Film 80S SYLLABUS: Special Topics in Film & Digital Media

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:45pm, in Classroom Unit 1

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Office hours: Tuesdays from 4-6pm (or by appointment) in Communications 105

Teaching Assistants: Meredith Drum (Tuesdays 12:30-1:30pm in Communications 202)
Phoenix Toews (Mondays 10-11am in Communications 202)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Defined by media scholar Henry Jenkins as “a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience,” transmedia storytelling has been widely adopted and celebrated as a narrative model that promotes collaborative authorship and participatory spectatorship. But there is something paradoxical about transmedia storytelling, beginning with dual emphasis on dispersal and unification in Jenkins’ definition. Transmedia stories are defined by their ability to expand: they expand and enrich a fictional universe, they expand across media platforms, and they empower an expansive fan base by promoting collective intelligence as a consumption strategy. However, transmedia storytelling is a product of industrial consolidation and conglomeration, with the flow of content across platforms mirroring the economic logic of a horizontally integrated entertainment industry. Transmedia stories also produce a consolidated canon of “official” texts that can be viewed as discouraging or discrediting unauthorized expansion or speculation by fans, equating audiences’ “participation” with their continuous consumption of texts that narratively and financially supplement a franchise.

This course will use Star Wars, one of the forefathers of contemporary transmedia storytelling systems, as our primary test case to analyze the narrative challenges and pleasures transmedia stories offer audiences, and consider how they cater to conglomeration within the media industry. In addition to screening/reading/playing components of the Star Wars transmedia narrative (films, animated series, comics, video games, and novels), other transmedia stories under discussion will include The Matrix, Battlestar Galactica, Gossip Girl, The Dark Knight, and Heroes.

Some of the core questions this course will explore are:
- What is “new” about transmedia storytelling, and what differentiates them from older models of synergistic storytelling?
- What is the role of the author/auteur in transmedia storytelling?
- How is the industry negotiating between their “official” transmedia storytelling and “unofficial” forms of transmedia storytelling created by fans?
- Why has television, in particular, embraced transmedia storytelling as a narrative model?
REQUIRED READINGS:
Readings are listed below on the course schedule; assigned chapters and articles are to be read before class each Tuesday. All are required unless listed as “recommended.” All readings can be found either in the assigned books or course reader (all available at the Bay Tree Bookstore), or online (web addresses listed in course schedule, when applicable). Additional links to online articles or recommended reading may be sent via email. The readings are coded below, [CR]=course reader and [O]=online.

Required Books:


Course Reader (available at the Bay Tree Bookstore)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Your attendance and active participation is central to the class’ success and to your success in the class, as is your thoughtful engagement with the course readings and lecture content. Time will be allotted in class to discuss the readings, their correlation to the course screenings, and your own experiences consuming transmedia stories. You’re also encouraged to email me with any additional material you come across that you think might be relevant to the class (blog posts, videos, articles, etc.).

With a class this size, it may seem difficult or intimidating to make your voice heard. I will make every effort to incorporate questions and discussion into our class time, but I also strongly encourage you to come to office hours to talk. Office hours are the best time to get to know each other better, hash out your questions or concerns about course material, discuss upcoming assignments, rant about how Han shot first, etc. Office hours are one of your greatest resources, so please make use of them!

In addition to a midterm exam composed of short identifications and essay questions, you will be responsible for writing two papers. Your first paper (3 pages) is due Tuesday, 10/12 at 2pm. This paper will require you to pick one scene from Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope (screened in class on 9/30), and closely analyze that scene in terms of: 1. How negative capability functions, 2. How it contributes to the “world” the film builds, and 3. How additive comprehension might change our understanding of that scene OR which encyclopedic detail you would be most interested in exploring through your own textual production. Use the readings by Henry Jenkins and Geoffrey Long to support your analysis and cite your sources. You will also submit a final paper (6-8pgs), due on the final day of class. More details on this assignment will be distributed in the coming weeks.

All essays should be double spaced, use Times 12pt. font, and have 1 inch margins. You must follow a recognized citation format (MLA, APA, or Chicago, in other words), and you must cite all your sources, although no outside research will be required to complete these assignments. If you have questions or concerns about these essays, please come see one of your instructors well in advance of the due date. Any extensions must be requested at least 48 hours before the essay is due, and papers are not accepted via email.
There will also be 3 in class reading pop quizzes over the course of the quarter. These quizzes will consist of multiple choice and/or short answer questions, and will address specific terminology and content from the readings and lectures for that week. Essentially, these quizzes are functioning as your attendance and participation grade. If you read the assigned chapters/essays closely, take thorough notes in class, and attend class, there is no reason you shouldn’t do well on these quizzes.

All assignments must be handed in on time, and turning in assignments late will be detrimental to your grade. Exceptions will be made and extensions will be given only for medical or family emergencies (provided you can offer documentation). No make-ups will be given for missed quizzes and exams without sufficient documentation of a medical or family emergency.

Grading breakdown:

- In Class Pop Quizzes = 15%
- First Paper = 25%
- Midterm = 30%
- Final Paper = 30%

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit it to me in person outside of class (e.g., office hours) within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY), or http://drc.ucsc.edu for more information on the requirements and/or process.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

PLAGIARISM IN ANY FORM WILL BE REPORTED TO THE APPROPRIATE PROVOST’S OFFICE, WILL RESULT IN FAILURE OF THE COURSE, AND COULD LEAD TO DISMISSAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY. Familiarize yourself with UCSC’s Policy on Academic Integrity (http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/undergraduate_students/) and if you have any questions or doubts about how to properly cite a source, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 • Course Introduction and the Forefather of Transmedia Storytelling

Thursday 9/23

Week 2 • Transmedia Storytelling: Foundational Concepts (I)

Tuesday 9/28 and Thursday 9/30

Read: Henry Jenkins, “Searching for the Origami Unicorn: The Matrix and Transmedia Storytelling” (93-130) [CR]

Henry Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling 101” [O]


Screen: *Star Wars: Episode IV- A New Hope* (George Lucas, 1977, 121 min.)

