Advanced Composition:
Digital Storytelling (English 333)

Instructor: Shannon Carter, Professor of English
Office Location: HL 209
Classroom: SS 311
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images from Texas A&M-Commerce Digital Collections

"Ugly Man Contest" Commerce, TX (1959)

"Campus Ice Storm" Commerce, TX (c 1950)

"ETSU Students" Commerce (1907)

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]

All items below are available for purchase at our campus bookstore.

Busby, Mark. *Cedar Crossing*. Texas Christian University Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0875655451. Print.

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

Lambert, Joe. Digital Storytelling, 4th Edition. Taylor Publishing, 2013. ISBN: 97804152627030. Print.

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

Westhafer, Cheryl and James H. Conrad. *A Pictorial History of Commerce , Texas*. Commerce, Texas: Friends of Commerce Public Library, 2010. Print. ISBN 9780615386645

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.

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

PARTICIPATION, Online and Face-to-Face (30%): Each week, we will be meeting face-to-face and online to discuss/explore course readings, research, tools, and your developing projects. A few times this term, we will move our required face-to-face meeting entirely online. Those days we will make ourselves available for optional workshops with those who would like some more one-on-one time with us to complete ongoing projects. Otherwise, we will ask you to spend that time (1) developing your digital media projects on your own and (2) joining us online at some point before that optional class meeting and post in the required "Forum" and/or "Sandbox" for that week (see below).

> **"Forums":** We will hold the bulk of our class discussions in the "Forums." You will have several of these throughout the term. Our goals for each Forum are to explore the assigned readings, lectures, and other, related elements in meaningful conversation with one another, just as you would in any upper-level class meeting face-to-face. For that reason, I ask you to keep up with your assigned readings, and post in each required Forum before the deadline.
>
> **"Sandbox" Activities:** One of the best ways to learn how to use unfamiliar tools is to play with them. Indeed, "play" is an important--albeit it too often forgotten--aspect of the creative process. For this reason, I have set aside a "sandbox" and prepared a series of activities designed for you to try out new composition and research tools, genres, and materials in a low risk environment before applying them to your major writing assignments for this class. At several points throughout the term, you will be expected to participate in the "sandbox" (to experiment with tools and ideas) and the "forums" (to explore ideas and concepts more directly related to your assigned course readings). Each of these spaces will be helpful to you as you create your major writing assignments and prepare for your final project.

MAJOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (20%): Annotated bibliography, DMP1 (photoessay), and DMP2 (video essay) combine to create this score.

- **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY:** An annotated bibliography that features archival materials and related resources on a person, place, or event related to some aspect of life in East Texas. The bibliography should include at least 10 sources and an introductory statement (*one* page) framing the annotations according to your key goals concerning the selected person, place, or event. You should consider the annotated bibliography (AB) as a preliminary step toward the major assignments that follow (see below). Essentially, the AB is a proposal for DMP1, DMP2, and the Final Project. Sources should include the following: (a) at least two annotations on relevant excerpts from *Memories of Old ET*, (b) an annotation for Busby's *Cedar Crossing*, calling attention to some aspect of the book's potential relevance to the topic you have selected, especially where the connections seem particularly unclear; (c) an annotation for *Professor Mayo's College* (in Northeast Texas Digital Collections), especially as it informs your selected topic; (d) at least two relevant images from the Northeast Texas Digital Collections; (e) at least one relevant oral history from the NTDC; (f) at least one relevant document (manuscript/letter/memo/catalog/local publication, etc) that isn't an image or an oral history but can be located in the NTDC. You may also find useful materials in the digital collections at the University of North Texas (Portal to Texas History at http://texashistory.unt.edu/) and Stephen F. Austin University (East Texas Digital Archives and Collections at http://digital.sfasu.edu/).
- **Digital Media Project 1 (DMP1):** For this first major writing assignment, you will develop a photo essay about some aspect of our history in Northeast Texas. You should make extensive use of the annotated bibliography in preparing content for this assignment; however, you will also have had a number of meaningful experiences with the relevant composing tools through your experiments in the "Sandbox" and conversations in the Forums leading up to this assignment. Project will draw primarily from one of our core texts: *Memories of Old ET*, *Professor Mayo's College*, or *Cedar Crossing*. 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.
- **Digital Media Project 2 (DMP2):** For this second essay, you will develop a video essay (remix) about some aspect of our history in Northeast Texas. Again, your assignments and activities leading up to this will provide extensive support for DMP2. Like DMP1, this 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.

MIDTERM EXAM (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 final project (see below). You will have one week to complete this exam (clock begins when I post questions for midterm).

REFLECTIONS (10%): You will include (a) Reflective Memos with each of your major writing assignments (Annotated Bibliography, DMP1, and DMP2) and (b) a final Reflective Statement at the end of the course. For each Reflective Memo, you'll reflect upon a single assignment. For the Reflective Statement, however, you reflect upon the work you have done throughout the *entire* semester.

- **Reflective Memos (x3):** Upon submission, the annotated bibliography and DMP1-2 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.

- **Final Reflective Statement:** 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 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.

PEER REVIEWS (10%): For each of your major projects, you will be completing an extensive peer review of a classmate's draft and receiving your own extensive feedback, which you can apply in revision to ensure a stronger project. Your grade for this will be determined by timeliness of feedback provided and the extent to which it follows provided guidelines and provides the author constructive feedback for revision.

FINAL PROJECT: Digital Storytelling Portfolio (20%): 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. As with everything else in this course, you do not need to have any previous experience with web development tools to complete this important assignment. We will help you create a blog early in the semester, which you will use throughout the term in various ways and with lots of support. When it is time to create this final webtext, you'll be more than ready. At the end of the term, you will each present your final project to the class (see "Presentations" at calendar below).

Digital Storytelling Portfolio (DSP) 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.

POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Don't skip class. I will not be able to 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. There is no such thing as "partial attendance"—students are either present for the entire class or they are absent. Excessive tardiness can be penalized as an absence.

The university has no policy for "excused absences" except for university-sanctioned events, so please save your absences for illness, court appearances, childcare arrangements, and other situations when you must miss class.

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>.

SCHEDULE

The detailed schedule will be available before end of Week One. In our first week together, I have asked you to share your own research, teaching, and/or creative interests as writers and thinkers so I can make this course as beneficial to you as possible.