

Advanced Composition: Digital Storytelling (English 333)

Texas A&M University-Commerce, Spring 2013
Online, eCollege

Shannon Carter, PhD
shannon.carter@tamuc.edu
www.shannoncarter.info

Office Hours: Wednesday, 9:00-2:00 (by phone and text). Appointments are especially welcome.

Office Location: HL 209
Phone: TBA (cell)



“Ugly Man Contest”
Commerce, TX (1959)

“Campus Ice Storm”
Commerce, TX (c 1950)

“ETSU Students”
Commerce (1907)

images from Texas
A&M-Commerce
Digital Collections

An advanced composition course engaging 21st-century modalities for composing (images, audio, print, text) in what is often called “Digital Storytelling.” As the influential critic Lawrence Lessing argues, “creativity and innovation always build on the past” (Free Culture, 2004). Our course foregrounds this notion by drawing extensively from local history to retell those stories through new media--especially as represented in the Digital Collections at Texas A&M-Commerce. For this and many other reasons, any research trail that begins or ends in our university’s Digital Collections is appropriate fodder for the digital compositions resulting from this course.

Objectives

- To gain familiarity with and control over multiple modes of composition <multimodality>
- To gain familiarity and increasing facility with a range of tools (software and hardware) useful in creating multimodal texts <composing technologies>
- To learn about and use contemporary communication technologies in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes <communication technologies>
- To understand and effectively navigate the ethical considerations associated with creating and sharing multimodal texts <creative rights>
- To expand research skills by engaging in primary and secondary research inside and outside the library <research methods>
- To develop abilities to work collaboratively in a variety of in- and out-of-class activities and settings <collaboration>

Texts

Required Texts [\[purchase\]](#)

I've included ISBNs so you can explore purchase options online. All items below are available for purchase at our campus bookstore.

Kammen, Carol. *On Doing Local History*. Second Edition. AltaMira Press, 2003. ISBN: 978-0759102538

Tarpley, Fred, Ed. *Memories of Old ET*. Silver Leos Guild. 2010.

Silver Leos Writers Guild. *Non-Fiction / Fiction: Transitions Between Reality and Imagination*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011.

Required Texts [\[available FREE\]](#)

Reynolds, Daniel. Professor Mayo's College (1993)—see Webliography in eCollege

In addition to the above required texts, we will be making extensive use of texts available online. Please check eCollege for collection of additional required readings.

Recommended Texts

Carlos, John and Dave Zirin. *The John Carlos Story*. Haymarket Books, 2011.

Westhafer, Cheryl and James H. Conrad. *A Pictorial History of Commerce*, Texas.

Commerce, Texas: Friends of Commerce Public Library, 2010. Print. ISBN 9780615386645

Cimmereli, Mary. *Man of Grace: A Remembrance of Paul Wells Barrus*. Texas A&M-Commerce, 2010.

Equipment

Software [\[available FREE\]](#)

Most of what we will be doing can be done with free software on your home computer. Video editing software is among the basic software for PCs and Macs. Additional software recommended is available for free download.

In-Process Media Storage/Sharing::	Dropbox (Windows/Mac)
Manage Bibliographic Data:	Zotera (Windows/Mac)
Web Design:	Weebly (Windows/Mac)
Blog:	Wordpress (Windows/Mac)
Video Production::	Movie Maker (Windows) or iMovie (Mac)
Audio Production::	Audacity (Windows/Mac)

[audacity.sourceforge.net]

[dropbox.com]

[zotera.org]
[weebly.com]

For Windows Users--All versions of Windows since XP come with a version of basic editing software, Movie Maker, which is more than enough for what we are going to be doing in class.

For Mac Users--Macs all come with a version of iMovie, which is also quite enough for this course.

Hardware/Additional Equipment

In addition to a PC or Mac, your projects may require you to capture additional (new) video, audio, or images. If so, you'll need equipment for capturing this new media and downloading it to your computer so you can manipulate it. The vast majority of equipment you need for this course is available for checkout at the Gee Library. Checkout times will be quite limited, which means some of you may want to invest in some of your own multimedia equipment.*

Available at the Circulation Desk @Gee Library--

- Laptops
- Flip Cameras with kit (including tripod)
- Audio Recorders
- USB-camera cables
- Headphones (noise canceling)
- Large, external USB harddrives
- Headphones (highly recommended)
- DVD burner with writable DVD media and relevant software
- Mini DV Digital videocassettes (if using camcorder other than Flip Camera)
- Large, external USB harddrive (for storing media)
- Memory stick(s), for ease of sharing (at least 4 gig, preferably more)

*If you are planning on purchasing equipment or have questions about what you already have on hand, please come chat with me about it.

