

The 21st-Century Experimental Novel

English 527 | SDSU | Fall 2015

Professor Jessica Pressman

This course reads novels published in the new millennium whose pages expose the influence of new media technologies. These works experiment with form and content in order to foreground the role of text and literature in our increasingly multimedia, multimodal culture. We will examine these works and their shared interest in and engagement with new media in order to analyze what they have to say about globalism, the role of the literary, the experience of living in an age of information overload, and other topics at the center of our contemporary digital culture.

Learning Objectives:

1. You will learn how contemporary print-based novels express the impact of digital technologies, which will enable you to recognize and critically articulate the inter-relationships between media formats,
2. You will learn how traditional literary analysis can employ digital technologies to practice close reading and to understand print literature,
3. You will learn to practice media-specific analysis and will produce a culminating work of creative-critical scholarship.

Email: jpressman@mail.sdsu.edu	Course Website: http://fall2015-eng527.jessicapressman.com/
Office: AL 261 Office hours: T/Th, 9:30-10:30 and by appointment	T/Th 11-12:15 Room: NE 85
Course Librarian: Anna Culbertson (Special Collections)	Anna Culbertson < aculbertson@mail.sdsu.edu >

REQUIRED READINGS (available in SDSU Bookstore, except for **)

Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves* (2000)

Plascencia, Salvador. *People of Paper* (2005)

Rawle, Graham. *Woman's World* (2005)

**Gorman, Samantha and Danny Cannizzarro *Pry* (2015) (App for iPad or iPhone.

Downloadable from iTunes)

ASSIGNMENTS:

In-class Participation: 20%

This is *your* class, and your attendance and participation is vital to its success.

Attendance matters and counts towards your grade. Come to class prepared to discuss the novels in depth; this means having read the *entire* novel *before* the first class meeting dedicated to that text.

-**Your participation grade includes an in-person meeting with the professor.**

-**Your participation grade requires weekly comments on the blog posts** (i.e the experimental assignments) of your peers.

-**Your participation grade includes a 3-minute presentation on one of the novels.** This presentation should serve to start the class's conversation for the day. You will point us to a question from the day's reading and to the specific passage in the text that sparked that inquiry for you. You will get the discussion rolling...

Final Essay Project (6-8 pages/ 1200-1600 words): 30%

You will write a final essay on *at least one* of the novels that displays your engagement with the work(s) and *at least one* of the topics discussed during the seminar. Before writing, you will need to consult with the professor to discuss your thesis statement and to make sure that you are on a viable path.

**Graduate students will write 10-12 pages and use at least 3 secondary, critical sources.

Your essay can be digital and/or experimental in format, but it must contain the following: 1) a thesis statement, 2) close-reading explication of the text, 3) engagement with *at least two* critical sources, one of which should be from our syllabus.

-You can use your experimental assignments to form the basis—and even the format—of your final essay.

-You will briefly present your final project during the last week of class.

5 Experimental Assignments: 50% (10% each)

You will be required to complete 5 shorter, experimental assignments, each of which will invite you to engage with the novels in different ways using a variety of media and resources. These assignments will be posted to the course blog.

-If you choose to complete more than 5 of these assignments, I will take the best grades.

-You can use one (or more) of these assignments as the foundation for your final essay.

-You must do at least 3 different types of assignments; 2 can be duplicate methods.

-You must write about at least 3 different novels.

Prompts for Experimental Assignments:

- **Remix:** A “remix” is a version that has been altered -- extended, rearranged, added to and / or cut. The word “remix” commonly describes an altered song (whose tracks have been “mixed again”), and may also refer to remixed arts such as images, video, and literature. Techniques such as sampling in music, collage in visual art, montage in film, and cut-up in literature may all be used to remix. (For more information on a broad understanding of remix see “[Remix Defined](#)” and [Remix Theory](#) by Eduardo Navas; see also [Remix Culture](#) by Lawrence Lessig.)

In this assignment, you will creatively remix one page of a novel in a way that explores form-content relationships while thinking about literature as media. ***See amillionbluepages.net for the *House of Leaves* examples of this assignment.

