ENC 3414: "Hypermedia – Futures of Reading"

Professor Terry Harpold
Spring 2012, Section 036E
Tu, 10:40–11:30 AM (period 4)
Th, 10:40 AM – 12:35 PM (periods 4–5)
CSE E211A

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"Writing," observes Vilém Flusser, "in the sense of placing letters and other marks one after another, appears to have little or no future." Flusser's claim may seem less shocking if we understand that he associates the invention of writing with the invention of historical consciousness, which he correlates with a transformation by writing of experiential scenes into serial processes of representation. A way of thinking about and figuring causality and sequence, which is fundamental to writing and thus to modern literate thought, Flusser claims, is of diminishing relevance in the age of electronic and programmable – what Flusser calls *technical* – images.

This course takes as its founding assumption that we may substitute "reading" for Flusser's "writing," and perhaps "interpreting," or "decoding" (or "re– or displacing") for his "placing." *Reading*, then, according to senses that the term may have had in the age of print – during which it was bound to basic structures of reason – appears not to have the future we might have formerly imagined for it.

Reading in the age of electronic textuality – the age Jay David Bolter has referred to as the "late age of print" – must have some kind of future or futures, even if they are vexed or dire (it is hard for literate beings to think otherwise), but what these futures are, exactly, appears now unclear. (They will be, as Gregory Ulmer proposes, *electrate* rather than literate. But what that means, exactly, also remains to be determined.) By all accounts, literate populations with ready access to electronic text read as much or more than they did before. But they read differently (they "browse" and "interact"), and the objects they read (hypertexts, e-books, etc.) engage language, the hand, the eye, and the mind differently from printed works. (*Perhaps*. The degree and nature of this apparent difference is one of the puzzles we will consider.) The ongoing transformation of reading practice must, scholars such as Flusser, Bolter, and Ulmer have proposed, result also in a transformation of readerly consciousness.

In this course, we will address some of the futures of reading. Our discussions will draw on a few canonical texts of new media studies, but they will shaped primarily by collective practices of reading and writing about imaginative works of the digital field. We will read closely from a small corpus of important digital fictions and poetry of the last two decades and we will compose our responses to them in a collaborative scholarly writing environment. (All graded written work for the course will be completed in a course wiki. Basic knowledge of WWW- and image–editing applications may be to students' advantage for some assignments, but is not required.)

The course will incorporate two important events at UF related to our research agendas. "Digital Platforms and the Future of Books," the sixth annual symposium of the Digital Assembly, UF's graduate research group in new media studies, will be held on January 20–21, 2012. Participants in the symposium will include major scholars in new media studies, electronic scholarship and publishing, and the future of the book. Their presentations will be a cornerstone of our discussions thereafter. "The Art of Google Books," a gallery show at the UF's J. Wayne Reitz Union based upon Krissy Wilson's curatorial blog of the same name, will run from March 15–April 3, 2012. Wilson will give a guest lecture and tour of the exhibit for the class, and will tutor us in the discovery of new and significant oddities and errata of Google's would-be Library of Babel.

Written course requirements include individual student critical responses to some assigned readings, collaborative group responses to the Digital Assembly conference and

Wilson's exhibit, a collaborative group critical response to an assigned reading, and two exams.

Required texts

Required printed books for the course are available at bookstores in and around campus, including the UF Bookstore, and the usual online vendors. I encourage you whenever possible to buy from independent booksellers. If you choose to buy your texts online, I recommend sources such as Abebooks.com and Alibris.com because they serve independent booksellers.

> Flusser, Vilém. *Does Writing Have a Future?* Trans. Nancy Ann Roth. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. Print.

> La Farge, Paul. *Luminous Airplanes: A Novel*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. Print. *This book has a companion hypertext, which we will also read:* <http://www.luminousairplanes.com/>.

The digital fictions and electronic poetry that we will read will be drawn chiefly from two anthologies, which are available in full online:

> Hayles, N. Katherine, Nick Montfort, Scott Rettberg, and Stephanie Strickland, eds. *Electronic Literature Collection, Volume One*. College Park, MD: Electronic Literature Organization, 2006. <http://collection.eliterature.org/1/> *Assigned texts are marked below as "ELC1".*

> Borràs, Laura, Talan Memmott, Rita Raley, and Brian Stefans, eds. *Electronic Literature Collection, Volume Two*. College Park, MD: Electronic Literature Organization, 2011. <http://collection.eliterature.org/2/> *Assigned texts are marked below as "ELC2".*

These files and applications are compatible with current versions of Mac OS and Windows operating systems. Some WWW browser-based texts require Adobe Flash® or Shockwave® plugins. For these texts, Mac OS users should use current versions of Firefox or Safari browsers. Windows users should use current version of Firefox.

