

Summer 2012
Saint Louis University
Department of Communication
CMM 481: Digital Storytelling
M/T/W/R 10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Dr. Mary Gould

Email: mgould9@slu.edu

Office Hrs: Wednesday – 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. (and by appointment)

Required Texts

Makagon, Daniel and Mark Neumann. *Recording Culture: Audio Documentary and the Ethnographic Experience*. Sage Publications, Inc, 2008.

Reading Packet (Course Blog)

Additional Course Material

Course Blog: <http://sludigitalstorytelling.wordpress.com>

Course Description

In its most literal interpretation digital storytelling is the practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories. Digital storytelling can incorporate a mixture of images, text, sound, audio narration, video and/or music. As an intellectual practice digital storytelling incorporates extensive interviewing, writing, research, and production methods. As a social and cultural practice digital storytelling is a way to learn about and represent the narratives existing within various communities. This course involves employing the key skills needed to create a digital story: (1) qualitative research methods, (2) narrative writing, and (3) digital production. Students in this course will explore the practical and theoretical components of cultural reporting and storytelling. As a class we will analyze written, audio, video and cinematic approaches to storytelling. Through this process we will consider varying perspectives on the interpretation and representation of cultural experience. Theoretical components of the course will address modes of ethnographic research, cultural studies approaches to meaning making processes, and issues of aesthetics in cultural representations. As a culmination of the research process students will produce two story projects—one audio and one video.

Course Objectives

- To understand the timeline of the storytelling tradition – oral, written and digital.
- To understand how stories give meaning and shape to our lives.
- To learn how to study and understand cultural difference through observation, encounters and storytelling.
- To create digital stories that cross cultural boundaries and create community.
- To learn advanced ethnographic research skills.
- To learn how to produce digital stories.
- To learn how to use various modes of digital recording equipment.

What You Must Be Committed To Do:

- Be present (both physically and mentally) for all class sessions so that you may learn from others and offer classmates your insights.
- Commit yourself to producing well-developed, thoughtful, and coherent written and oral work.
- Be open to listening, respecting, and working to understand perspectives that differ from your own.
- Actively participating during in-class and out-of-class assignments.

Course Policies and Additional Information

Any student who qualifies for **special accommodations**, due to presence of a disability, and feels it necessary to utilize them in order to meet the requirements of this course as outlined in the syllabus, should contact Counseling/Disability Services. Please phone the office at 91 5545858 (Ext. 230), or send an e-mail to counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu. Students may also stop by the Counseling/Disabilities Services Office. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

The registrar cautions students that withdrawing from a course and other registration matters are the student's responsibility. Please be aware of these dates and the penalties enforced for not complying.

In accordance with university policy **academic misconduct, including: cheating, fabrication of information, and plagiarism is not tolerated in this course.** The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity, such as would be expected at a Jesuit, Catholic institution. As members of this community, students, faculty, and staff members share the responsibility to maintain this environment. Academic dishonesty violates it. Although not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, it can be said in general that soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of any work submitted toward academic credit is dishonest. It not only violates the mutual trust necessary between faculty and students but also undermines the validity of the University's evaluation of students and takes unfair advantage of fellow students. Further, it is the responsibility of any student who observes such dishonest conduct to call it to the attention of a faculty member or administrator.

Examples of academic dishonesty would be copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed-book exam, submitting materials authored by or editorially revised by another person but presented as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, tampering with another student's work, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in an act of academic dishonesty.

