

Syllabus Template



Vesalius College
Brussels

Course Syllabus CMM 263G CONVERGENCE MEDIA AND TRANSMEDIA NARRATIVES

SPRING 2017

Number of ECTS credits: 6

Contact Details for Professor

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Schedule: Wednesday : 1:30 – 4:30 (Veco 1)

Office hours: Monday : 1:30 – 3:00 (office below 1).
 Wednesday: 4:30 - 5:30

Course Description

The course aims to introduce students to how various narrative forms (including radion, television and the internet) as well as brands are currently increasingly conceptualized and produced across multiple media platforms. It will assess the major cultural, social and political changes that have occurred as a result of increased media convergence. The course analyzes how this major technically-driven cultural shift is impacting and fundamentally transforming audience participation, interaction and consumption of mediatised content.

The course provides students via a series of workshops the practical opportunity to conceptualize, create and finally produce a major transmedia narrative project in the form of a docu-drama, thus giving them the opportunity to become familiar with the tools needed to master the art and craft of writing for a number of traditional and new media formats in a cohesive and organic fashion. They will also be asked to ensure that in the process they create and manage the type of interactive space that will generate major and sustained audience participation.

A significant portion of the course will be devoted to analyzing and discussing the findings of some of the major theorist in the field, notably Henry Jenkins, Max Giovagnoli and Nuno Bernardo.

Course Prerequisites (if any)**CMM 101****Learning Objectives****The Broad Learning Outcomes of the course**

1. To acquire knowledge of Communication Studies as a science and understand and compare the academic literature of different fields of communication studies (human, mass, journalism studies and media production, research and development)
2. To be highly skilled in oral and written communication and be able to successfully address diverse audiences
3. To understand the ethical aspects of the work and the social responsibilities of professional communicators in different contexts such as interpersonal, small and large group, journalism, new media, public relations and marketing, ideally in a comparative intercultural perspective.
4. To be able to work effectively in a multinational environment
5. To be prepared to pursue a Master's Degree in all different fields of Communication Studies (get stimulated by lifelong learning) and/or attain a high-level occupation in a relevant field.

The Specific Learning Outcomes of the course

- 1) Become familiar with the various constitutive elements involved in the creation of a transmedia project and deepen the understanding regarding how each medium relies upon specific literary codes
- 2) Appreciate the various media involved in the production of a Transmedia product in general and constantly expand the tools at user's disposal
- 3) Develop an analytical mind with regards to how communication strategies in a transmedia project can be used to entertain and inform but also shape public opinion.

Applying Knowledge

- * Work within a predetermined (and preferably large) group while allowing for various forms of collaborations with different subsets and configurations of students
- * Master the art and craft of writing for different media formats, including literature, radio, photostories, webepisodes/shorts in a professional manner
- * Become more familiar with the technique of pitching a story to decision-makers
- * Appreciate the groundbreaking work done by theorists and practitioners in this new field.
- * Exhibit the ability to blend creativity with the rigors of a specific yet overarching brief
- * Work as a collaborative and thoroughly engaged unit with a view of conceptualizing, creating and delivering a cohesive narrative via the use of various media platforms.

Judgment

* Submit, produce, stage/present and defend a transmedia project at the end of the semester wherein students include, among other elements, a literary text, a radio dramatization, a short/web episode eventually followed by a synopsis/treatment for a TV pilot episode.

Communication

- * Develop a keen sense of how best to communicate with different stakeholders both within and outside the group
- * Hone their presentational skills via a constant series of presentations and exercises incorporating appropriate audio components and visuals of various kinds
- * Become an eager contributor to the various assignments that compose the end of semester project/package as well as provide constant feedback.

Attitudes

- * To be eager to apply life-long learning skills
- * Develop strong team work and networking as well as time and people management skills
- * Be very open to criticism, feedback, reactions from peers, professors and the intended audience and show a willingness to smartly incorporate such ideas and suggestions in the finished product

COURSE CALENDAR.

WEEK 1

Syllabus Review.

Defining Convergence Culture and Transmedia Narratives and related terms.

Assessing the technological implications thereof.

Explaining the scope of the transmedia project (TP) and the expected group dynamics involved in the actual production of such a narrative. Allocation of tasks and discussion on possible topics and narratives.

