

*“Interdisciplinary success is based upon exploration and curiosity in the service of solving a problem or answering a question, which may or may not yield the kind of tangible result we expect from [disciplinary]research”<sup>1</sup>*

## **CTIN 575: Health and Interactive Entertainment Research Lab (2-4 units)**

### **Fall 2020 Theme: “Love Matters”**

A hands-on transdisciplinary lab tackling the complex problem of capturing, defining, understanding, analyzing, summarizing, synthesizing, curating, presenting, and preserving the lived experience of romance in human relationships.

#### **When:**

Flexible schedule to be negotiated between students and instructor after minimum registration is reached.

Current schedule is:

**Mondays 1-2pm & Fridays 2-3pm PST**

#### **INSTRUCTOR**

Prof. Marientina Gotsis, MFA

<https://usc.zoom.us/my/marientina>

[gotsis@usc.edu](mailto:gotsis@usc.edu)

#### **Course Description:**

Emerging transdisciplinary research methods for conducting formative or summative evaluation of interactive entertainment-based interventions.

#### **Prerequisite:**

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<sup>1</sup> p.8 in Caruso, D., and Rhoten, D. (2001). Lead, follow, get out of the way: Sidestepping the barriers to effective practice of interdisciplinarity. White paper published by the Hybrid Vigor Institute. Retrieved June 5, 2020, from

[https://www.academia.edu/8674913/LEAD\\_FOLLOW\\_GET\\_OUT\\_OF\\_THE\\_WAY\\_SIDESTEPPING\\_THE\\_BARRIERS\\_TO\\_EFFECTIVE\\_PRACTICE\\_OF\\_INTERDISCIPLINARITY\\_A\\_New\\_Mechanism\\_For\\_Knowledge\\_Production\\_And\\_ReIntegration\\_In\\_The\\_Age\\_Of\\_Information](https://www.academia.edu/8674913/LEAD_FOLLOW_GET_OUT_OF_THE_WAY_SIDESTEPPING_THE_BARRIERS_TO_EFFECTIVE_PRACTICE_OF_INTERDISCIPLINARITY_A_New_Mechanism_For_Knowledge_Production_And_ReIntegration_In_The_Age_Of_Information)

Permission of instructor. Advanced undergraduates, graduate students, doctoral students.  
Taken as Credit/No Credit.

**Course Overview:**

Students will participate in lectures and labs that focus on one or more emerging research methods that are translatable to a new problem space. Students will be introduced to the methods and how these were developed and used in previous cases, and will then be asked to apply these methods to a new set challenge. These challenges may be proposed by the students and could be aligned with their current projects, or be set by the priority areas and partnerships of the lab. The types of deliverables expected are instruments, datasets, reports, and prototypes that are both qualitative and quantitative. Students will be working together as a group in the lab or in the field as needed. Students will also acquire standard skills in ethics and challenges of dealing with sensitive topics and vulnerable populations.

**Course Objective:**

The purpose of this course is to disseminate emerging transdisciplinary research methods for conducting formative or summative evaluation of interactive entertainment based interventions. The goal is to introduce the need and development of these methods via lectures, teach the students the basic skills and instruments to apply them and then challenge them to use them on one or more new problem spaces during the semester.

**Course Requirements - subject to change:**

**Unit Registration:** Register for 2 units if you only wish to participate in the labs and 4 units if you wish to apply the methods to a current project that can benefit from this method.

**Lectures** – In person and/or remote participation allowed. Schedules may need to be modified to take advantage of emerging resources (experts, field trips). You can also participate asynchronously if you are only registering for 2 units and observe the recorded lectures with discussions, read assigned materials and submit your weekly report.

**Readings & Resources** – Some foundational readings will be provided, as well as access to survey instruments and other USC tools for data collection and analysis.

**Ethics** – Students will be required to obtain the CITI training on doing research and complete iStar training.

**Labs** – Students must apply the methods to a new problem space, document and deliver their data, process, and notes in the end. If multiple application areas are being explored, scheduling will be adjusted to accommodate what is best for the project, its data collection needs and the various stakeholders. Feasibility will be prioritized. This is meant to be a course with flexible participation so long as the students are completing their interdependent goals.

