

**Digital Literary Studies: Texts, Technologies, and Traditions**  
**ENG400 Section 07**  
**West Chester University Spring 2012**

*This course meets the Writing Emphasis component of the WCU General Education curriculum*

Randall Cream, Ph.D.  
Main Hall 312  
[rcream@wcupa.edu](mailto:rcream@wcupa.edu)

Office Hours:  
Tu/Th 9-9:30; 11-12:15; 3:15-4:00  
Wed 3-4 pm; other times by appt.

This course meets two WCU General Education goals by encouraging students to:  
★ *communicate effectively*; ★ *think critically and analytically*.

### **Course Overview**

ENG400-07 is designed to help you think productively at the intersection of English Studies and Technology, or Digital Humanities. Using two areas of focus (Reading & Gaming), we'll investigate the obstacles and opportunities for a technology-focused approach to the study of English. The course will draw your attention to some aspects of digital culture that at first glance seem innocuous—interfaces, design elements, and other accidental features of software—in order to allow us to consider the experience of the literary in digital environments. Along the way, we'll also try to get at the heart of the object itself—just what is it that we study in English, anyway, if both the material and digital media are accidental? We'll read a lot, we'll write a lot, we'll think a lot, and we'll discuss all of these—in class and in conferences. Welcome!

### **Required Texts and Materials**

This course uses a website for all required readings and writing assignments: [thinkingtogether.org/400](http://thinkingtogether.org/400)

### **The Work of the Course**

This course is a Writing Emphasis course. You will receive instruction in writing specific to the work of the course. This instruction will occur through in-class lessons on elements of writing, out of class conferences on your work in process, and feedback from your peers and the instructor. This course helps you to produce the skill of revision. Everything, literally *everything*, in this course is geared toward this skill. Do not be content with any of your work on first attempt. Re-read. Re-write. Re-visit. Re-think. Again and again. We'll do relatively few assignments, but I'll provide the structure and the incentive to develop revision as a fundamental way of producing academic excellence. There are two units in the course, Reading in Electronic Environments and Gaming. You'll write short, formal essays for each of these units. At the end of the term, you'll submit a longer essay that represents a sustained engagement with the material of the course and original research from beyond the classroom. There will be brief, interpretive analyses that help to produce the skill of analytic and critical thinking that is a core skill of the English major.

### **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Missed classes produce an occasion for self-direction; receiving the missed work and content remains the responsibility of students. The D2L based discussion forum and email provide the opportunity for students to form peer relationships as a management tool for a self-directed education.

### **Academic Integrity & Plagiarism**

It is the responsibility of each student to adhere to the university's standards for academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity include any act that violates the rights of another student in academic work, that involves misrepresentation of your own work, or that disrupts the instruction of the course. Other violations include (but are not limited to): cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing, which means copying any part of another's work and/or using ideas of another and presenting them as one's own without giving proper credit to the source; selling, purchasing, or exchanging of term papers; falsifying of information; and using your own work from one class to fulfill the assignment for another class without significant modification. Proof of academic misconduct can result in the automatic failure and removal from this course.

For questions regarding Academic Integrity, the No-Grade Policy, Sexual Harassment, or the Student Code of Conduct, students are encouraged to refer to the English Department's Undergraduate Handbook, the Undergraduate Catalogue, the Ram's Eye View, and the University website at [www.wcupa.edu](http://www.wcupa.edu).

### **ADA**

If you have a disability that requires accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please meet with me as soon as possible so that I can support your success in an informed manner. If you would like to know more about West Chester University's services for students with disabilities, please contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities which is located at 223 Lawrence Center and can be reached at 610-436-3217 and at [ossd@wcupa.edu](mailto:ossd@wcupa.edu).

### **Grades & Assignments**

I follow the standard 100 point grading scale, using numbers and letters with a + or a -. I take grading to be an ethical contract: I demonstrate what the expectations are for each level, and you are confident as to where you stand as the semester progresses.

#### Essays 10%+10%+30%=50%

You will plan, write, and revise three essays for this class. These essays will be formal, polished out of class writings that represent a serious attempt to think alongside the issues of the class. You will be graded on the sophistication and development of ideas, on the fluency and cohesion of language, and on the structure and success of the argument. Part of each essay assignment will involve a period of drafting, revising, and rewriting. I require and encourage writing as a process of thoughtful reflection and revision; once complete, however, each essay will receive an unalterable grade.

#### Annotated Bibliography 20%

You'll prepare an annotated bibliography of out-of-class sources for the term paper. The annotated bibliography provides an interpretive perspective on the selected research items, driven by the research focus of your term paper. This assignment supports and develops the process-based approach to writing, and encourages recursive thinking and revision as a practice of writing.

#### Interpretive Analyses 20%

Each week's reading assignment will carry along with it a writing assignment. These assignments will ask you to critically analyze some specific textual question— either to make sense of some passage, or to explain some concept, or to make connections between ideas. Over the semester, there will be approximately 8 of these assignments, which will be averaged together for 20% of your final grade.

Each writing assignment will ask you to think about some specific aspect of the text and present a reasoned perspective on that issue. These minor writings are a tool for you to prepare for the essays, as they spur your thinking about the issues of the class. The purposes of these writings are twofold: to support the readings, and to spur you to develop your ideas about the readings in argument form. They also serve to prepare you for the essay assignments, as they model the ways that thoughtful readers and writers move from reading a text to responding to a text to thinking critically. Missed writings can't be made up, regardless of the excuse. I will drop your lowest writing in this category before computing the average.

### Participation, in class & online: 10%

This class uses discussion in class and online as a significant pedagogical element. Together, we'll build an awareness of the complex issues of the semester, and the contributions of each member of the class will help serve as scaffolding for the intellectual work of the semester. Each individual's contribution of a thoughtful, reasoned perspective will significantly ease the task of forming new synthetic propositions.

### **Tentative Schedule**

#### **Week One: Jan 25**

Introduction to the Course  
Technology Tour

#### **Unit I: Reading, Information, & the Literary**

##### **Weeks Two-Six: Feb 1-22**

Changing Modes of Reading: NEA, Kirschenbaum...  
Literary Reading Machines: Digital Archives, Interfaces, and the Literary  
Writing, Reading, Marginalia, & Born Digital  
The Material Conditions of the Digital Environment  
Close vs Distant Reading & Writing

**Theories: Unsworth, Genette, Moretti**

**Interpretive Analyses 1-5**

#### **Essay I Due**

#### **Unit II: Gaming and the Subject of Literature**

##### **Weeks Seven- Twelve Mar 7-Apr 18**

Play, Literature, & Human Nature  
Games as Texts  
Gaming and/as Learning  
Narration, Gaming, and Ethical Behavior  
Interpretive Analyses 6-10

#### **Essay II Due Apr 15**

#### **Week Thirteen & Fourteen Apr 25-May 2**

Digital Humanities and the Future of English  
Tools, Techniques, and Methodologies for Digital English

**Annotated Bibliography Due Apr 27**

**Essay III Due at Final Exam**

#### **Finals Week May 7-11**