Where there is clear indication of such dishonesty, a faculty member or administrator has the responsibility to apply appropriate sanctions. Investigations of violations will be conducted in accord with standards and procedures of the school or college through which the course or research is offered. Recommendations of sanctions to be imposed will be made to the dean of the school or college in which the student is enrolled. Possible sanctions for a violation of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. The complete SLU Academic Honesty Policy can be found at the following link:

http://spain.slu.edu/academics/academic_advising/docs/Academic_integrity.pdf

All assignments (papers, presentations, etc.) are due on assigned days and there will be **NO MAKE-UPS**. Documented emergencies, legal/religious holidays not observed by the University, or absences due to participation in University activities are the only exception to this policy, but only if those circumstances are (a) made known to me in advance (i.e.: religious holiday, band, debate, student government, or intercollegiate athletics); (b) documented (i.e.: you were ill, went to the doctor, and bring me a note); (c) verifiable. Absence without documentation on the date an assignment is due will result in a zero for that assignment. If you will be absent and it is excused your make-up will take place during or is due the next class session that you attend. Therefore, you need to come to class prepared to fulfill the assignment. Keep in mind that being absent from class does not prevent you from submitting assignments via email.

Your **ATTENDANCE** is expected at each class meeting. My assumption is that you will attend every class this semester. If you are unable to attend a class meeting it is your responsibility to make sure you have completed all assignments that might be due and that you get the material you missed from a classmate. Leaving class early or arriving late will also reduce your participation grade. Full attendance means that you arrive to class prior to its beginning and that you stay until the class period has ended. Every student will be permitted TWO unexcused absences. After your second unexcused absence you will be penalized FIVE points for each class missed, on your final grade for the class.

I also expect that you will participate and make a significant contribution to class discussions. If you are not in class you cannot participate in discussions, which will significantly reduce the participation percentage of your grade. Additionally, if you are present in class, but are distracted, either by your cellular phone or your computer, then you cannot participate. I ask that you turn off your cell phones while in class. If you must, for emergency purposes, keep your cell phone on; please

place it on silent. If you must take a phone call, first leave the classroom and then answer the phone. If you use a computer to take notes, please ensure that the use of your computer does not distract your classmates. If you are surfing the internet, you are not only reducing your own ability to focus, but you are negatively impacting those around you. While I cannot, and will not, police your computer usage, if you cause a distraction to other students around you, I will ask you to discontinue the use of your computer.

I will be available during my posted **OFFICE HOURS** and at other times by appointment. The best way to communicate with me is via email (mgould9@slu.edu). I check my email frequently. I will always make every effort to reply to your email within 24 hours.

Writing Guidelines

All written assignments must be typed, paginated, double-spaced throughout the entire essay, and use a consistent style (e.g., Chicago, MLA, or APA). Use one-inch margins and 12-point font. Please include a title page that contains your name, the date, the assignment, project title, and any other information you feel compelled to include. Please number your pages.

Course Assignments

Assignments will be discussed on the first day of class, and on designated days found in the Course Schedule. Extended descriptions of the course assignments will be engaged in class.

Each student, either individually or in a group of two, will select one topic that will serve as the concept for all of the projects for the semester. The topics must relate to some aspect of “THE CITY”. How to choose a documentary topic will be a frequent discussion at the start of the semester. Students are encouraged to choose a topic that is local and of interest to them. At three points in the semester you will be asked to describe your project topic. On May 23rd you must come to class prepared to share two to three possible project topics. Based upon discussion with classmates you must narrow your choice to one topic. This will be the topic you use as the framework for your Soundscape and Five Frames projects. On June 5th you will submit a “Project Treatment” for your audio or visual final project. The Treatment will be based upon the same topic you used for your Soundscape and Five Frames projects.

Reading Quizzes (TBA)

Reading quizzes will be used if it becomes apparent that students are not reading assigned material. The intention of the reading quiz is to ensure that every student is reading the course material and coming to class prepared to engage in discussions. Reading quizzes will be unannounced and given during the first twenty minutes of class. If reading quizzes are added to the course they will be factored into the “Participation” grade. The course instructor has the discretion to incorporate readings quizzes at any point during the semester.

Soundscape (20%)

Each student will complete a soundscape projects this semester. Find a location/place and record at least ten (10:00) minutes of sound in this one location. From the sound you record you will edit it down to a 1:00-1:30 minute sound piece. Your “soundscape” should tell a story about the location where you have conducted your recording. In other words, someone should be able to listen to your soundscape and understand the “feel” of the place you have recorded.