**Project completion/Schedule** – Students must provide ~ ½ page research diary of completed activities by email to everyone during the lab periods or by the end of the week. The instructor will provide additional requirements if necessary.

**Final - see sample schedule**

**Grading Criteria:** Course will be graded Credit/No Credit, and that students will need to do B-level work or better to get a grade of Credit. Students will be asked to grade their teammates in a private survey (40%), to self-evaluate (20%) and for submitting their weekly reports (20%). Final report is worth 20%.

**Sample schedule - to be negotiated weekly between everyone.**

See **Fall 2020 Course Design Notes.**

**Sample Schedule #1 (2 units, intensive front loaded-schedule 8 weeks/3 hours per week)**

### **Week 1**

Online meeting 1.5 hour (with 10 min break)

- intros and discussion, fill out survey

Online meeting 1.5 hour (with 10 min break)

- Intro to chosen problem/topic space, write in your research journal

### **Week 2**

Film/videos/games screening/streaming 1.5 hour (with breaks between films)

- write in your research journal after each screening

Quiet reading time 1.5 hour (with breakout for discussion as needed)

- write in your research journal during/after

Homework: complete CITI ethics training

### **Week 3**

Method/case study 1.5 hour (with 10 min break)

- write in your research journal

Quiet reading/viewing time 1.5 hour (with breakout for discussion as needed)

- write in your research journal during/after

Homework: Review sample human subjects protocols

### **Week 4**

Method/case study presentation and discussion 1.5 hour (with 10 min break)

- write in your research journal

TBD based on what is needed

- TBD

Homework: Readings or mini-exercise

### **Week 5**

Work on speculative plan/protocol for conducting interviews 1.5 hour (with 10 min break)

- Write together session

Work on speculative plan/protocol for conducting interviews 1.5 hour (with 10 min break)

- Write together session

Homework: Finish your writing assignments

### **Week 6**

Conduct mock/guest interviews together 1.5 hour (with 10 min break)

- Work together session

Debrief 1.5 hour (with breakout for discussion as needed)

- Live chat notes

Homework: Finish your debrief notes

### **Week 7**

Conduct your own interviews and report back 1.5 hour

- write in your research journal

Conduct your own interviews and report back 1.5 hour

- write in your research journal

Homework: Complete readings on data analysis

### **Week 8**

Analyze and document 1.5 hour

- Work together session

Analyze and document 1.5 hour

- Work together session

### **FINAL**

Students registered for 2 units will need to wrap up any group documentation loose ends and submit a final reflection on how this could be applied speculatively to their work and how can this project scale and be applied to their field of interest as an exhibit, game, research study, etc. (1000 words max). Students registered for 4 units will apply this method or adapt this method as needed to their own projects and submit a final presentation as outlined above with a deadline negotiated with the instructor by the end of the grading period. For either report, students can also deliver it as a final in the form of a video, scientific poster, or other submission that is useful for their field of study or any format where they could get a submission credit useful in their careers.

### **Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*

<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety*

<http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

### **Support Systems**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

### **Incomplete Grade (IN):**

Grades of incomplete are given when a student cannot complete the course requirements as a result of a documented illness or an emergency occurring after the twelfth week of the semester. The instructor, the school, the department owning the course, or the student can initiate an Assignment of Final Grade for Completion of IN when the coursework has been completed. No more than one year is allowed for completion of an IN. The end of the twelfth week is the withdrawal deadline from the course.

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## **Fall 2020 Course Design Notes**

June 15, 2020

Dear Students,

Welcome to another semester of uncertainty. As I type, I am not sure how relevant the notes will be by August 17, 2020. Experienced researchers pivot all the time and trained artists improvise every moment. Unfortunately, despite how often limitations drive creativity in the world, working from a place of fear and anxiety does not produce great results long-term. Therefore, what I imagined for this course will adapt as needed while preserving the core goal: teaching the process skills of emerging transdisciplinary methods. This means that while focused on a question or a problem, we will convene to share our own ideas on how the question or problem may be approached (based on our experiences and that of others), we will decide whether the

question of problem need to rephrase or reframed, we will agree on a scope and methods, we may invent some new methods, and we will most likely not answer the original question or solve the problem.