Other assigned and recommended readings for the course will be made available in digital formats, in the course wiki, via the WWW, or via the course's electronic reserves (Ares, <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/>). These include:

> Bush, Vannevar. "As We May Think." *LIFE* 19.11 (September 10, 1945): 112–24. *(Ares)*

Bush, Vannevar. "As We May Think." *From Memex to Hypertext: Vannevar Bush and the Mind's Machine*. Eds. James M. Nyce and Paul Kahn. New York: Academic Press, 1991 1945. 85–110. *(Ares)*

Harpold, Terry. "A Future Device for Individual Use." *Ex-foliations: Reading Machines and the Upgrade Path*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 15–43, 250–7. *(Ares)*

Other texts may be added to the list of required and recommended reading as the semester progresses. I will notify you of these changes and will update the course syllabus accordingly.

Attendance, assignments, & grading

Attendance & lateness. The texts we will read are complex, subtle, and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with required reading assignments and come to class prepared and on time. Moreover, our discussions in class will often include review of materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. After **three** absences, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class that you miss. I treat excused and unexcused absences alike in this regard. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work. If you must miss class, make sure that you turn in any assignments due for that day, and that you are ready if another assignment is due on the day you return to class. In the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

Lateness is disruptive to others in the classroom, and is strongly discouraged. If you are more than 20 minutes late to class, this will be considered an absence.

If you have special classroom access, seating, or other needs because of disability, do not hesitate to bring those to my attention, so that I may make appropriate accommodations for them.

If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances, you must notify me of this conflict well in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

The use of computers and other electronic devices in class. You may use personal computers and other electronic devices in class for purposes related to class discussion and collaboration. Casual WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, texting, etc., unrelated to classroom activities will not be tolerated. In the event of a violation of this policy, I reserve the right to prohibit the use of all electronic devices in class by individual students. Cell

phones, pagers, and other communication devices may not be used during class meetings, and must be turned off at the start of class.

Assignments & grading. All graded written assignments will be completed in the course wiki. Your final grade will be determined by the average of six written assignments:

> Individual critical response to 1 digital text: 10%
> Midterm exam: 25%
> Final exam: 30%
> Collaborative report on Digital Assembly conference: 10%
> Collaborative "Art of Google Books" project: 10%
> Collaborative critical response to 1 digital text: 15%

Three of these assignments are completed individually by each student, three are collaborative endeavors of workgroups of 4–5 students each. There are no other graded assignments in this course. I do not give make-up or extra-credit assignments.

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A	90–100	A–	87–89		
B+	84–86	B	80–83	B–	77–79
C+	74–76	C	70–73	C–	67–69
D+	64–66	D	60–63	D–	57–59

A grade of 56 or below is a failing grade (E). If you do not complete an assignment, you will receive a grade of 0. If you feel that you've been unfairly graded on an assignment, you may make a case in writing for a better grade. I will consider no grade changes without this written rationale.

You may turn in an assignment late without penalty only if you have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family. You should contact me as soon as possible when you anticipate a delay in submission of graded work.

The course wiki. The written work of this course will take place in a *wiki*, a WWW site that supports collaborative editing of shared documents by a defined group of users. In this course, we will use a wiki hosted within the course's e-Learning (Sakai) site, which you can access at this URL:

> <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>

The wiki is *not* open to the general public, i.e., visible on the Internet. Only students registered in this course are able to access documents posted on it.

You are probably familiar with large and complex wikis like Wikipedia. Wikis can also be used for smaller projects such as the collaborative reading and writing exercises of this course. Writing in a wiki is no more technically difficult than writing in a word processor, but learning how to collaborate with others in such an environment presents distinct challenges and opportunities. We will devote several class meetings to effective uses of the wiki before the first graded writing assignments are due.

Format, topics, & due dates of writing assignments. All written assignments must follow guidelines regarding format and citation methods that I will post on the wiki and discuss in class.