Defining the docu-drama genre.

WEEK 2

Read chapter 1 and 2 (*Spoiling Survivor* and *Buying Into American Idol*) in the reference book Convergence Media by Henry Jenkins and be prepared for an in-class questionnaire and discussion on said chapters.

TP: Writing a literary text and enhancing creativity. In-class exercises.

WEEK 3

Leading Question: How can one gauge grassroots creativity and how can one enhance media literacy?

Read chapter 3 (*The Matrix and Transmedia Storytelling*) and 4 (*Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars*) in Convergence Media (questionnaire and discussion).

TP: The arc of a story: tools, structure and constitutive elements.

By the end of week 3 you should have completed a final draft **literary text** as part of the TP.

WEEK 4

Leading Question: How can one democratize television? How are contemporary Politics conducted and affected by social media in the Age of YouTube?

Read chapter 5 (*Why Heather Can Write*). Questionnaire and discussion.

The art and craft of radio dramatization - The Orson Welles Case.

TP: How to write, perform and produce a radio script (1)

Guest speaker: Nico Carpentier (VUB), lecture on how audience theory has evolved on account of increased active audience participation.

WEEK 5

Leading Question: Can Popular Culture shape politics?

Read chapter 6 (*The New Relationship between Politics and Popular Culture*) and chapter 7 (*Conclusion: Democratizing Television/ The Politics of Participation*).

TP: How to write, produce and perform a radio script (2)

Storyboarding the photo story

WEEK 6

Midterm Exam Review:

TP: Rehearsal of the portions completed so far, status report and feedback session(it is expected that by week 6 students will have completed the literary text, the radio dramatization and the storyboard and/or the actual photo story)

WEEK 7

Mid-Term Exam (20%)

In preparation for the exam review the chapters and questionnaires distributed and discussed in class and refer to the lectures

You should be able to prove your ability to write a literary text and a radio dramatization in a professional manner.

Lecture on the art and craft of web series

WEEK 8

Two student presentation on a web series or an existing transmedia project, be it fiction or non-fiction. Please note that the selection of the series or project needs to be approved by the professor. It is possible to do an individual presentation, in which case the student will select a web series that should ideally be minimum 8 episode long. The individual (web series) student presentation itself should be 10-12 minute long while the two student presentation (transmedia project) should be between 15 and 18 minutes long

TP: How to write for theater (1)

WEEK 9

Leading Question: What gets lost in contemporary business practices when participatory culture is harnessed exclusively for economic gain?

Read the introduction and chapter 1 from the ***Spreadable Media*** textbook (*Where Web 2.0 Went Wrong*). Questionnaire and in-class discussion

One/Two student presentation on a web series or a transmedia narrative

TP: How to write for theater (2)

The art of staging

WEEK 10

Leading Question: What is the value for content and brands as they move between commercial and noncommercial exchange?

Read chapter 2 (Reappraising the Residual)

One/Two student presentation on webseries or transmedia project

TP/How to write a short/webepisode (1)

WEEK 11

Leading Question: How is the television industry currently rethinking audience measurement in a era of new business models?

Read chapter 3 (*The Value of Media Engagement*)

One/Two student presentation on webseries/transmedia project

TP: How to write a short/webepisode (2)

WEEK 12

(Please note that the Transmedia Project should have been completed by now)

Leading Question: What Constitutes Meaningful Participation ?

Read chapter 4

Book Report and Presentation

Last opportunity to complete the one/two student presentation

Rehearsal for week 13

WEEK 13

Hand in the full written Transmedia Project report and present/perform the transmedia docu-drama

WEEK 14

Read chapter 5 and 6 (*Designing for Spreadability + Courting Supporters for Independent Media*). Questionnaire and discussion. Review in preparation of the final exam

WEEK 15

FINAL EXAM

In preparation for the final exam, review the material, articles, lectures, points of discussion/ questionnaires and exercises done or completed after week 7

Course Materials

Textbooks:

1) *Convergence Culture - Where Old and New Media Collide* by Henry Jenkins(2006) (New York University Press)

2) *Spreadable Media – Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* by Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green (2014) (New York University Press)

Reference Books

Media Convergence by Klaus Bruhn (2010)
(Publisher: Routledge)

