Engaging Readers and Writers with Interactive Fiction

Christian Sheehy

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Instructor Information

Instructor	Christian Sheehy
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Email is the best way to contact your instructor directly. Email is checked periodically Monday – Friday during normal business hours. Email is not checked on weekends so it is the responsibility of the student to ask questions about assignments early in the week. Expect under a 24 hour turnaround on all emails during the business week. Emails received during weekends will be answered the next business day.

Course Information

Description: This course introduces interactive fiction (IF) while showing how to create narrative text-based games for a variety of audiences and platforms. IF is a powerful tool to engage both readers and writers while teaching basic programming skills.

Prerequisite(s): None. Coding experience helpful but not required.

Term: Winter 2017

Format: Online, Asynchronous

Technical Requirements: A computer with internet access, administrative rights to install and operate free software (Linux, Windows, or OSX), ability to stream video and audio.

Software Requirements

- Twine https://twinery.org
- Inform7 http://inform7.com
- RenPy https://www.renpy.org

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- understand how IF influenced and continues to influence not only video game design, but also literature.
- demonstrate how readers can interact with texts in new and non-traditional ways through IF.

- leverage IF in children's and teen programming, both inside the library and out, to encourage reading, writing, and computer programming skills across disciplines.

- write their own stories using Twine, Inform7, and others cross-platform programs.

Time Commitment

This is a dense, 4 week course that includes text-based games, readings, discussions, and writing assignments. Students should try to log in each day to access content and actively participate in discussions. Expect to spend at least 3 – 5 hours each week with course material.

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty and integrity is expected in any academic environment. Students are encouraged to collaborate with and ask questions of other students, however all submitted work must be the student's own. Students who turn in work that is not their own will be immediately withdrawn from the class with a zero percent grade.

Grades

A grade of 70% or higher is required to pass this class and receive a certificate of completion. Certificates will be distributed by ALA several weeks after the instructor turns in final grades. This class includes 4 assignments which will be graded according to the following point structure for a total of 400 points:

Required Components	80
Mechanics (Grammar/Spelling)	10
Creativity/Originality	10

Unless arrangements are made with the instructor prior to the due date, late assignments will receive a 20 point penalty for each day late. Grades for submitted assignments will generally be available with instructor comments within 3 days of submission.

Discussion Boards

Participation in discussion is necessary to get the most out of this course while learning from each other. Although not graded, active participation throughout each week is expected. The discussion board is a public forum and everything posted can be seen by everyone in the course, including the instructor. You are encouraged to provide your honest viewpoint, but be respectful of the views of your classmates. Objectionable, sexist, or racist language will not be tolerated.

The instructor will participate in discussion boards throughout each business week. Although each discussion will be kept available to students throughout the course, the instructor will only participate during the week each discussion prompt is assigned.

Tentative Course Outline

Each week of class runs from Monday - Sunday with any assignments for the week due on Sunday by 11:55PM EST. Each week includes a brief lecture, required readings, assignments, and discussion questions. Content for each week is typically made available the Friday before the week begins.

Week 1: Introduction to IF; History and Gameplay Mechanics

Lecture

Readings

- Let's Tell a Story Together

- Welcome to Interactive Fiction

Assignment

- Read "Lightyear"

- Read "Depression Quest" (Optional)

- Read "The Dreamhold"

- Read "Lost Pig"

- Read "Photopia"

- Try a few online demos from Choice of Games

- Browse the Interactive Fiction Database

- Introductions and Discussion

Week 2: IF and Literature, Writing IF

Lecture

Readings

- Writing Space Chapter 7: Interactive Fiction

- Creating an Interactive Adventure with Twine

Assignment

- Create Story with Twine (will be shared with class)

- Watch "The Art of Video Game Storytelling"

- Discussion

Week 3: Teaching Reading and Writing with IF; Other Platforms

Lecture

Readings

- Interactive Fiction and the Reluctant Reader

- Interactive Fiction: New Literacy Learning Opportunities for Children

Assignment

- Begin Lesson Plan

- Create 2 Rooms with Inform7

- Discussion

Week 4: Teaching Cont., Other Platforms Cont., Modern IF, Conclusion

Lecture

Assignment

- Complete Event Lesson Plan (will be shared with class)

- Create 3 Scenes in RenPy

- Discussion

IF Authoring Platforms

- ADRIFT

- ALAN IF

- ChoiceScript

- Hugo

- Inform7

- inklewriter

- Quest

- RenPy

- TADS

- Twine

- Undum

Select IF Interpreters

- Frotz

- Gargoyle

- Glulx

- QTADS

- Spatterlight

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