While this may seem like a theoretical exercise, it is not. It is how we solve problems and answer questions that are very complex. Creatives may understand this period as R&D and pre-production. Researchers may understand this period as formative research. This is the knowledge that rarely gets published and is both invisible and underappreciated; it is knowledge co-produced; it is processes that are negotiated and experienced; it is outcomes that may never find the spotlight. While the pandemic has thrust everyone into crisis mode, slowing things down has become a point of luxury. Military language of “fighting a war” has seeped into our daily lives, and planning ahead more than a few days has become moot. Professional time management trainers will tell you that working only in crisis mode will eventually rob you of a future. While a lot of research is focused on the crisis, preserving and inventing both timely and timeless methods involves a lot of activities that may seem like they result in nothing tangible. These activities include reading, thinking, gathering, and listening alone and together. Such activities require a different timeline, a mindful attitude, and a heart that is free of fear of failure.

While the class is not focused on a single deliverable, it will result in what transdisciplinary research describes as shared **boundary objects**:

*Without clearly defined objectives to interdisciplinary work, what Rhoten (2004) labels as “boundary objects,” communication is inhibited among a diverse group. Bowker and Star (1999) defined boundary objects as “those objects that both inhabit multiple communities of practice and satisfy the informational requirement of each. . . . They are objects that are able to both travel across borders and maintain some sort of constant identity” (p. 16). Given the diversity of disciplinary cultures and the distinctive meanings attributed to cultural practices, the definition of boundary objects provides working goals for the interdisciplinary team. **Such goals produce shared analytical categories for team members to determine data of worth.** In addition to research objectives, other examples of boundary objects include **scholarly publications** (Star and Griesemer, 1989), the structure of an interdisciplinary research center (Girvan and Newman, 2002), and **data collection procedures** developed and shared among collaborators (Chubin, Porter, Rossini, and Connolly, 1986). These artifacts loosely guide the collective practice of an interdisciplinary team, but they can work on a more concrete and structured level in terms of individual behavior.<sup>2</sup>*

How exactly will all these materialize while we work together? First, I will be available to you only online even if you may be on campus together. Thankfully, our lab has been functioning in a hybrid way for years and our people are spread across campuses and locations so being online is not a problem. If things are safe, you may do some fieldwork in-person. Secondly, we will manage and negotiate how we work together synchronously and asynchronously, just like any robust research team. We may only meet once-weekly sometimes, and twice per week other times. Thirdly, we will use our tools (Zoom, Slack, Discord, Google Drive, etc.) to help us, not wear us out. We will be participants in so many other activities that will not have flexibility, but this class will not be one of them.

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<sup>2</sup> p.69 in Holley KA. Understanding interdisciplinary challenges and opportunities in higher education. *Innov High Educ.* 2009;34:1-131. doi:10.1002/aehe.3502

The Fall 2020 theme "Love Matters" is focused on the **complex problem of capturing, defining, understanding, analyzing, summarizing, synthesizing, curating, presenting, and preserving the lived experience of romance in human relationships**—this an opportunistic, but also classic problem of methodology that can leverage methods from every discipline. From big data to database narrative, from ethnography to documentary, from anthropology to psychology<sup>3</sup>, from cinematic arts to computer science. Linking it all together is a shared commitment to continually consider the relevance of this to public health advocacy, policy, and intervention, regardless of our disciplinary boundaries.

For this class, we will likely use a little bit of ethnography, auto-ethnography, survey design, and interviewing to capture love stories (ours, our parents/grandparents, friends, community, strangers from around the world) and look for emerging patterns of how people define romantic love, from the "fleeting" to the "enduring," from the "painful" to the "painless", and what "tests" people use to evaluate the value and impact of romance in their lives. Finally, we will think about romance and the trail of "evidence" of existence it leaves behind as a third entity that emerges between two (or more - to remain open-minded) people.

How is this important in public health? The "public" in "public health" is all of us. As for policy, every decision we make at home, in social settings, in the classroom, in the workplace, and at the university sets a standard and precedent. We are all policymakers. The shape and form of an intervention must be informed by a participatory and compassionate process. The decisions we make for ourselves and others influence romantic outcomes daily. Just think of the pandemic now and how it has impacted people's lives stranded away from each other and stranded together.