Media Literacies: A Critical Introduction by Michael Hoechsmann and Stuart R. Poyntz (2012)
(Publisher: Wiley Blackwell)

Case Studies and Additional Sources:

Students are actively encouraged to regularly access the following sites:

www.henryjenkins.org

www.davidbordwell.net (Observations on Film Art)

www.interstitialarts.org (The Interstitial Arts Foundation)

www.alrc.gov.au (Media Convergence and the Transformed Media Environment/
Australian Law Reform Commission)

www.viewjournal.eu (Multi-Media E-Journal of European Television)

www.fibrejournal.org

www.tedxtransmedia.com

www.projectmoken.com (Norwegian Transmedia documentary)

www.con.sagepub.com (google: Convergence – All Issues - Sage Publications) which gives you free access to all the articles in the journals published so far. Focus on two recent issues in particular:

Volume 22, Issue 5, October 2016

Volume 22, Issue 4/ Special Issue, August 2016: Connected Viewing.

Please note that each student will be responsible for selecting one article out of these two volumes and be prepared to present and animate a discussion in class from week 2 to week 6.

On a more general note and given the various media-driven elements of the Transmedia Project, students are highly encouraged to become familiar with the more technical aspects of the art and craft of producing actual audiovisual narratives (via filming, photography...) by accessing relevant literature and watching tutorials

Course Assessment

The students will be evaluated on the basis of their performance as follows.

Midterm exam:	20%
Book Report:	10%
Transmedia Project:	35%
Final Exam:	30%
TOTAL	100%

The time allocation is estimated as follows:

Reading and chapter discussion	15 hours
Creation/ presentation of Package	80 hours
Mid-term exam	10 hours
In-class participation:	30 hours
Final Exam	20 hours

Grading Scale of Vesalius College

Vesalius College grading policy, in line with the Flemish Educational norms, is now as stated follows:

Letter grade	Scale of 20	Scale of 100
A	17.0-20.0	85-100
A-	16.1-16.9	81-84
B+	15.3-16.0	77-80
B	14.5-15.2	73-76
B-	13.7-14.4	69-72
C+	13.1-13.6	66-68
C	12.3-13.0	62-65
C-	11.5-12.2	58-61
D+	10.7-11.4	54-57
D	10.0-10.6	50-53
F	0-9.9	0-49

Description of activities and Grading Criteria

Transmedia Project (a.k.a. Non-fiction transmedia project, audiovisual documentary or interactive documentary). **(30%)**

The topic of the TP project will be discussed and approved in class.

The Transmedia Project (TP) represents the culmination of all the lectures, discussions and practical writing workshops that will have been tackled over the entire semester.

The actual written portion of the TP needs to be handed in on the day of the presentation/ performance of the docu-drama scheduled for week 13.

Students will work in large groups starting on week 1 and will continue finetuning it till the day of the performance with a view to creating an original, informative and coherent interactive docu-drama. While the project is too course specific to be assessed according to the standard rubrics of the CMM department, a number of key elements will be used to grade both the written portion of the TP and the actual performance.

Among the criteria students should be aware of:

- a) originality of the project
- b) level of audience participation and interactivity generated
- c) level and quality of information accessed and provided
- d) quality of the various media-driven written elements of the project (including, radio, literary text, video etc.)

Students will need to fairly quickly decide who will be responsible for what portion of the TP and which role they will fill.

Producer(s) (maximum 2)

Assistant producers (max.2) - also responsible for raising funds via crowdfunding

Photographers (photo-story and stills)

Music composer and/or supervisor

Literary text writer

Reader of literary text (and/or narrator)

Radio dramatization scriptwriter

SFX expert/ engineer

Storyboard artist for photo-story

Interviewer/Journalist

Web episode writer max 2)

Director of the web episode

Videographer for the web episode

Costumes/ Make-up/ Props (max. 2)

Marketing unit (max. 2) - responsible for creating a) an original poster, b) a promocard/leaflet/comic-strip carton, c) an audio file/podcast and d) a trailer

Media platform webmaster and supervisor

Cast (roles in the narrative)

Casting director

Making of film

Programme (week 13)

Stage director/assistant stage director

All students are de facto researchers for the TP topic selected

A system is devised whereby the individual contribution of the members of the group is constantly monitored and assessed. Should the members of the group feel that some members did not contribute equally and fairly throughout the execution of the project, they will be assessed separately/ individually. In this respect, the frequent feedback of the nominal producer(s) will be of crucial importance.

