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Syllabus

Required Texts:

*Picturing Texts* (Faigley, George, George, and Selfe)  
(The instructor will provide you a copy of this book in manuscript form.)

Web Materials:

<http://www.hu.mtu.edu/~csyself/courses/HU3910/hu3910.html>

Course Description:

The language issue that we will focus on as a class this term is the changing nature of texts in the 21st century, generally, and the characteristics of hybrid texts (texts that incorporate both alphabetic and visual elements), more specifically.

In other words, we will explore Gunther Kress' claim (1999) that our culture has made "the turn to the visual," and try to figure out what difference, if any, this "turn" makes in our definition of words like "text," "reading," and "composing."

This claim is relatively recent, and it is controversial. So, to accomplish the tasks I have identified above, we will be using a brand new textbook—in fact it is so new that it is still in the process of being composed! Given this context, students in this class should be prepared to work with a textbook in the process of becoming and willing to take advantage of the opportunity to shape the contents of this book through their responses to the material.

Students who enroll in this course will read about hybrid texts, look at examples of these texts, and find their own examples of hybrid texts. In addition, students will learn to study, read, compose, and produce hybrid texts.

Students should be willing to learn how to use some computer technologies (e.g., digital cameras, web pages, digital images, word
processing) to produce and explore hybrid texts.

The course is designed to help students explore the following key questions:

• What is a hybrid text? Why should we study such texts?
• What is the history of hybrid texts?
• How are hybrid texts read?
• How are hybrid texts composed?
• Can hybrid texts help individuals compose texts about themselves?
• Can hybrid texts help individuals compose texts about others?
• What do arguments look like in hybrid texts? How are they composed?
• How are hybrid texts designed and produced?

Course Goals:

Students will become familiar with hybrid texts, the issues surrounding these texts, and a range of readings about such texts.

Students will learn how to read, design, and compose hybrid texts.

Students will learn how to use digital technologies to produce hybrid texts.

Students will gain expertise in leading effective class discussions.

Students will explore the key questions informing the class (see above)

Grading:

The following criteria will be used to determine your grade in this course:

Composing Hybrid-texts Assignments (6X12 pts. = 72 pts.)
Reading Preparation and Engaged Participation (16 pts.)
Preliminary drafts (complete and on-time) (6 X 2 pts. = 12 pts.)
Extra-Credit Responses: Instructional Materials (2 pts. each)
Extra-Credit Responses: Readings and Tasks (2 pts. Each)
Reading Preparation and Engaged Participation

Your reading preparation will be gauged by the teacher during each class session by your contributions to class discussion. Informal quizzes may also be used for this purpose.

This class will depend heavily on your voluntary, engaged participation in discussions. Students are responsible for volunteering their insights and opinions every class session.

Participation necessitates regular class attendance and preparation. Missing more than three class sessions this term will result in a lower grade.

Students who are going to miss a class session should check the class web site and contact a classmate to find out what they have missed.

Computer Elements

This course will require that you use several kinds of computer applications. If any of these are unfamiliar to you, please see me as soon as possible so that you can access the course materials:

- listserv: hu63910-l@mtu.edu (for course updates, assignment changes, questions of general interest to all students in the course).
- e-mail: cyselfe@mtu.edu (please use this address for questions that should go directly to the teacher; you will also use e-mail for several of your class assignments).
- digital cameras, web authoring programs, word processing programs, etc. (to be learned as needed).

Schedule and Syllabus

I know that many students like to see the whole term laid out in the syllabus—assignments, due dates, classwork—so that they can plan their semester and live appropriately. For that reason, I have put my planned syllabus online at <http://www.hu.mtu.edu/~cyselfe/courses/HU3910/hu3910.html>.

At the same time, we are venturing into some new territory with this class— we’ll be studying and creating new kinds of texts, we’ll be using a textbook that is in-progress, we’ll be trying out some new approaches. In addition, I am committed, as a teacher, to making sure that I adjust the class to the needs of students as they learn—and different students learn at different rates.

Given this context, we will consider the syllabus to be a dynamic, living document—it will change throughout the term to reflect our plans and...
accomplishments. I will update you on all changes via the class list, and the syllabus online will be the one we go by.

Your responsibility will be to check the syllabus as you prepare for every class session (to make sure that you understand assignments and due dates) and on a regular basis to make sure you note important changes.

Drafts

I need to know if you are making steady progress on each assignment, and that you are working over time to refine your compositions. So, in the syllabus, I have indicated dates when a complete preliminary draft is due. On these dates, you are responsible for bringing your draft to class so that a drafting partner can read and respond to it with the purpose of helping you make it better.

The idea behind this process is that two heads are better than one. However, the author is the person in charge. To benefit from this process, your preliminary drafts should be complete and thoughtful. After your drafting partner reads the draft and suggests additional changes, you can try best to refine your composition.

Partial drafts will not receive credit.

An Experiment in User Testing

In an important sense, this course is an experiment in user testing. We will be working with a manuscript copy (a copy in-process) of a textbook that has yet to be published. I am using this book because it is the best one that I know of on the topic of hybrid texts.

Structuring the course in this way should provide you an interesting window on the process of textbook writing (just in case any of you are going to be writers, editors, graphic designers, students, or teachers when you graduate), and on the process of user testing (just in case you are going to be a technical communicator or an engineer).

As one of the four authors of this textbook (Dr. Diana George, MTU; Dr. Lester Faigley, University of Texas; Ms Anna George, professional graphic artist and designer; and me), I am hoping that you—as students with contemporary interests and abilities—will provide some feedback about how to shape it so that it meets your needs and piques your interest. (Personally, I think that too many textbooks already get written without adequate attention to—or input from—the students who will be their primary audience.)

At the same time, as the teacher of this class, I don't want any member of the class to feel as if they have to participate in these user-testing activities in order to succeed in this class or as if they can't give frank and honest feedback about the book because the teacher of the class is also an author of the textbook. Hence, when I ask you to give me and the other authors feedback about this textbook (in the form of responses to the instructional material and responses to the readings and composing tasks), I will do so only after I have already graded your assignments, and these responses will be counted only as extra-credit, not as the
primary grade of the class.

In addition, I will ask for your signed permission before I pass along any response you give me to this textbook to the other authors and to the editor, and I will make sure any student who is generous enough to help us in this way will get an acknowledgment of our thanks in print.

Finally, we are hoping that to publish some examples of students' composing efforts in this book—giving full credit to the authors, of course. Thus, after grading some of your assignments, I may ask you for permission to send them to the editor for this purpose. I would hope that you would consider this an honor—I would be proud to have some MTU students' work represented in this textbook. Before I send anything anywhere, however, I will ask you if you are willing to sign a permission form. The decision to accept or decline this offer is entirely up to you and will not figure into your grade for the course.

Special Notes:

If you have a disability covered under the Americans with Disability Act, or any other special needs, please see me during the first week of class—or as soon as possible—so that we can arrange a reasonable accommodation.