Your assignment will have 2 parts: 1) creative remix, 2) short explanation:

- 1) Your remix will you must creatively change the visual layout of the page -- rearrange, add to, or subtract from the visual appearance of one page (or page layout), creating a new image. Your new page should preserve aspects of the original page *and comment on* how that page presents, mediates, or complicates meaning.
 - 2) You will write a short (1 page) explanation of what and how your remix does, shows, and achieves.
- **Digital Annotation:** This assignment invites you to use digital technologies to engage with the novel. You might use a free tool like Diigo, Popcorn, MarkUp, GoogleDocs, or something else. You will close read a section of the text—a page, a paragraph, etc.—by carefully explicating the relationship between form and content in the text AND by using the digital tools to *how* and *where* you see what you see.
 - **Annotated Bibliography:** This assignment allows you to practices scholarly research skills and prepares you to write a final essay by prompting you to do research on the novel and on its content. An annotated bibliography is list of sources about a topic in which each item of the list (each citation) is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph—this is the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited; this is where you add your subjective opinion about the value of the source and its relevance for your own research. For more on annotated bibliographies, see <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/03/>
 - **Creative Response:** This assignment allows you to explore the novel and criticism about it in a creative way. You will *make* something-- a sculpture, bookart, painting, digital poem, etc.—that is inspired by the novel.
 - 1) Your creative piece should be documented so that it can be turned in online (e.g. if you create a sculpture, take photos that you can share on our webiste)
 - 2) You will write a short (1 page) explanation of *what and how* your creative piece shows us about the novel, citing passages that inspired you and explaining your creative interpretation.

READING SCHEDULE

Week 1: Intro to the Contemporary and Experimental

August 25: introduction

August 27: *House of Leaves*, Forward and Introduction, 0-xxiii

**NOTE: For *House of Leaves*: read all materials— appendices, footnotes, exhibits, etc.— when and as they are referred to in the text. Do not wait until the end to read them.

Week 2: *House of Leaves*: Entering the House

September 1: *House of Leaves*, 1- 66

September 3: *House of Leaves*, 67-73 (and Appendix II, D and E)

Week 3: *House of Leaves*: The Remix Novel

September 8: *House of Leaves*, 80-245

-View the website *A Million Blue Pages.net*

September 10: *House of Leaves*: 245-275

Week 4: *House of Leaves*: Theory and Critique

September 15: *House of Leaves*: 275- 384

-N. Katherine Hayles, *Writing Machines*, Chapter 8: “Inhabiting House of Leaves”

September 17: *House of Leaves*, 384-463

Week 5: *House of Leaves*: The Transmedial Novel

September 22: *House of Leaves*, 463-528

-View [House of Leaves](#) official forum

September 24: *House of Leaves*, Index and Appendix

-Pressman, “Reading the Networked Novel”

Week 6: *People of Paper*

September 29: Chapters 1-3

October 1: Chapters 4-7

Week 7: *People of Paper*

October 6: Chapters 8-11

October 8: Chapters 12-17

Week 8: *People of Paper*

October 13: Chapters 18-24

October 15: Chapters 25-end

Week 9: *Woman’s World*

October 20: 3-121, ch 1-8

October 22: 120-205 ch. 4-12

Week 10: *Woman's World*

October 27: 209-274, 13-15

October 29: 277-end

Week 11: *Experimental Books*

November 3-- *Special Collection Visit with Anna Culbertson*

November 5— *Special Collection Visit with Anna Culbertson*

Week 12: *Pry*

November 10: *Pry*

November 12: *Pry*

Week 13: *Pry*

November 17: *Pry*

November 19: Peer Review session final Project Proposals

****Final Project Proposals due in class****

Week 14: *Pry*

November 24: *Pry*

November 26- Thanksgiving. No class.

Week 15: Student Projects

December 1: Student Projects Workshops

December 3: Student Presentations

Week 16: Conclusion

December 8: Student Presentations

December 10: Concluding Discussion

*****Final Project Due: December 15 at noon*****

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change.

ACADEMIC HONEST

I take teaching seriously, and I expect you to take seriously your work as a student. That means that academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonest includes, but is not limited to: (a) using assignments that you wrote for another class, (b) representing work done by someone else as your own (i.e., plagiarism), and (c) copying someone else's work on an assignment, basic cheating. Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for further action. If you have questions at all, you should consult me immediately.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at [\(619\) 594-6473](tel:6195946473). To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.