

LCC 6114: Advanced Design Workshop
Instructor: Dr. Ellen Strain
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Contact/Class Information

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Goals of the Class

Through the process of producing a single team-based project over the course of 15 weeks the following learning goals will be met:

- the undertaking of a specific set of design issues resolved through an iterative design process;
- participation in a highly-structured process of large-scale multimedia development;
- the mastery of basic programming concepts and advanced Lingo techniques including lists, MIAWs, customized behaviors, and interaction with the web;
- the study of issues of narrative, space, and navigation within interactive environments and the development of alternative approaches to these issues;
- the application of a particular body of film theory to interactive media and the exploration of the limits of cross-media theory.

No background in film theory is necessary; however, students should be very familiar with Director, Photoshop, and video production tools.

Design Problem Proposals

The class will focus on a single team project for the duration of the course. Before the start of the semester, pre-enrolled students will have decided on a class project by voting on one of three design proposals posted on the coweb. In this case, the students have chosen to work on the William Desmond Taylor story.

Course Components

The class will be divided into four temporally overlapping areas of instruction/production. For each area, the primary activities and pedagogical components are listed followed by a description of the area-specific evaluation criteria and methods.

ELABORATION OF THE DESIGN PROBLEM

- application of narrative theory to digital media (with cross-media readings)
- domain research on the William Desmond Taylor case

During this stage, students will be evaluated on general participation, engagement with narrative theory readings, and contribution to domain research.

PRE-PRODUCTION

- research into standard methods for organizing large-scale multimedia projects
- scheduling of production milestones and deadlines
- brainstorming on general contours of project's structure and particular design solutions

During this stage, students will be evaluated on general participation and productive involvement with project scheduling and design brainstorming.

LINGO INSTRUCTION

Attempts will be made to match Lingo instruction to the class's level of experience and its interests. The following list contains possible topics to be covered.

- property lists, parent-child scripts, customized menus, customized behaviors
- sound/video/QTVR control within Director, MIAWs
- advanced debugging techniques and memory management
- planning for web delivery and other forms of web interaction

Scripting assignments, as described below, will be used to determine students' comprehension of scripting techniques. Shared source materials will be used to limit the time-intensity of such projects.

PRODUCTION PROCESS

- coordination of tasks across multiple design groups and within 2-3 person design groups
- generation of creative solutions to design issues
- completion of project components according to schedule

Students will be evaluated on the technical and conceptual elegance of their design solutions presented at regular intervals in the form of in-class progress updates. Students are expected to participate in constructive evaluation of other design groups' work.

Required Reading

Although this is not a class focused on readings, it will be expected that you do limited readings in the following four areas:

MULTIMEDIA PROJECT PLANNING

The following reading is on electronic reserve, and a photocopy is available in the IDT lounge. Since this article lays out a general production planning method (in the context of integrating usability), you should read the article during the first few weeks of the class.

- Charles B. Kreitzberg, "Managing for Usability: The Cognetics QUE Design Methodology," *Multimedia: A Management Perspective* (ed. Antone F. Alber). Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Group, 1996. (feel free to skip pages 67-70)

NARRATIVE MECHANICS

The following articles are intended to provide a cross-media look at narrative construction, a basic vocabulary for dissecting and rebuilding narrative, and a cursory view of interactive narrative's guiding assumptions. Articles are fractured into specified sets of pages that provide the most pertinent information while still limiting the total amount of required reading. All readings are on electronic reserve and are accessible in photocopied form in the IDT lounge.

- Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (trans. Richard Miller). New York: The Noonday Press, 1974, 1970, pp. 3-7, 13-14, 18-21, 75-76, 209-210. [literature]
- Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 243-251, 257-262. [literature—review of Barthes]
- David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, “Story causality and motivation,” *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. [film]
- Ann-Sargent Wooster, “Reach Out and Touch Someone: The Romance of Interactivity,” *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (eds. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer). Aperture, 1986. [interactive video disks]
- George R. Landow, *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, pp 2-7, 52-53, 101-109. [hypertext]
- Janet Murray, “Chapter 5: Agency,” *Hamlet on the Holodeck*. New York: The Free Press, 1997. [interactive games and cyber-narratives]

THE WILLIAM DESMOND TAYLOR STORY

Although everyone in the class does not need to read every extant text on William Desmond Taylor, ideally we will be collectively familiar with the range of theories about Taylor’s death. You should purchase one of the following texts and then borrow the texts of other students for specific tasks. I will also make my own copies available.

