

# Advanced Composition: Digital Storytelling (English 333)

**Instructor:** Shannon Carter, Professor of English

**Office Location:** HL 209

**Office Hours:** Tuesday, 12:30-1:45; Thursday, 3:45-5:00

**Phone:** 903-886-5492

**Office Fax:** 903-886-5980

**Email Address:** [shannon.carter@tamuc.edu](mailto:shannon.carter@tamuc.edu) and [cartershannon@gmail.com](mailto:cartershannon@gmail.com)



“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.” The course begins as a workshop in the history and methods of digital storytelling. Objectives include understanding the fundamentals of dynamic digital storytelling, from seeing the story to assembling and sharing it. Students will demonstrate that understanding by assembling and sharing their own, original examples of digital storytelling. As the influential critic Lawrence Lessing argues, “creativity and innovation always build on the past” (Free Culture, 2004). For this reason, the second half of 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 second half of 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.

Lambert Joe. *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Routledge, 2013.

Goldberg, Natalie. *Old Friend from Far Away: The Practice of Writing Memoir*. Atria Books, 2009.

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.

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

### 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.

## 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 (20%):** Each week, we will be meeting online in eCollege to discuss/explore course readings, research, tools, and your developing projects. This participation will take place via two mechanisms: (1) Forums (10%) and (2) “Sandbox” Activities (10%).

**“Forums”:** We will hold the bulk of our class discussions in the “Forums.” You will have ten 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 assigned forum at least twice—once early in the conversation to get things started and again later in the discussion to keep it moving in meaningful directions.

**“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%):** DMP1 (video, digital storytelling), and DMP2 (video essay, “remix”) combine to create this score.

- **Digital Media Project 1 (DMP1):** For this first major writing assignment, you will develop a 3-5 minute video essay based entirely on your own lived experiences, interests, and/or goals. The goal is a brief video that brings together images, sound, and narrative to tell an original story about something with deep, personal connections to your own life. Throughout, you will be guided by the examples and principles of “Digital Storytelling” as expressed in Lambert’s *Digital Storytelling*. The resulting DMP1 will be a 3-5 minute video
- **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. Project will draw primarily from one of our core texts: *Memories of Old ET* or *Cedar Crossing*, guided extensively by *On Doing Local History*. 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.

**REFLECTIONS (20%):** You will include (a) Reflective Memos with each of your major writing assignments (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 (x2):** Upon submission, 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.

**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).

**FINAL PROJECT: Digital Storytelling Portfolio (20%):** Your final, digital storytelling project will be a website featuring your significant multimodal texts (video): revisions of DMP1 and DMP2. This site should include the following components: (Overview)--a short introduction to site contents; (Featured Texts)—the five-minute video sample of digital storytelling about your own lived experiences (DMP1), and the remix featuring some aspect of this life in this area (DMP2); (Acknowledgements)-- a complete bibliography of the source materials you included in this project; (Profile)--a brief profile from the author (you!), including relevant reflections on the experience of creating this project; (Free Zone)-- any additional, relevant contributions that might enhance the website's overall goals and purposes.

## 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).

## SCHEDULE

### UNIT 1: Digital Media Project 1 (Weeks 1-5)

Required Texts:

- Lambert's *Digital Storytelling*
- Goldberg's *Old Friend from Far Away: The Practice of Writing Memoir*

#### Details

Week	Begins	Activities	Deadline
1	Monday, date	Forums 1, Sandbox Activities 1-2	First Post: Before midnight Friday Final Post: Before midnight Sunday
2	Monday, date	Forum 2, Sandbox Activity 3	First Post: Before midnight Thursday Final Post: Before midnight Sunday
3	Monday, date	Forum 3, Sandbox Activity 4	First Post: Before midnight Thursday Final Post: Before midnight Sunday
4	Monday, date	Sandbox Activity 5, Forum 4	First Post: Before midnight Thursday Final Post: Before midnight Sunday
5	Monday, date	DMP1 for Peer Review	Post draft before midnight Thursday Post feedback before midnight Sunday
6	Monday, date	DMP1 for Instructor Review	Submit before midnight Sunday
		Reflective Memo 1	Submit before midnight Sunday

### UNIT 2: Creative Rights (Weeks 7-8)

#### Details

Week	Begins	Activities	Deadline
7	Monday, date	Forum 5, Sandbox Activity 6	First Post: Before midnight Thursday Final Post: Before midnight Sunday
8	Monday, date	Midterm Examination	Complete before midnight Sunday
		Forum 6, Sandbox Activity 7	First Post: Before midnight Thursday Final Post: Before midnight Sunday

### UNIT 3: Digital Media Project 2

Required Texts:

- *On Doing Local History* (ODLH)
- *Cedar Crossing* (CC)
- *Memories of Old ET* (MOET)

#### Details

Week	Begins	Activities	Assigned Readings	Deadlines
9	Monday, date	Forum 7 (ODLH), Sandbox Activity 8 (MOET)	ODLH, Forward, chapters 1-2; Lecture on DMP2; Assignment sheet for DMP2; MOET (select one story)	First Post: Before midnight Thursday Final Post: Before midnight Sunday

			to discuss in SA8)	
10	Monday, date	Forum 8 (ODLH); Sandbox Activity 9 (CC)	ODLH, Chapters 3,4, and 6; CC, Chapters 1-3	First Post: Before midnight Thursday Final Post: Before midnight Sunday
11	Monday, date	Forum 9 (ODLH); Sandbox Activity 10 (CC or MOET)	ODLH, Chapters 7-9; CC, Chapters 4-7	Post draft before midnight Thursday Post feedback before midnight Sunday
12	Monday, date	Forum 10 (CC)	CC, Chapter 7-end	Post draft before midnight Thursday Post feedback before midnight Sunday
		Peer Review: Storyboard for DMP2		Post draft before midnight Thursday Post feedback before midnight Sunday
13	Monday, date	Peer Review: DMP2		Post draft before midnight Tuesday, date
14	Monday, date	Peer Review: DMP2		Post feedback before midnight Tuesday, date
		DMP2 due for Instructor Review		Submit final, revised DMP2 before midnight Sunday, 12/3
		Reflective Memo 2		Submit before midnight Sunday

#### UNIT 4: Digital Storytelling Portfolio

##### Details

Week	Begins	Activities	Deadline
15	Monday, date	Peer Review: Final Reflections	Post draft before midnight Thursday Post feedback before midnight Sunday
		DSP due for Peer Review	Post draft before midnight Thursday Post feedback before midnight Sunday
<b>Final Exams Week</b>		DSP for Instructor Review	Submit before midnight Wednesday, date
		Final Reflections	Submit before midnight Wednesday, date