

**ENG 1131: Writing Through Media**  
**Section 7489: Assemblage Expression**

Spring 2010

MWF Per 7 / R E1-E3

CSE E211A / Weil 412

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This course proceeds from the fundamental understanding that we are in the midst of an apparatus shift beyond literacy and its modes of thought, toward a new and emerging paradigm of “electracy,” as theorized by professor Gregory L. Ulmer. The effects impact not only communication and identity formation but academic practices as well; this course directly puts into practice the changes and implications for commensurate methods of learning and writing, guided by Ulmer’s *Internet Invention* textbook. A second premise is that the “television age” of our parents’ generation involved audiences’ passively receiving the narratives, images, and ideology of the dominant culture—with a logic of consumers, resulting in a collective forgetting of history. In contrast, the “Internet age” situates us in a participatory role regarding information, communication, and media. As active agents and producers, we are not freely inventive but fundamentally responsible for the creation and dissemination of discourse and representations. Thus, ours will be a critical stance toward the paradigm that we have inherited, which narrowly defines American history, culture, identity, and values from the latter half of the twentieth century. This new mode of thought and expression (electracy), within the present media-cultural situation, requires innovative practices within a scholarly context that are both critical and creative; we will test the potential for a new academic writing that cultivates our intuition and responsibility alike.

### ***Course Objectives***

The goal of the course is to introduce students to the transition underway between literacy and post-literacy (electracy) in contemporary culture. This shift is approached through its rhetorical implications, with the students as producers and not just “consumers” of new media effects. Students will become familiar with the basic modes of organizing information that underlie and make coherent the apparent diversity of popular media: narrative (enigma), argument (enthymeme), and figures (trope). The desired understanding of the transition from one apparatus or technological paradigm to another is achieved by comparing the way each of these discursive modes manifests in print, film, and multimedia. Additionally, students will become familiar with the basic principles of semiotics, by pairing examples from visual and print culture, toward an understanding of new media. While this course draws upon the analytical skills of literacy for writing, it also asks students to compose narrative, images, and expressive figures in the mode of aesthetic authoring in digital and online forms. We will develop composition skills through web design as well as through blogging and “Photoshopping”—prominent practices of the new cultural logic—using freely-available software on the Web.

### **Required Texts**

*Note:* all texts available at **Orange and Blue Textbooks**

Ulmer, Gregory L. *Internet Invention* (Longman, 2003)

Spiegelman, Art. *The Complete Maus* (Pantheon, 1996)

DeLillo, Don. *White Noise*. (Penguin, 1986)

*Note:* Additional required readings hosted online (*see website for links*).

### **Assignments and Grade Distribution**

5 “Exercise” Assignments	(500 words, 10 points each)	30%
Project 1: Family and Career	(1000 words, 25 points)	15%
Project 2: Entertainment and Community	(1000 words, 25 points)	15%
Project 3: Refashioning Culture	(1500 words, 35 points)	20%
Attendance <b>and</b> Participation		20%

– including Blog Entries (10 / weekly) and Group Presentations (two)

## Assignments

**Note:** More detailed description will appear on course website, including requirements and evaluation criteria.

### Project 1: **Triangulating Position within Family and Career Discourse** (1000 words, 25 points)

**Challenge:** What reflexive knowledge can we acquire about our role in the paradigm in which we are situated?

**From *Internet Invention*:**

- 1) “Make a website documenting an important discovery, or a (founding) invention, in your career domain” (21)
  - “The goal is *invention*—the stage of gathering the materials with which to work. This of this site as a documentation, a curated display of details related to a discovery, invention, and a figure responsible” (21-2)
  - This “resembles a conventional research topic, except that rather than [forming] an argument, you are considering the material in terms of your identification with it: an event in a field of knowledge used as a feature in a self-portrait.” (22)
- 2) “Make a website documenting a scene that sticks in your memory from the childhood years of your family life.”
  - Find “the image pattern we seek for the widesite in discourse materials generated around problem issues in each” (86)

### Project 2: **Reclaiming Entertainment and Community Discourse** (1000 words, 25 points)

**Challenge:** How to engage and redefine our relation to established narratives that have informed our thinking?

- 1) “Make a website documenting the details of a movie or TV narrative, some part of which you remember from your childhood”
  - “record the part of the story that you remember” and then view again; “looking for the obtuse meaning of a story”
  - “connect your family memories and the Entertainment narrative. The connection will most likely not literal, but figurative.”  
“The idea is to map one story onto the other. The entertainment narrative figures the atmosphere or mood” (127)
- 2) “Add to your site the documentation of an exemplary story from your community, about a person or event that your community identifies with and tells about itself in its celebrations, festivals, naming practices...[and] memorials.”
  - “notice how the community in which one was raised focalizes the story of its founding and existence. ...find the point of view that expresses the values of the community” (191); plus, “locate the interpellation, what the community thinks for us, and prior to us, on our behalf. The wide image is a compass....we may use it to go in any direction.” (192)