Please note that the TP project will be filmed on the day of the performance and pending on the quality of the end product uploaded onto the Veco CMM YouTube channel. In any event, the filming on week 13 will be used for purposes of feedback as well.

Performance/Presentation of the Transmedia Project (5%)

On week 13, a course-specific questionnaire/ form will be distributed in class and filled out to assess the overall quality of the performance.

Students should expect to be evaluated according to a list of set criteria, ranging from overall quality of the mechanics involved in staging a transmedia performance/presentation (quality of diction, sound, staging etc.) to the level and quality of information provided on the topic selected.

BOOK REPORT

Individual Written Report (10%)

Students will be tasked with reading, summarizing/synthesizing and commenting upon a recent book to be selected from an approved predetermined list. The book report should be 13 pages /3900 words long. While the list is constantly being

updated, students can already consider selecting the book from the list provided below. Typically students need to summarize the actual content within 6 to 7 pages (around 1800/2100 words) and use the remaining pages to compile and comment upon the reviews and reactions from readers and users and especially the critical reviews of professionals as made available on specialized online or offline magazines. They need to end with a substantive and professional maximum.600 words/2 page long personal commentary/review.

The grade will be the result of a number of criteria, including:

- 1) Content and organization (**30%**)
- 2) The quality of the information provided (**50%**)
- 3) The mechanics of language (usage of vocabulary, grammar/ syntax, and format) (**20%**).

While the instructor is open to suggestions, you are invited to consider and select one of the following list of books (which can easily be ordered via amazon.co.uk):

- 1) *Set the Story World to Random: How to Connect with Modern Transmedia Audiences* by Krishna Scott (2015) (Upfront Publisher)
- 2) *Media Convergence in Japan* by Patrick W. Gailbraith (Editor) (2016) (Kinema Club)
- 3) *Journalism and Media Convergence* by Heinz-Werner Nienstedt (Editor) (De Gruyter)
- 4) *Practicing Convergence Journalism: An introduction to Cross-Media Storytelling* by Janet Kolodzy (2012) (Routledge)

EXAMS

Typically mid-term and/or final exams contain up to 5 questions which cover the lectures, students presentations, in-class discussions as well as the assigned chapters in the textbook. No multiple choice questions are included.

The goal of the exams is to ascertain that the students have mastered the relevant specialized vocabulary, can explain and reflect on the case studies and articles discussed in class and that they have come to appreciate the possible cultural and media-related implications of the material studied throughout the semester.

In a 200-level course, students can expect an essay type question to be included as well which will test their ability to expand and comment in a critical and intelligent fashion on an issue raised or inferred in the course.

RUBRICS AND GRADINGS

With regards to the written assignments as well as the short/long/essay questions in the mid-term and final exam, you will notice that the letter grades cover 5 columns/categories, typically ranging from A to F.

For your information, when allocating and computing the points, an **A** corresponds to 5 points out of 5, a **B** to a 4 out of 5, a **C** corresponds to 3 points, a **D** to two points and an **F** to 0 or 1 point

Further description of assessment activities

The following criteria will be applied in assessing your written work:

- A. Grading criteria give students the possibility to understand the rationale of the grading and to prepare at best for all assignments.
- B. Click here to enter text
- C. Click here to enter text

Additional Course Policies

Add policies on late papers, coming late to class, etc.

Late papers will not be accepted unless there are serious legitimate reasons.

Provision of a signed medical certificate is required, and notice must be given **prior** to the deadline.

Academic Honesty Statement

Academic dishonesty is **NOT** tolerated in this course.

Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship. Cheating and plagiarism are therefore serious breaches of academic integrity.

Following the College policy, cheating and plagiarism cases will be communicated in writing to the Associate Dean for Students and submitted to the Student Conduct Committee for disciplinary action.

If you refer to someone else's work, appropriate references and citations must be provided. Grammar, spelling and punctuation count, so use the tools necessary to correct before handing in assignments.