Watch the following editing tutorials from Ch. 4:

Moving Clips and Swapping Shots; Performing Basic Trims;

http://www.lynda.com/Premiere-Pro-tutorials/Premiere-Pro-CC-Essential-Training-2014/170630-2.html?org=pitt.edu

Wed Feb 24

Bring in Premiere project. We'll continue working on timelines. *Discuss Bluets*. **HW:** Watch the following editing tutorials from Ch. 4: *Splitting Clips & Removing Material;Reviewing Timeline Navigation Techniques* http://www.lynda.com/Premiere-Pro-tutorials/Premiere-Pro-CC-Essential-Training-2014/170630-2.html?org=pitt.edu

— Find an *excerpt from a text*, and an *object of a color* that set you to thinking/feeling. **Blog:** embed a short video that captures the object, and write ~250 words in response to the object/color and text excerpt. Tease out the relationship b/w the two things. Try to approach this assignment as material for your larger project.

— Watch the Lynda tutorial *Outputting the Project* (Ch 2). Output your project.

Bring in working draft of project on Monday for feedback

Week 9

Mon Feb 29

_Watch *Amelie* intro: <u>https://voutu.be/FOgJgOrdxsY</u>

HW: download trial version of Premiere

Start Vimeo account

Continue searching for archival footage, add to your timeline

Wed Mar 2

Discuss ideas for recording film footage

Watch Yellow Plastic Raygun: https://vimeo.com/10985119

Bring in working draft of project. Try to have your timeline mostly filled in with footage (no excerpts over 15 seconds)

Week 10

March 6-13: Spring Break!

Record footage for your project

Due Sunday March 13 on Vimeo/course blog: Revision of project that includes both archival footage and footage you captured yourself, plus revised Philosophy of storytelling (~500 words)// 15% of final grade. Make sure your revised philosophy of storytelling reflects the kind of changes you've made to your project since your last draft (i.e. discuss visual elements of documenting and/or storytelling). As a postscript to your philosophy, note which footage you yourself captured.

— How to download youtube videos (I recommend ClipGrab for Macs): http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2476563,00.asp

Upload the video and revised philosophy of storytelling in a blog post. Make sure to test your video after you post it! Review Ch. 2 (Outputting the Project) if needed.

Week 11

Mon Mar 14 (Sound)

Watch: John Baldessari video: https://youtu.be/eU7V4GyEuXA

Becky: scale/position Jen: Audio levels, gain

Andrew: removing background noise in Audacity

How to make a video tutorial using Quicktime: https://voutu.be/6KRbKCqKd4s

HW: watch Ch. 8, section 1: Making Basic Audio Level Adjustments: http://www.lynda.com/Premiere-Pro-tutorials/Premiere-Pro-CC-Essential-Training-2014/170630-2.html?org=pitt.edu

Make sure your audio is relatively even. (roughly -12 for voice; -6 for other sounds).

Update: If you have experienced difficulties uploading your project to Vimeo then try saving your project as a *smaller* file, or try posting to YouTube.

Wed Mar 16

Jen: transitioning audio Jenn: Filters/Colors etc

HW: Continue working on your project. Come to class prepared to discuss an issue you'd like to resolve, or an effect you'd like to produce in Premiere. This

will allow us to plan the last few weeks of tutorial presentations.

Week 12

Mon Mar 21

__Rebecca W: Ken Burns Effect

Elyse: audio transitions

Wed Mar 23

Maddy: opacity and video/image transitions

Cat: constant gain, constant power

Watch Banksy "The Punking of Paris Hilton:

http://www.ubu.com/film/banksv.html

UbuWeb (resource for art films, music, etc): http://www.ubu.com/

http://www.xstockvideo.com

Week 13

Mon Mar 28

_Korey: lighting effects

Jacob: Old-fashioning effects

Wed Mar 30

Alex: text animation

Kati: speed up, slow down, rate

Week 14

Mon Apr 4

Juliana: borders/layers/transparency Hw: bring on Monday for peer response

- draft 500 word reflection on composing process over the semester (the class is your audience)
- 500 word revision of philosophy of storytelling (get rid of redundancy, refine your thoughts, be concise—general audience)

Wed Apr 6

Class cancelled

Week 15

Mon Apr 11

__Cassidy: ease in/ease out

Colton: viewing

Response to writing materials

HW: post revised philosophy of storytelling by Tues night (400 words or less)

(Respond to 2 philosophies by Friday)

_Oliver: stop animation Larry: triptych effect Mark: ghost effect

HW: respond to 2 philosophies by Friday night. What do you like? What questions do you have? Did you gain a new perspective, or find generative disagreement?

Final checklist:

- Make sure there are no abrupt loud spots, or quiet spots, and that everything is audible without having to adjust volume.
- Audio levels shouldn't go above -12 for voice, and -3 for other sounds
- Review Ch. 8 (Basic Audio Adjustments)
- timing/syncing of audio and visual
- lighting/brightness
- fill in your timeline!
- credits/works cited
- don't overuse material without remixing and making it your own

Week 16 ______ Viewing ______ Wed Apr 20 Viewing

Due date: April 29th post a link to your project, your process reflection (~500 words) and philosophies (~400 words)

Student Skill Resources

Alex, Comm: photoshop, html, css, social media, twitter etc

Rebecca Wardle, Comm: Wix, wordpress, audacity

Cassidy, Comm: wordpress, Audacity, social media

Korey, Comp Eng: paint, photoshop

Julianna, Marketing: wikis, wordpress, photoshop

Jen, Media, Prof Comm: PHotoshop, Audacity, html

Maddy, undeclared: Illustrator, PHotoshop, blogs, web design

Cat, civil engineering: photoshop, illustrator, movie maker, audactiy

Elyse, chem eng, comp eng: programing, app development

Larry, psych: coding, movie maker

Greg, physics: photoshop, illustrator, python

Kati: Writing: movie maker, wordpress, social media

Colton, comp eng: Audacity, photoshop, wordpress, coding

Oliver, Writing: imovie, final cut, web design

Andrew, bioengineering: audacity, photoshop, illustrator, Indesign

Becky Torres, rehab science: audacity, imovie

STORYTELLING vs/and DOCUMENTATION

<u>Vulcan:</u> begins with an object, details. colors. more rounded out? Good comparisons. metaphors. structured rambling? like thinking out loud, shows thought progression, natural, relatable, inviting, familiar, exposed and open

<u>I don't know:</u> terse, fast, confusing, meditation on a common image, but her own interpretation, plunked down in the middle of a conversation, suggests another conversationalist and what they said or asked, asks us to do more work, relatable, familiarity, comparison left open to interpretation

<u>Aunt Anne:</u> nostalgia, nationalities, makes you think about your own family, generational differences, foreignness, statements about humanity and sadness, personal and specific as a way to the general, stable story structure, then into stream of consciousness, make other people present with vocal intonation, mimicking, common themes of death, habits, rituals

American Poem: began calmly with personal story. then gets worked up, spikes in vocal intonation, trying to move an audience with emphasis on certain words, self-consciousness, honest, more rooted and direct, opinionated, political, being an outcast yet a Kennedy?, class marking, shame? facades? repetition of I am a Kennedy, incantations, important, discomfort? self-convincing?