### Project 3: **Refashioning Culture through “Widesite” and “Emblem”** (1500 words, 35 points)

**Challenge:** How would a “product” (or concept) of “the television age” look if designed in the mode of electracry?

#### Part I

- 1) “Design a website version of your image of wide scope (a “widesite”).” (18)
- 2) “Design an emblem that evokes the look and feel of your mystory.” (246)
  - “The widesite in electracry performs [the] function...as a virtual ‘potential space’ that augments the basic trust or ontological security needed in order to be creative. The ability to read and write this space digitally has the potential to do for the emotional body what the ability to write concepts did for analytical reason.” (247)

#### Part II

Using your emblem as a guide for decision (intuition), take responsibility for “rebranding” or “updating” an aspect of 20<sup>th</sup>-century American culture—avoiding judgment (ideology or reason) in favor of expressing the affect (lived feeling) of the experience. Topic should extract from the doxa (consensus) one specific issue to refashion, such as the construction of identity; collective memory and forgotten aspects; diversity and/or “dissensus”; stereotypes or beliefs from socio-cultural discourse. The assemblage expression will include heterogeneous elements, both employing and critiquing American culture from entire paradigm: narratives (2 min.), “scholarly discourse” (2 sources), autobiography (family history), and images (digitally manipulated).

## Assignments

### “Exercise” Assignments

(500 words & 10 points each)

These informal assignments serve to illustrate both attentive reading and effort toward attempting the ideas and practices that course introduces. Evaluation will correspond accordingly, with credit assigned

(**1**) for submitting work on-time; (**2**) for demonstrating both attention to assigned reading and to class discussion topics, particularly by describing insights and connections; (**3**) for providing thoughtful and relevant responses to prompts, with (**4**) specific examples from media without and outside of class, while (**5**) minimizing and/or avoiding summary, repetition, digression, and any unnecessary discussion. Supplementary details for prompts from textbook will be appear online, including deadlines and submission method (unless noted, posted by class time on student’s blog).

**Exercise 1** (due 23-Jan): “Obtuse Meanings” (p.46)

**Exercise 2** (due 05-Feb): “Memory Glimpse” (p.90) & “Mapping Popcycle” (p. 114)

**Exercise 3** (due 03-Mar): “High Concept” (p. 198)

**Exercise 4** (due 09-Apr): “Lyric” (p. 223) & “Being Singular” (p.241)

**Exercise 5** (due 16-Apr): “Automatic Emblems” (p.253) & “Default Moods” (p.290)

### Blog Entries

(10 minimum; 200 words. Credit/no credit assigned.)

Every student will create and maintain a blog throughout the semester, beginning **week 2** and due each Wednesday except when noted (*e.g.* project weeks). Entries are informal and ungraded, except for credit. This is an on-going “Research Journal,” testing ideas and compiling “materials” for the projects: associative links and media, questions and hypotheses; observations and insights—particularly connections between media within and outside of class.

While **WordPress.com** is preferred, other sites are acceptable (excluding Tumblr and Facebook).

### Extra Credit Opportunities

- 1) Comment upon or “blog about” a classmate’s entry, (for participation credit).
- 2) Respond to a classmate’s “Exercise” entry, (150-200 words; for assignment credit).  
—Replies must be productive, relevant, perceptive, and above all respectful in order to receive credit.
- 3) Compose additional “Exercise,” discussing media internal/external to class, on week without an assignment (**2 max.**)

### Final grade appeals:

Please consult me with any questions about grades. If the issue is unresolved and students ultimately request review by the English Department, they can appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

## Course Policies

The student learning outcomes for this course are as detailed in the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggened.html#requirements>.

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for **Composition (C)** or **Humanities (H)**. For more information, see: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggened.html> >

This course can satisfy the UF requirement for **Writing**. For more information, see: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggordon.html> >

## Attendance and Participation

Attending class is vital to one's success in this course, as we will both work through conceptual issues and develop practical approaches to projects; any lectures will be directly relevant to assignments. As class discussion will occupy most sessions, daily participation is both expected and recorded for the "Attendance and Participation" percentage of the final grade. Participation demonstrates adequate preparation (regarding readings, screenings, ideas); this precludes my giving pop quizzes, to which I will resort if necessary in order to ensure expected attention to assigned tasks.