Individual critical responses. Over the course of the semester, the class as a whole will read six classic works of electronic literature. These are assigned reading, and must be completed by all students in the course. After drop/add is complete, I will randomly assign one of four of these texts to each student, for which she or he must complete a 500–750 word critical response. (Prior to the first due date of the first responses, I will review in class the kinds of information that a successful critical response must include.) First drafts of the critical responses must be posted to the wiki by 12 PM (noon) on the day *prior* to the first class meeting during which we will discuss the assigned text. Other students in the course are recommended to read the critical responses and, if they are inclined, to respond to them in the wiki prior to that class meeting. Students are permitted to edit (update, correct, etc.) their critical responses for a period of one week (up until the close date), at which point the responses will be graded based on the last version posted within the revision period. (For more on this two-stage submission process, see the discussion of the midterm and final exams, below.)

The midterm and final exams are open-book and cumulative to the date each is posted to the wiki. You may not collaborate with any other person when working on the exams. Because the exams are intended to be time-limited reviews of your understanding of course readings and discussions, the penalty for an exam completed after the deadline is severe: for each day that your completed exam is late, ten points will be deducted from the grade for that exam. I will not accept any exam that is turned in later than three days after its due date, in which case a grade of 0 will be given for the exam.

The exams will require that you respond to one of two essay questions, producing essays of between 900–1500 words in length. The essay questions will be posted to wiki and are due on these dates:

	posted	*due date (close date)*
Midterm exam	Feb 21	Feb 28 (Mar 2)
Final exam	April 17	April 24 (May 1)

In keeping with the collaborative and revisionary ethos of wiki practice, the submission process for your written exams is in two phases. An initial draft of your completed exams must be posted to the course wiki before the beginning of class on on the *due date*, shown above. Your exam wiki page(s) will remain editable by you up until the beginning of the class on the *close date,* shown above.

What this means in practice is that you can continue to revise your essay up until the close date. As you will during this time also be able to read other students' draft essays, you can see how others have responded to exam questions and to draw upon their work to inform and improve your own. I will in fact encourage you to acknowledge and cite other students' work in your completed essay, and to comment constructively on their contributions to our conversations around the exams. When citing other students' writing, you will be required to adhere scrupulously to correct citation practices.

On the close date, I will reset editing permissions of your exam pages in the wiki, preventing you from revising them further. Your grade on the assignment will be based on the version of the exam posted to the wiki as of the close date.

The submission process for individual critical responses follows a similar two-stage scheme, with the due date and close date for each response generally

This two-stage submission scheme, and how it is effectively realized in the wiki environment, are likely to be new to most of you. We will review requirements and best practices of the scheme in detail prior to the first graded assignment.

Collaborative report on the 2012 Digital Assembly conference. "Digital Platforms and the Future of Books" will include two days of presentations and responses by major scholars from UF and other institutions. **You should plan on attending most or all of the symposium.** For this assignment, each workgroup will produce a 900–1200 word critical response to one speaker's presentation, or to the event's culminating roundtable discussion. (Workgroups will decide individually to which event they will respond.) The first draft of this response must be posted to the wiki no later than noon, February 1. Workgroups are permitted to edit (update, correct, etc.) their critical responses up until noon, February 6, at which point the responses will be locked – no further edits will be permitted – and will be graded based on the last version posted within the revision period.

Collaborative "Art of Google Books" project. This project will draw on our readings from Krissy Wilson's curatorial blog, her guest lecture, and her tour of the blog's companion exhibit. The method and specific requirements of the project will be announced later in the semester. (For the time being, take note of the due and close dates of this project in the course calendar, below.)

Collaborative group critical response. This assignment is similar to the individual critical response, except that it is longer and is written collaboratively by each workgroup. The

two volumes of the *Electronic Literature Collection* include 122 works of fiction and poetry. We will be reading six of these works together. Each workgroup will choose one of the remaining works as the object of its collaborative critical response. (I will, in fact, ask each workgroup to choose three candidate works, ranked by order of preference, and will use those rankings if necessary to resolve conflicting choices so that each workgroup is working on a different text. I will make every effort to insure that workgroups' preferences are respected.) Collaborative critical responses should be between 1500–2000 words in length and should make full use of the potential of the wiki environment to facilitate editing, revision, and commentary. In the final two weeks of the semester, each workgroup will give an in-class presentation on its assigned text, critical response, and the experience of wiki collaboration. Critical responses for each group must be posted to the wiki by 12 PM (noon) of the day immediately *prior* to the date the group's in-class presentation. (I will assign the dates of presentations randomly, and will announce these mid-semester.) Workgroups are permitted to edit (update, correct, etc.) their critical responses for a period of one week after they are posted and presented, at which point the responses will be graded, based on the last version posted within the revision period. The critical response will be worth 80%, and the in-class presentation will be worth 20%, of the grade of this assignment.