Five Frames (20%)

Five Frames is a project adapted from *Flicker.com*. The purpose of this project is to learn how to tell a story only with images. You are allowed five images (frames) for this project, and no words. You may not take a picture of an object with words on it. You may edit your images, but you are not required to. You must title your project, but these are the only words you may use. Your final project should contain five images and a title, there should be no other artistic/design elements added.

Digital Story Final Projects (35%)

Audio Project Treatment or Video Project Treatment (10%) A treatment is a one-page statement about your project that reviews the details of your work, from conception to completion. It is necessary to have your topic chosen and to have conducted preliminary research before you write a treatment. While a project will always change/grow/morph throughout the process it is necessary to have a sense of what you are doing before you start. As you near completion of your project, you will be given an opportunity to discuss the changes that occurred in the process of completing your digital story.

Audio Documentary (30%)

You will work individually or in groups of two to create a four (4:00) to six (6:00) minute short audio documentary focused on one topic. Your project can include interviews, ambient sound, music, narration, and other techniques/resources to create an interesting and creative non-fiction story.

OR

Video Documentary (30%)

You will work individually to create a three (3:00) to five (5:00) minute short video documentary focused on your topic of choice. Your project should include interviews, still images, video, ambient sound, music, narration, and other techniques/resources to create an interesting and creative story. Many elements of the soundscape and/or five frames projects can be incorporated into the video documentary. It is assumed that you will add many new elements as well.

Grading and Assessment

Grade Scale

93-100 A, 90-92 A-, 88-89 B+, 83-87 B, 80-82 B-, 78-79 C+, 73-77 C, 70-72 C-, 60-69 D, 0-59 F

Requirements

Class Participation	20%
Soundscape	20%
Five Frames	20%
Digital Story Treatment (audio or video)	10%
Digital Story Project (audio or video)	30%
Total	100%

COURSE SCHEDULE

(any changes to the course schedule will be announced in class and on the course blog)

Date	Topics	Reading(s)/ Assignments	Due in class
Week 1 (May 21-24)	Monday: Course Introduction: What is Digital Storytelling? Tuesday: What is Digital Storytelling Cont'd Wednesday: Doing Digital Storytelling Thursday: Entering "The Field"	Tuesday: Makagon and Neumann (<i>Introduction and Chapter One</i>) Wednesday: Review Sites: -DocumentaryWorks.org -Soundportraits.org -Storycorps.org <i>Discuss: Audio and Visual Project and Project Proposals/Treatments</i>	Due: Project Proposal—First Draft (Wednesday)
Week 2 (May 28-31)	Monday: Telling Stories for Radio Tuesday: Using Audio Recording Equipment Wednesday: Audio Recording Fieldwork Thursday: Audio Editing Workshop	Monday: Able and Glass— <i>Radio: An Illustrated Guide</i> Tuesday: Makagon and Neumann <i>Chapter Two</i> Wednesday: Watch: How to use the audio recorder (video on course blog)	Due: Soundscape (Friday)

<p>Week 3 (June 4-7)</p>	<p>Monday: Telling Visual Stories Tuesday: Visual Evidence and B-Roll Wednesday: Visual Recording Fieldwork Thursday: Visual Editing Workshop Friday: Five Frames (Due)</p>	<p>Monday: Curran Bernard: <i>From Idea to Story</i> and Writing a Documentary Treatment Tuesday: -Hampe, <i>Visual Evidence</i> And Hampe, <i>B-Roll ...</i></p>	<p>Due: Project Treatment (Tuesday) Due: Five Frames (Friday)</p>
<p>Week 4 (June 11-14)</p>	<p>Monday: Interviewing and Ethics Tuesday: Constructing the Story Wednesday: Fieldwork Thursday: Fieldwork</p>	<p>Monday: Hearing Voices: <i>Interviewing 3.0</i>; Jay Alison: <i>The Basics</i>; David Isay: <i>Documentary Notes</i></p>	
<p>Week 5 (June 18-21)</p>	<p>Monday: Fieldwork Tuesday: Fieldwork Wednesday: Project Production Thursday: Project Production</p>		<p>Due: Final Project (Friday)</p>