Additionally, each student will be responsible for preparing and participating within a **group presentation twice** during the semester, synthesizing readings and media with toward particular techniques and approaches for the projects.

**Note:** arriving late receives  $\frac{1}{4}$  participation penalty—**four times late will equate to an absence**.

Attendance is expected and recorded for each meeting, **including** the Thursday screening / workshop period (E1-E3). Absences will only be excused for medical or religious reasons, or for official university activities (e.g. athletics), with documentation; do not assume any absences are excused, even if you notify me. Prolonged absences, even for medical reasons, will not be excused, as class sessions are a vital part of this course.

Finally, every absence after the **third** will reduce the **final grade** by a letter; students **will not pass** after the **sixth** absence.

## Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

➤ **Simply stated: do not plagiarize in this or any class.**

Any project that improperly presents material, whether deliberate or inadvertent, will not receiving credit for the assignment, under Academic Honesty rules. This includes all original sources as well as unauthorized collaboration. Given the type of course and assignments, we will review acceptable forms of using sources in our work: for example, differentiating manipulated or "refashioned" material from unaltered and unacknowledged original forms. All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code, and violations are subject to additional consequences.

For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and collusion, consult <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php> >

## Students with disabilities:

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom.

For more information about Student Disability Services, see: <http://dso.ufl.edu/drc/> >

## Statement on harassment:

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see the Student Conduct Code at

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041> >

## Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments

(subject to change, particularly films and online readings; always consult website)

W	6-Jan	1 <sup>st</sup> class — “Method” & “Object” of study	
R	7-Jan	Technical Setup: Blogs and UF web hosting (Plaza)	<b>Screening:</b> <i>The Sopranos</i> (2002)
F	8-Jan	Read & Discuss: <i>Internet Invention</i> Introduction (1-16)	
M	11-Jan	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 1 (18-42): “Mystory”	Discuss: <b>Part One</b> “Career” Discourse”
W	13-Jan	online reading: Bobby Rabyd, <i>Sunshine '69</i> (1996)	Discuss: New Media / Hypertext
R	14-Jan	<b>Screening:</b> <i>Synechdoche, New York</i> (Dir. Kauffman, 2008)	[ or <i>Adaptation</i> (2002) ]
F	15-Jan	<b>Due:</b> First Blog Entry	Discuss: Project 1 (1 <sup>st</sup> Component)
M	18-Jan	<b>No Classes—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</b>	
W	20-Jan	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 2 (43-68): “Image”; <b>plus</b> Caitlin Fisher, <i>These Waves of Girls</i> (2001) (online)	
R	21-Jan	<b>Screening:</b> <i>Waking Life</i> (Dir. Linklater, 2002)	[ or <i>A Scanner Darkly</i> (2006) ]
F	23-Jan	<b>Due:</b> <b>Exercise 1</b> Assignment (“Obtuse Meanings” p.46)	Discuss: Films & Project 1
M	25-Jan	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 3 (72-94): “Home and Family”	Discuss: <b>Part Two</b> “Family Discourse”
W	27-Jan	online reading: Shelley Jackson, <i>The Doll Games</i> (2001) and <i>my body—a Wunderkammer</i> (1997)	
R	28-Jan	<b>Screening:</b> <i>Sink or Swim</i> & <i>Hide and Seek</i> (Dir. Friedrich, 2007)	[ or <i>Rachel Getting Married</i> (2008) ]
F	29-Jan	Discuss: Mediating Family-Memory-Home	Discuss: Project 1 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Component)
M	01-Feb	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 4 (96-122): “Cosmogram”	Discuss: Mapping Diegesis & “Popcycle”
W	03-Feb	online reading: Jeremy Bushnell, <i>The Imaginary Year</i> (2004)	
R	04-Feb	<b>Screening:</b> <i>My Winnipeg</i> (Dir. Maddin, 2007); <i>Sigur Ros—Heima</i> (Dir. Deblois, 2007)	
F	05-Feb	<b>Due:</b> <b>Exercise 2</b> (“Memory Glimpse” p.90 & “Mapping Popcycle” p. 114)	
M	08-Feb	Spiegelman: <i>Maus</i> I (“My Father Bleeds History,” 1986)	Discuss: Narrative & Image
W	10-Feb	<i>Maus</i> I	
R	11-Feb	<i>Maus</i> II (“And Here My Troubles Began,” 1991)	Exercise: “Micro Scenes” (p.92)
F	12-Feb	<i>Maus</i> II	Discuss: “Relay” (for Project)
M	15-Feb	online reading: Mark Amerika, <i>FILMTEXT 2.0</i> (2002)	<b>Presentations:</b> Groups 1 & 2
W	17-Feb	online reading: Stephanie Strickland, <i>Vniverse</i>	<b>Presentations:</b> Groups 3 & 4
R	18-Feb	“ <b>Studio</b> ”: Workshop (praxis, “tech-support”)—Project 1	
F	19-Feb	<b>Due:</b> <b>Project 1</b>	Discuss: Reflection and Prospective
M	22-Feb	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 5 (126-53): “Interface Impressions”	Discuss: <b>Part Three</b> “Entertainment”
W	24-Feb	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 6 (155-77): “Cyberpidgin”	Discuss: Discourse & Ideology
R	25-Feb	<b>Screening:</b> <i>Brick</i> (Dir. Johnson, 2005)	[ or <i>The Chumsclubber</i> (2005) ]
F	26-Feb	Attend UF Digital Assembly <b>Conference:</b> “Futures of Digital Studies”	

## Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments

M	01-Mar	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 7 (180-209): “History (School)”	Discuss: <b>Part Four</b> “Community”
W	03-Mar	<b>Due: Exercise 3</b> (“High Concept” p. 198)	Discuss: Project Two
R	04-Mar	<b>Screening:</b> <i>Donnie Darko</i> (Dir. Kelly, 2000)	[ or <i>The Virgin Suicides</i> (1999) ]
F	05-Mar	<b>Spring Break (No Class)</b>	
M	08-Mar	Spring Break	
W	10-Mar	Spring Break	Extra Credit: Blog Entry (optional)
R	11-Mar	Spring Break	
F	12-Mar	Spring Break	
M	15-Mar	DeLillo: <i>White Noise</i> (Part I: “Waves and Radiation”)	Discuss: Postmodernism
W	18-Mar	<i>White Noise</i> (Part II: “Airborne Toxic Event”)	Discuss: Doxa
R	19-Mar	<i>White Noise</i> (Part III: “Dylarama”)	Discuss: Entertainment & Community
F	20-Mar	<i>White Noise</i> (Part III: “Dylarama”)	Discuss: Relay (for Project)
M	22-Mar	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 8 (210-20): “The Bar (Street)”	<b>Presentation: Group 3</b>
W	25-Mar	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 8 (221-45): “The Bar (Street)”	<b>Presentation: Group 2</b>
R	26-Mar	“ <b>Studio</b> ”: Workshop (praxis, “tech-support”)—Project 2	
F	27-Mar	<b>Due: Project 2</b>	Discuss: Reflection and Prospective
M	29-Mar	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 9 (246-62): “Emblem”	Discuss: <b>Part Five “WideScope”</b>
W	31-Mar	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 9 (263-77): “Emblem”	Discuss: “Readymade” vs. Ads
R	01-Apr	<b>Screening:</b> <i>Inland Empire</i> (Dir. Lynch, 2006)	[ or <i>Memento</i> (2000) ]
F	02-Apr	Discuss: Project 3—Refashioning Culture through “Wide Emblem” Method	
M	05-Apr	online reading: Jason Nelson, <i>Dreamphage</i> (Parts I & II)	Discuss: Narrative Threshold
W	07-Apr	online reading: Rob Wittig, <i>The Fall of the Site of Martha</i>	<b>Presentation: Group 4</b>
R	08-Apr	<b>No Class</b> (away at conference)	
F	09-Apr	<b>Due: Exercise 4</b> (“Lyric” p. 223 & “Being Singular” p.241)	
M	12-Apr	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 10 (278-98): “Ideal/Value”	Discuss: Ulmer’s “Remake”
W	14-Apr	<i>Internet Invention</i> Chapter 10 (278-98): “Ideal/Value”	<b>Presentation: Group 1</b>
R	15-Apr	“ <b>Studio</b> ”: Workshop (praxis, “tech-support”)—Project 3	
F	16-Apr	<b>Due: Exercise 5</b> (“Automatic Emblems” p.253 & “Default Moods” p.290)	
M	19-Apr	<i>Internet Invention</i> (299-324): “Culture Wars or Syncretism?”	Discuss: Aporia
W	21-Apr	“ <b>Studio</b> ” / Review	(last class)
R	22-Apr	No Class—Complete Project 3	
F	23-Apr	<b>Due: Project 3</b>	