I strongly advise workgroups to select their texts no later than the end of February to insure adequate time for editing and revision of critical responses.

A note on collaborative assignments. Productive collaborative work is seldom easy. Students often worry that their final grades may suffer as a result of breakdowns in communication within groups or the failures of some group members to complete quality work on a project. I have built mechanisms into this course to reduce the risk of this happening. Moreover, the openness of the wiki – everyone in the course can be aware of your contributions to your group's projects or lack thereof – tends, in my experience, to promote students' good faith efforts within their groups. The most important things you can do to insure that your workgroup's performance is effective is to define any assigned tasks within the group well in advance, stick to a calendar for your projects together, and take full advantage of the wiki's editing and revision features to improve the quality of the group's written product.

Keep in mind that the wiki environment includes audit trailing functions that allow me to track the frequency and extent of every student's written contributions to her or his workgroup project. In the event that a student within a workgroup fails to participate in the group's efforts or to otherwise fulfill her or his obligations to the group, I reserve the right to reduce that student's grade on a given assignment and, in some cases, to adjust the rest of the group's grade on the assignment accordingly.

If for any reason you feel that members of your group are not efficiently or appropriately working together, I encourage you to alert me to such difficulties through private emails or conversation as soon as possible.

Privacy of grades and other assessments of your performance. The guiding principal of our uses of the wiki in this course is one of *peer access*: in brief, others in the course will be able to review much of your written work and many of your exchanges with me regarding your work. They will be able – and encouraged – to comment on your work and these exchanges, with the aim of enlarging our shared understanding of the texts and critical-theoretical problems we will discuss.

This public aspect of your contributions to the wiki does not include my grading of your individual performance in the course. I have designed the course and grading methods to insure that such evaluations of your work are known only to the two of us, and will be communicated only by channels that will guarantee your privacy in this regard.

Grades for group projects will communicated by way of similarly privileged channels; only the members of each group and I know that group's grade for a given project. Should it become necessary that I adjust a student's grade because of poor performance in a group project, only that student will be notified of the change.

Our uses of online resources in this course will adhere to the University's posted policies on student data security, confidentiality, and privacy. As a student, you have defined obligations under these policies with regard to your online conduct. See <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/home/privacy/> for a complete description of these policies.

Resolving date conflicts for assignments. It is essential that you notify me immediately after the assignment of the individual critical responses, group projects, and group presentations if these conflict with other commitments you may have. (For example, if the due date falls on a religious holiday.) If you wait to notify me of such conflicts I may not be able to change your assignments and your grade may be adversely affected as a result.

Policy on academic honesty

The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic honesty, are clearly spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.

- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.

- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

Collaborative work that is required for this course does not fall within any of the forbidden categories listed above. Honest completion of collaborative work *does* require that you adhere to well-defined practices that acknowledge the contributions of others in a forthright and precisely documented manner. I will review these practices in class before the first graded assignment.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. This may include a reduced or failing grade for the course as a whole or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

Course calendar

Jan 10 (Tu)	*Course introduction*
Jan 12 (Th)	Introduction to the course wiki Bush, "As We May Think" (*LIFE* version, *Ares*)
Jan 17 (Tu)	Review of course wiki methods Introduction to workgroup methods *No assigned reading*
Jan 19 (Th)	Harpold, "A Future Device for Individual Use" (*Ares*) *Recommended reading:* Bush, "As We May Think" (Nyce & Kahn version, *Ares*) Preview of "Digital Platforms & the Future of Books" symposium
Jan 20–21 (F & Sat)	**"Digital Platforms & the Future of Books" symposium, Smathers Library, Room 1A.** See <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/tharpold/courses/spring12/enc3414/images/digital-platforms_program.pdf> for details

