

Course Syllabus

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How do we tell, and how do we read, stories? The answer to those questions reveal essential aspects of narrative, the way parts can stand for wholes, the distinction between mood and plot, the difference between things that happen in sequence and things that happen simultaneously, and the way details reveal truths. We will investigate those issues through careful reading and watching, but most importantly, by making.

We come to this material from two distinct points of view: Michael is a designer and Whitney a documentary filmmaker. Graphic Narratives is closely linked to our own practices dealing with the relationship between form and meaning. We have both been engaged in the way that ideas are broadcast through things like films, books, magazines, posters, diagrams, collages, videos, websites, and so on.

Michael has been exploring the way the graphic and the architectural inform one another. In addition he is engaged with the question of how architecture reveals itself both as a process and as a spatial experience. Whitney's work explores the relationship between representation and truth, and how process drives form and meaning.

In this class we aim to look at multiple aspects of narrative: both how we tell the story of an architectural project and how thinking about narrative informs the design process.

The class is a hybrid of a workshop and a seminar. The content of the class is your studio project. In the first half of the semester there is a very straightforward visual project every week that will be critiqued and discussed in class. These short assignments are designed to investigate a single facet of making narratives.

At the same time, there are weekly readings and viewings that support the work in class. Each student will make at least two presentations on the readings or films.

In the second half of the semester we will concentrate on a multi-week project that uses your own work, or your own interests, as a subject. You will develop a short film or AV presentation that both describes your process and reveals your project using the techniques developed in together in class.

Our intention is that Graphic Narratives is an extremely practical class – the tools you acquire should be immediately applicable to problems of presentation and documentation of your work. Simultaneously, we hope that through practicality we can investigate the structure of narrative itself in precise and profound ways that will influence the way you think about making design. – WD, MR

REQUIREMENTS

- — Attendance is mandatory. 3 absences will result in a failing grade.
- — 3 unexcused tardies will count as an absence
- — Always follow the provided format guidelines
- — Access to and basic knowledge of simple video editing tools
- — Smartphone with camera and video function

CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Presentations should be supported by at least 10 slides, clips, or excerpts and explore some, or all, of the following questions:

Who is the author (or creator) and what is their significance?

What are the themes and ideas explored?

How does the form support the conceptual ideas explored?

What is the argument?

How does the work relate to the broader body of work of the creator?

Is the work successful? Why or why not?

How does the work connect to the broader ideas under consideration?

FOCUS ON DEEP THEMATIC ISSUES. DO NOT SUMMARIZE OR REITERATE MATERIAL WE HAVE JUST READ OR WATCHED.

You must stand for your presentation. You may not read your presentation. Note cards are acceptable.

After your presentation be prepared to take questions from the class and consider critique of your presentation.

Each student is required to give a minimum of two presentations: one each on a reading and a film. (Sign up on Courseworks.)

PRESENTATIONS MUST BE LIMITED TO 10 MINUTES MAXIMUM.

			ASSIGNMENT	READING	VIEWING
1	1/22	MW	Intro to the Structure of Narrative Present: Bios		In class
2	1/29	MW	Making Meaning Present: Project A	Discuss: Brooks, Chapter 1 (section I + II)	Discuss: Nolan, Memento (2000)
3	2/5	W	Diagram and Time Present: Project B	Discuss: Goodman, Twisted Tales	Discuss: Linklater, Slacker (1991)
4	2/12	M	Explaining Present: Project C	Discuss: McCloud, Chapters 3 + 4	Discuss: Figgis, Timecode (2000)
5	2/19	W	Synchronic/Diachronic Present: Project D	Discuss: Eisenstein, Beyond the Shot, Pages 15–25	Discuss: Vertov, Man w/ (1921)
6	2/26	M	Compression/Expansion Discuss: Project E	Discuss: de Botton, Chapter 3 Read: Mullican, Essex	Discuss: Anna Devere Smith: Fires in the Mirror (1992)
7	3/4	W	Manifesto Present: Project F-1	Read: Perec, The Apartment Discuss: Political ads	Discuss: Von Treir, The Five Obstructions (2003)
8	3/11		Studio Trips No class		
9	3/18		Spring Break Present: Project F-2		
10	3/25	MW	Log Lines Present: Project F-3	Discuss: Queneau, Exercises	Discuss: 3 short films
11	4/1	M	Treatment Present: Project F-4	Discuss: Malcolm, 41 False Starts	Discuss: Bagheri: That B.E.A.T. Beyoncé: Lemonade (2016)
12	4/8	W	Storyboard Present: Project F-5	Discuss: Atwood, Happy Endings	Discuss: 3 interactive stories
12	4/15	M	Desk Crits Present: Project F-6 WIP	Discuss: BIG, Yes is More OMA, Content	Discuss: Bandersnatch (2018)
13	4/22	MW	Desk Crits Present: Project F-6 WIP	Read: Murch, In the Blink of an Eye	
14	5/6	MW	FINAL REVIEW Present: Project F-6		

READINGS:

Roland Barthes, An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative (pp. 237–272)

BIG, Yes Is More:

An Archicomic on Architectural Evolution

Alain de Botton, How Proust Can Change Your Life (Chapter 3)

Peter Brooks, Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative, (Chapter 1)

Robert Coover, The Babysitter

Sergie Eisenstein, Beyond the Shot, Pages (pp. 15–25)

Nelson Goodman, Twisted Tales

Janet Malcolm, Forty- One False Starts

Scott McCloud, Understanding Comics; The Invisible Art, (Chapters 3,4,6,7)

Walter Murch, In the Blink of an Eye (pp. 1–72)

OMA, Content

Georges Perec, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces (The Apartment)

Raymond Queneau, Exercises in Style

Jennifer Van Sijll, Cinematic Storytelling

VIEWINGS

Matthew Bate, Mystery of the Flying Kicks (2010)

Alan Berliner, The Sweetest Sound (2001)

Beyoncé, Lemonade (2016)

Sophie Calle, Contacts vol 2 (2011)

Katerina Cizek, Highrise (out my window) (2010)

Mark Columbus, Battle of the Jazz Guitarists (2013)

Abdeen Bagheri: That B.E.A.T. (2012)

Mike Figgis, Timecode (2000)

Richard Linklater, Slacker (1991)

Kevin B. Lee, Transformers the Premake (2014)

Jeremy Mendes et al., Bear 71 (2012)

Christopher Nolan, Memento (2000)

RaMell Ross, Hale County This Morning, this Evening (2018)

Paul Shoebrieger, Pine Point (2011)

Anna Devere Smith, Fires in the Mirror (1992)

Dziga Vertov, Man with a Movie Camera (1921)

Lars Von Treir, The Five Obstructions (2003)