Assignments and grading

Brief descriptions for each assignment below and their value. Much guidance and additional directives available soon.

NOTE: Upon submission, Digital Media Projects 1-2 should be accompanied by a one-page, reflective memo in which you explain the rhetorical decisions that you made throughout the composition process. What inspired your assignment choice/topic? Why did you choose to express yourself using a particular medium? How does that medium facilitate the rhetorical purpose of your text? What thoughts/feelings/insights did you have during the process? Now that you have completed the assignment, what are your thoughts on the decisions that you made? In other words, really think through the process and write a substantial reflection that shows the careful consideration that you put into creating your text.

DMP #1: Picturing Local History [10%]

For this first major writing assignment, you will develop a photo essay about some aspect of our history in Northeast Texas. Project will draw primarily from one of our core texts: Memories of Old ET, Professor Mayo's College, or A Pictorial History of Commerce, Texas. You'll remake digital stories through archival materials available in Northeast Texas Digital Collections. Project requires students to remix relevant images from archival materials with alphabetic text in an attempt to create an identifiable narrative regarding some aspect of Northeast Texas history.

DMP #2: Moving Local History [10%]

For this second essay, you will develop a video essay (remix) about some aspect of our history in Northeast Texas. Project requires students to remix relevant images from archival materials with alphabetic text in an attempt to create an identifiable narrative regarding some aspect of Northeast Texas history. Project will draw primarily from one of our core texts: Memories of Old ET, Professor Mayo's College, or A Pictorial History of Commerce, Texas.

Options:

The first major assignment asked you to retell some aspect of our local history through photoessay (static images combined with text) or sequential art (static images presented in deliberate sequence). For this assignment, I ask you to begin retelling local history through video. Options include creating a short video with the text-to-screen tool Xtranormal, (“Xtranormal Local History”!), the slideshow editing tool PhotoStory 3, or video editing programs like Movie Maker or iMovie. You might even consider retelling local history as audio essay, perhaps modeled after popular radio broadcasts like NPR’s This American Life and using the audio editing tool Audacity. Much more about these options and more soon.

Midterm Essay--[10%]

At midterm, you will be given a set of questions drawn from your readings and discussions in the first half of semester. The goals for this are twofold: (1) to demonstrate your understanding of these key concepts as they enable you to reach the course objectives (see Syllabus, pg. 1), and (2) to begin considering your plans, based on these lessons, for the Digital Storytelling Portfolio. You will have one week to complete this essay (clock begins when I post questions for midterm).

Reflective Statement--[10%]

For this assignment, you will reflect on the work you have done for the course in terms of the major goals of the course (see “Course Objectives” above) with the overall goal of demonstrating what and how you have learned over the 15 weeks of the semester. Project should be 3-4 pages in length and will be due to me by midnight the Sunday before finals week. NOTE: Up to 10 points extra credit will be given to students whose reflection is multimodal. If you decide to go this route, your reflection will not doubt be in a format different than above. Contact me ahead of time so we can discuss what you have in mind. Due to the additional time to compose such a reflection, your due date will be during Finals Week. Again, you’ll receive many more additional details soon.

Digital Storytelling Portfolio--[40%]

For your final project, you will develop a webtext for a public audience that communicates some aspect of life in Northeast Texas. Your Digital Storytelling Portfolio should communicate that complex information in a straightforward way. Essentially the Digital Storytelling Portfolios produced in this course should offer effective companion sites to one of the course texts (Memories of Old ET, Professor Mayo’s College, or A Pictorial History of Commerce, Texas) and/or the Northeast Texas Digital Collections.

Final webtext will combine deep revisions of at least one of the major assignments created for this course (DMP #1-2), appropriate design, and extensive use of reflective elements and other materials. Web projects make it possible to combine a range of channels of communication (i.e., linguistic, gestural, spatial, etc) into a single text. The project should take advantage of these possibilities and develop through several stages, from initial overview to final presentation.

Site content will include the following: (OVERVIEW) short introduction to site contents; (TEXT) a significant multimodal texts (audio, video, photoessay, etc) revealing extensive and appropriate use of archival materials and deep revision; (ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS) bibliography of all source materials, including relevant statement regarding creative rights for each; (PROFILE) brief profile from author; (FREE ZONE) any additional, relevant contributions that might enhance the website’s overall goals and purposes.