Jan 24 (Tu)	In-class debriefing of "Digital Platforms" symposium *No assigned reading*
Jan 26 (Th)	Flusser, *Does Writing Have a Future?*
Jan 31 (Tu)	Flusser, *Does Writing Have a Future?*
Feb 1 (W, noon)	**First drafts of collaborative reports on "Digital Platform" symposium due (due date)**
Feb 2 (Th)	Morrissey, *The Jew's Daughter* (*ELC1*)
Feb 6 (M, noon)	**Collaborative symposium reports are locked (close date)**
Feb 7 (Tu)	Joyce, *Twelve Blue* (*ELC1*)
Feb 9 (Th)	Joyce, *Twelve Blue* (*ELC1*)
Feb 13 (M, noon)	**First draft of *My Body – A Wunderkammer* individual critical responses due (due date)**
Feb 14 (Tu)	Jackson, *My Body – A Wunderkammer* (*ELC1*)
Feb 15 (W, noon)	**First draft of *New Digital Emblems* individual critical responses due (due date)**
Feb 16 (Th)	Poundstone, *New Digital Emblems* (*ELC2*)
Feb 20 (M, noon)	***My Body – A Wunderkammer* individual critical responses locked (close date)**
Feb 21 (Tu)	**Questions for midterm exam posted to the wiki** *No assigned reading – in-class discussion of midterm questions*
Feb 22 (W, noon)	***New Digital Emblems* individual critical responses locked (close date)** ***Diagrams Series 6* individual critical responses due (due date)**
Feb 23 (Th)	Rosenberg, *Diagrams Series 6* (*ELC1*)

Feb 28 (Tu)	**First draft of completed midterm exam due (due date)** *No assigned reading – in-class debriefing of midterm*
Feb 29 (W, noon)	***Diagrams Series 6* individual critical responses locked (close date)** ***V: Vniverse* individual critical responses due (due date)**
Mar 1 (Th)	Strickland, *V: Vniverse* (*ELC2*)
Mar 2 (F)	**Midterm exam wiki pages locked, 5 PM (close date)**
Mar 6 (Tu)	**No class meeting – Spring Break**
Mar 8 (Th)	**No class meeting – Spring Break**
Mar 12 (M)	***V: Vniverse* individual critical responses locked (close date)**
Mar 13 (Tu)	La Farge, *Luminous Airplanes* (print & hypertext)
Mar 15 (Th)	La Farge, *Luminous Airplanes* (print & hypertext)
Mar 20 (Tu)	**Guest lecture & tour of "Art of Google Books" exhibit by Krissy Wilson** *Assigned reading from Wilson's blog* *<http://theartofgooglebooks.tumblr.com/> TBA* *Note: lecture will be held in the J. Wayne Reitz Union gallery*
Mar 22 (Th)	**No class meeting – Professor Harpold is away** *Workgroups should be working on their collaborative "Art of Google Books" projects – details TBA*
Mar 27 (Tu)	**First drafts of collaborative "Art of Google Books" projects due (due date)** *No assigned reading – in-class discussion of projects*
Mar 29 (Th)	In-class discussion of forthcoming workgroup presentations *No assigned reading*

| April 3 (Tu) | **Collaborative "Art of Google Books" projects are locked (close date)** |
| | **In-class presentation of collaborative critical responses** |

| April 5 (Th) | **In-class presentation of collaborative critical responses** |

| April 5 (Th, 7:30 PM) | Gregory Crane, Editor in Chief, Perseus Project, "To Advance the Common Understanding: Reinventing the Humanities in a Digital Age." Smathers Library Room 1A. See <http://www.humanities.ufl.edu/calendar/20120405-Crane.html> for details. |

| April 10 (Tu) | **In-class presentation of collaborative critical responses** |

| April 12 (Th) | **In-class presentation of collaborative critical responses** |

| April 17 (Tu) | **Questions for final exam posted to the wiki** |
| | *No assigned reading – in-class review of final exam questions* |

| April 19 (Th) | **No class meeting – Professor Harpold is away** |

April 24 (Tu)	**Final class meeting**
	First draft of final exam due (due date)
	Written components of collaborative critical responses are locked
	Course debriefing & book drawing

| May 1 (Tu) | **Final exam wiki pages are locked, 5 PM (close date)** |