Living, loving, dying alone, or together is a complicated matter shaped by public health and other policies. A not-so-distant reminder from the past is the AIDS crisis, which was pivotal in reshaping our understanding of love (and sex and gender of course). A policy can make or break humans and human relationships. It can create trauma or foster resilience. In this time of extraordinary crisis, this class is a call to skeptics, romantics, idealists to work together and develop a new lens through which we can observe and understand romantic love.

As the course is situated in the cinematic arts, we will focus a lot on how to use our tools (e.g., games, film, interactive media, VR, social media, etc.) as both data collection and research output tools. Qualitative and quantitative methods will be reviewed and assigned as needed.

If you have taken a class with me in the past, you know that I often have a dedication or more to favorite philosophers, scientists, artists, or other voices of inspiration. For this class, it will be impossible not to dedicate it to the late USC professor [Leo Buscaglia](#) whose classic books and lectures on love inspired multiple generations of students and non-students around the world, including yours truly all the way in Greece when I was a child growing up in the 1980s. Films will be recommended and viewed together or apart as we will share our favorites, such as *The Vertical Ray of the Sun* (2000) and *Autism in Love* (2015). There aren't many/enough documentaries about romantic love. Even fewer video games. This means that we are on a good path to bridge our research into non-fiction and storytelling related to romantic love.

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<sup>3</sup> A special call was issue on the Cyberpsychology Journal on romance and dating during the pandemic <https://home.liebertpub.com/cfp/special-issue-on-digital-romance-and-dating-including-covid-/276/>

Holding this arbitrary boundary on romance might also help us begin to understand other forms of love.

I hope you will embark with me on this transdisciplinary lab. See you soon!

Your instructor,  
Marientina Gotsis, MFA  
USC Cinematic Arts

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### **About the Instructor**

Marientina Gotsis, MFA is Associate Professor of the Practice at the Interactive Media & Games at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, and director and co-founder of the Creative Media & Behavioral Health Center. Gotsis has a broad background in arts, design and engineering with special interest in medicine, public health and health behavior. She and her team have developed several innovative applications using games for health behavior change in topics such as child development, wellness, obesity, nutrition, exercise, autism, PTSD, rehabilitation, and eye disease. Gotsis has developed partnerships and projects with funding by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Norlien Foundation, National Institutes of Health (NIH), US Department of Defense, US Department of Education-NIDRR and the Shafallah Center for Children with Special Needs. Formerly the Media Lab Manager for the Interactive Media Division, Gotsis managed technology infrastructure and contributed to several research projects funded by Electronic Arts, Intel, Microsoft and Nokia. She has taught at USC (School of Cinematic Arts, School of Social Work, Roski School of Fine Arts), Northeastern Illinois University, Columbia College Chicago and Harold Washington College, and she has consulted for small businesses and not-for-profit organizations. Gotsis has 25 years of experience as a designer and technologist. She received a BFA in photography/film/electronic media and an MFA in electronic visualization from the Electronic Visualization Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

### **About the Creative Media & Behavioral Health Center**

Founded in 2010 following the success of the USC Games for Health Initiative, the Creative Media & Behavioral Health Center (CM&BHC) is a unique incubator for innovation in the use of entertainment applications at the intersection of behavioral science, medicine and public health. As an organized research unit between the USC School of Cinematic Arts and the Keck School of Medicine of USC, its mission is to increase public awareness of critical issues in mental health and behavioral science, and to provide hands-on creativity-based educational opportunities for health researchers and practitioners. CM&BHC relies on sponsorship from individual, foundation, federal and international organizations to support infrastructure, research and production. As of 2013, CM&BHC members have completed several research milestones, published and disseminated ideas and findings, trained and mentored a remarkably diverse cohort of alumni, and provided consulting to partners locally, nationally and internationally. Our lab space (SCI 308) is affectionately known as *The Garden*, is named to honor the Ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus (341–270 B.C.E.), whose school and community garden were dedicated to the social and emotional welfare of its students and friends. Epicurus' letters include some of the earliest inquiries into the role of homeostatic balance of pleasure (akin to

contemporary concepts of affect regulation), the definition of happiness as the absence of mental and physical suffering (tranquility), and examples of practicing mindfulness in daily living.