NARRATIVE & TECHNOLOGY
ENGLIT 512 // CL135 // MWF 1-1:50

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Office hours:
Tu 4-5, W 2-4
CL 453

This course explores the relationship between emerging technologies and literary practices of storytelling. Together, we'll think through how digital technology shapes contemporary narratives from development to distribution to consumption. We'll ask questions like: How does each medium inflect the stories told through it? Can we use technology to better understand the way narratives work? How do stories shape a technology's life the world, and the impact it has on people? We'll look at media you probably think of as new (video games, interactive fiction, augmented reality), but we'll also consider how older forms are in conversation with emerging ones.

The theme for this section is *embodiment*. From biometric scanning to haptic controls and wearable devices, technology interfaces with human bodies in increasingly intimate ways. At the same time, machines make narratives out of our bodies. They sort us into categories, scan our features for signs of criminality or health risk, and project futures based on who we are and where we've been. This course asks: how can we evaluate and critique technology's stories while still leaving space for us to live among them?

W CREDIT
This is a writing-intensive course, so our work together entails serious public engagement with processes of creation and revision. Workshops and discussions will take up a significant portion of our in-class time, and you'll be expected to share your work and comment on the work of others.

REQUIRED BOOK
Ancillary Justice, Ann Leckie.
(Full text online via Pitt's library; also available for purchase on Amazon.)

All other readings will be posted to CourseWeb.

ASSIGNMENTS
You'll complete several different kinds of assignments for this course. The first are *weekly responses*: informal, prompt-driven writings in which you'll reflect upon and extend something we've done in class. These will usually be about one page of analytical writing and one page of something else (collecting quotations, annotating images, mapping a story's structure, and so on). Think of these responses as a testing ground for ideas, which you can draw on and refine in larger projects.

The ***narrative data essay*** is a 3-4 page, 900-1200 word consideration of what computational tools reveal about narrative construction. You'll select a public domain literary work to analyze, run provided code on it, and discuss what the results do and don't help you to see. (No prior programming experience expected.)

The ***media design prototype*** is a creative reworking of an existing story that adapts it into a new medium. Alongside a small media component, you'll write a 2-3 page, 600-900 word artist's statement that articulates the goals of your prototype and contextualizes them within the theories of media you've encountered in class.

The ***group project*** asks you to imagine a spatial narrative linked to the city of Pittsburgh. You'll select real-world locations around the city, curate information (nonfictional or fantastic) to attach to them, and consider how to move a player from one place to another through narrative.

The ***final project*** is purposefully open-ended. I'm calling it Choose-Your-Own-Final because – as in Choose-Your-Own-Adventure books – you control your destiny. Your project must take up questions of narrative and technology and develop out of your prior work for the class, but the specifics are up to you.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

Participation	10%
Weekly Responses	20%
Narrative Data Essay	15%
Media Design Prototype	15%
Group Project	15%
Choose-Your-Own-Final	25%

Final grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A = 92 – 100 %	All projects exceed expectations,
A- = 90 – 92 %	they are carefully edited and take risks that work.
B+ = 88 – 89 %	
B = 83 – 87 %	All projects meet or exceed expectation,
B- = 80 – 82 %	they take risks that may not always work out.
C+ = 78 – 79 %	
C = 73 – 77 %	All projects meet basic expectations, some work
C- = 70 – 72 %	may fail to take risks or need more careful editing.
D = 60 – 69 %	
F = below 60 %	Expectations not met. Work is incomplete or careless.

ATTENDANCE
Attendance is mandatory. Because this is a small, discussion- and workshop-based class, your classmates' experiences are directly impacted by whether or not you show up prepared. Come to class on time, ready to ask questions and take part in

conversation. If you arrive more than 15 minutes after class has begun or if you arrive without materials on a workshop day, you will be counted as absent. ***More than three absences are grounds for automatic failure***. That said, I understand that life doesn't always respect class schedules: ***come talk to me before you miss class*** if you expect to have a problem with this policy. If you are absent, you're responsible for finding out about and making up any work you miss.

LATE WORK
Late work receives no comments, and you lose a full letter grade for each day an assignment is late. If you expect to have trouble meeting a deadline, again, talk to me before the assignment is due. ***Deadlines are not negotiable after you have missed them.***

TECHNOLOGY POLICY
This is a course about technology. Computers, phones, and other devices will be a regular presence in our classroom, and you're welcome to use whatever technology makes you best able to contribute. That said, I expect you to be present and attentive to the work we're doing together. If you are distracted to the point that you're unable to contribute to class discussions, you'll be marked absent.

EMAIL POLICY
You can expect me to check email at least once a day during the week, and to make an effort to respond to questions within a day or two of reading them. I expect you to do the same.

OFFICE HOURS
My office hours are Tuesdays 4-5 and Wednesdays 2-3 in CL 453, and you can also contact me by email to set up an appointment at another time. Office hours are a chance for us to have a one-on-one conversation about anything related to the course or digital media more broadly: technical problems you're having, ideas for projects, questions or concerns about grading. I will not discuss individual grades in the classroom. For the sake of everyone's privacy, come to office hours. ***You're required to come see me at least once during the semester***, but when and what we talk about is up to you.

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 videos 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 0 on the assignment and a report to the Dean.

THE WRITING CENTER

Located in 317-B O'Hara 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, they can help you think through projects and provide valuable feedback on your written reflections. They can work with you on a one- time basis, or they can work with you throughout the term. Their services are free, but you should call ahead (412-624-6556) or make an appointment online at www.writingcenter.pitt.edu/

GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION
This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a name different from the one on the official class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your gender pronouns. Mine are she/her/hers.

OTHER SERVICES
If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both me (your instructor) and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-624-3346 (Fax), as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. For more information, visit www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drsabout.

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.