Note: If you have not seen *Star Wars: Episode V- The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) or *Star Wars: Episode VI- Return of the Jedi* (1983), it is recommended that you screen them outside of class.
Week 3 • Transmedia Storytelling: Foundational Concepts (II)
Tuesday 10/5 and Thursday 10/7
Read: Geoffrey A. Long, “Transmedia Storytelling: Business, Aesthetics and Production at the Jim Henson Company” (9-69) [O]
Henry Jenkins, “Transmedia Education: The 7 Principles Revisted”
http://henryjenkins.org/2010/06/transmedia_education_the_7_pri.html
Screen: Selections from Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace and Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones Reviews (Red Letter Media, 2009 and 2010)
Note: If you have not seen Star Wars: Episode III- Revenge of the Sith (2005), it is recommended that you screen it outside of class.

Week 4 • Canon and Paratexts
Tuesday 10/12 and Thursday 10/14
Read: Will Brooker, “Canon” (101-113) [CR]
Jonathan Gray, “From Spoilers to Spinoffs: A Theory of Paratexts” (23-46)
Screen: Star Wars Holiday Special (Steve Binder, 1978, 97 min.)
DUE: Paper #1 (Tuesday, 10/12 at 2pm sharp)

Week 5 • Transmedia Authorship and the Fanboy Auteur
Tuesday 10/19 and Thursday 10/21
Read: Jonathan Gray, “Bonus Materials: Digital Auras and Authors” (81-115)
Alan Wexelblat, “An Auteur in the Age of the Internet: JMS, Babylon 5, and the Net” (209-226) [CR]
Henry Jenkins, “‘Do You Enjoy Making the Rest of Us Feel Stupid?’: alt.tv.twinpeaks, the Trickster Author, and Viewer Mastery” (115-133) [CR]
Screen: George Lucas in Love (Joe Nussbaum, 1999, 9 min.)
Selections from The Hidden Fortress (Akira Kurosawa, 1958)

Week 6 • The Economic Motivators & Midterm Exam
Tuesday 10/26 and Thursday 10/28
Read: P. David Marshall, "The New Intertextual Commodity" (69-81) [CR]
Exam: Thursday, 10/28 at 2pm sharp (Bring blue books, a pen, and something to write on)

Week 7 • The Medium is the Message I: Transmedia TV
Tuesday 11/2 and Thursday 11/4
Read: Ivan Askwith, “Lost at Television’s Crossroads” (117-149)
Bud Caddell, "Becoming a Mad-Man" [O]
Suzanne Scott, “Authorized Resistance: Is Fan Production Frakked?” (210-223) [CR]
Screen: Star Wars Ewok Adventures: Caravan of Courage (John Korty, 1984, 90 min.)
Selections from Star Wars: Clone Wars (Genndy Tartakovsky, 2003-2005)
Week 8 • The Medium is the Message II: Novels and Comic Books
Tuesday 11/9 and Thursday 11/11 (Holiday: No Class)
Read: Read the following stories from Star Wars: Tales of the Bounty Hunters:
   “The Prize Pelt: The Tale of Bossk” (147-215)
   “The Last One Standing: The Tale of Boba Fett” (277-339)
Henry Jenkins, "We Had So Many Stories to Tell: The Heroes Comics as Transmedia Storytelling" [O]
http://henryjenkins.org/2007/12/we_had_so_many_stories_to_tell.html
Avi Santo, “Sudsy Superheroes and Transmedia Storytelling, or, Why Comic Book Heroes Do It Better” [O]
Screen: Selections from Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back (Irvin Kershner, 1980)

Week 9 • The Medium is the Message III: Video Games, MMOs, and ARGs
Tuesday 11/16 and Thursday 11/18
Read: Henry Jenkins, “Game Design as Narrative Architecture” [O]
Louisa Stein, "Playing Dress Up: Digital Fashion and Game Extensions of Televisual Experience in Gossip Girl's Second Life" (116-122) [CR]
Analee Newitz, “The Argument Against ARGs” [Note: please explore the links]
http://io9.com/5028054/the-argument-against-args
Screen: Clips and gameplay from a variety of Star Wars video game and MMO properties

Week 10 • Playing the Story: Toys and Games
Tuesday 11/23 and Thursday 11/25 (No Class: Thanksgiving)
Read: Jonathan Gray, “In the World, Just Off Screen: Toys and Games” (175-206)
Screen: Robot Chicken: Star Wars (Seth Green, 2007, 30 min.)

Week 11 • The Fanon
Tuesday 11/30 and Thursday 12/2
Read: Jonathan Gray, “Spoiled and Mashed Up: Viewer Created Paratexts” (143-174)
Catherine Tosenberger, “‘Oh my God, the Fanfiction!’: Dumbledore’s Outing and the Online Harry Potter Fandom” (200-206) [CR]
Catherine Tosenberger and Geoffrey Long, “Gender and Fan Studies Debate: Round 5 (Parts 1 and 2)”
http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/06/gender_and_fan_studies_round_f_1.html
http://henryjenkins.org/2007/06/gender_and_fan_culture_round_f.html
Screen: A selection of Star Wars fan films and fan vids (TBD, suggestions welcome via email)

Week 12 • Final Paper Due
Tuesday 12/7: 2pm, in class (papers may be turned in early in the main office)