Weekly Discussion Activities--[20%]

Regular, enthusiastic, productive, and informed participation is expected. Keep up with our readings and contribute (thoughtfully, productively) to our online discussions. That’s crucial. Specifics: Each week, you will have at least three “threads” (“Threaded Discussion Activity” or “TDA”) in which I will expect you to participate. You will find these at the “Discussion” tab listed each week, and you should contribute at least two significant posts to each TDA each week. Consider yourself in competition with your

classmates. Have you engaged the readings? the core arguments and implications of the readings and other materials under discussion? your classmates? Are your responses informed? provocative? productive? timely? If a plaque were offered at the end of the week for the Best Overall Responses to each TDA, would you win? You should. Each post should go beyond merely summarizing the required readings, but it should also be obvious from your post that you have read and completed everything assigned for the week. That's the minimum. Much better would be to post more than twice in each TDA and engage your classmates' posts as well. Otherwise, how can you "win"? :)

Timing: Post before the end of the day Monday, if at all possible. Get your first post of the week in by Wednesday at the absolute latest. As much as possible, the discussion should be a discussion rather than multiple speakers posting ideas/thoughts sans interaction. Participatory. Dynamic. One way to help make that happen is to post early in the week and again later in the week. Posting early allows others to bring you into the conversation that follows. Posting later in the week ensures that you benefit from how the discussion has progressed and get a chance to weigh in with your own thoughts.

To include: Sandbox Activities, Reader Responses, and active engagement with the course readings (and classmates!).

Policies

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Though you are not physically attending a class here, you are "here" when you show up to the online discussions (TDAs), engage with them, and get your assignments in on time. Don't skip a week. I will not let you make up the work unless you experience something dire--and I don't wish that on anyone. If something is going on that's getting in the way of your class time, please let me know.

Late assignments

You must keep up with the reading and, since each assignment builds on the previous one, I cannot accept late assignments. If you experience truly exceptional circumstances, please contact me immediately.

Official Statements

Academic Honesty: The official departmental policy: "Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion." (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b [1,2,3])

Student Conduct: All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement: Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must go through the Academic Support Committee. For more information, please contact the Director of Disability Resources and Services, Halladay Student Services Building, Room 303D, 903.886.5835.

Support

Writing Center

The Writing Center (or the “Communication Skills Center”) offers writers free, one-on-one assistance. We welcome all writers, majors, and disciplines—undergraduate and graduate students alike. In fact, we work from the premise that all writers, no matter their ability level, benefit from the feedback of knowledgeable readers. The Writing Center staff is trained to provide writers with just this service. In short, we are here to help you help yourself. In order to ensure the most effective session possible, we offer visitors the following suggestions: (1) Get started on your writing project early, and visit the Writing Center at least one day before your final draft is due. You will need time to work with the ideas and suggestions generated in your tutorial sessions. (2) Bring a written copy of your assignment, any relevant readings, and one or two specific questions or concerns you would like to discuss with us. We are located in the Hall of Languages, Room 103 (903-886-5280) and online at <<http://www7.tamu-commerce.edu/litlang/CSC/index.htm>>.



CLASS SCHEDULE [tentative]

Assigned readings can be found among required course texts, unless otherwise indicated.
All assignments are due by midnight Sunday of week assigned, unless otherwise indicated.

	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
Week 1	General	introductions, course overview Lamb, “Dr. Mashup”* Nivens* [video] “Everything’s a Remix”* [video]	Quiz (self assessment)
Week 2	Photoessay	Pictorial History of Commerce A Day in the Life* Overview, DMP#1(and schedule)	
Week 3	Memory	ODH, Chapter 1-2 Grimsley, Alexandar, and Modisette* [video]	
Week 4	Old ET	Memories of Old ET (selections) Northeast Texas Digital Collections	
Week 5	Old ET	Professor Mayo’s College, Chapter 1-2 (digital collections)	DMP #1
Week 6	Mayo	Gold, “Where Brains”* Overview, DMP#2(and schedule)	DMP #1
Week 7	Mayo	Professor Mayo’s College (digital collections)	DMP #1
Week 8	Ethics/Creative Rights	Remix Manifesto* [video] ODH, Chapters 3-end	Creative Rights DMP #2
Week 9	Ethics/Creative Rights	Bound by Law*	DMP #2
Week 10	DSP		Midterm Essay due
Week 11	DSP	Remixing Rural Texas [video]	

Week 12	DSP	Carter, "A Clear Channel"	
Week 13	DSP	Carter and Conrad, "In Possession"	TBA
Week 14	DSP	Peer Review	Final Project due for Peer Review
Week 15	Final		Digital Storytelling Portfolio due Reflections due

*available through eCollege