- Robert Giroux, *A Deed of Death*
- Bruce Long, *William Desmond Taylor : A Dossier*
- Sidney Kirkpatrick, *A Cast of Killers*
- Samuel A. Peeples, *The Man Who Died Twice*
- <http://www.silent-movies.com/Taylorology>

MACROMEDIA DIRECTOR AND LINGO

There is no single Lingo book that covers the various topics comprehensively and clearly. The following texts are all recommended, but different books are more appropriate for people with differing levels of programming and Director experience. You will need a reference text to get you through the class, but you may find it useful to have a different text than the members of your design group, so that resources might be shared.

- *Learning Lingo : The Art and Science of Programming with Director* by Michael Callery
- *Director 7 Demystified* by Jason Roberts and Phil Gross
- *Director 7 and Lingo Bible* by Robert Martin, John R. Nyquist, and Jonathan P. Bacon
- *The Lingo Handbook* by Rich Grace
- *Lingo Sorcery : The Magic of Lists, Objects and Intelligent Agents* by Peter Small
- *Lingo! : An Advanced Guide to Director's Scripting Language* by Tab Julius
- *Lingo in a Nutshell* by Bruce A. Epstein
- *Director in a Nutshell* by Bruce A. Epstein

Scripting Assignments

Each week one Lingo concept will be covered in class. The actual site of learning, however, is expected to be in the extension of class content through outside research using Lingo texts and through the application of such research to scripting assignments or to the larger team project. Scripting assignments can be done individually or in groups of two only in cases in which there is not a significant disparity in the scripting experience of the two individuals.

The scripting assignments are designed to be contained projects that are whimsical enough to both be enjoyable and accommodate an inconsistent aesthetic. The creation of an assignment’s component pieces will be split among students to avoid extensive time being spent preparing

graphics. Each assignment will combine at least two sets of Lingo concepts, covered in two consecutive class periods. The component pieces will be due in the second of these class periods, and the completed assignment will be due the following class period. All scripting assignments and graphics should be turned in to the LCC 6114 partition. Each scripting assignment will be described in detail on a one-page handout that will specify the exact nature of the preparatory materials and the required functionality of the completed assignment. Additionally, it will contain a list of Lingo terms that you may find helpful and recommended chapters in the various Lingo books with an asterisk next to the most useful source for this particular assignment.

There will be six scripting assignments given on a biweekly basis for the first 12 weeks of the course. Each scripting assignment will be worth 5% of the total grade and will be given a score between 0 and 5 according to the following evaluative scheme:

0 points: assignment never turned in.

1 point: assignment does not include the required functionality and illustrates a minimum of effort expended.

2 points: assignment is characterized by only partial functionality and represents very little assimilation of content covered in class.

3 points: scripting has bugs or the assignment otherwise illustrates that the student failed to exert sufficient effort in elegantly applying a scripting concept to an application.

4 points: all functionality is present, comprehension of class content is evident, and external resources have been consulted in the creation of smooth, bug-free functionality.

5 points: assignment evinces an attempt to push scripting concepts to levels above and beyond cursory information presented in class; or elegant, completely functional Lingo scripting is combined with creativity and design finesse to produce a digital artifact that stands out among other instances of the same assignment.

Scripting assignments can be turned in late up until the last week of class; however, a late assignment will receive no higher than a 3 without a medical excuse. All scripts must be commented.

One additional point will be given for documenting on the coweb what you consider to be a scripting triumph or innovation in your assignment. Collaboration in the form of sharing hints, innovations, and source material is encouraged in a class such as this one which is structured around a team project. However, anything that discourages independent learning – copying code from a project on the partition or allowing your partner to complete the assignment for you – will result in a grade deduction. Lastly, a place on the coweb will be designated for voting on “design awards” for the best application turned in for each scripting assignment. In other words, students are responsible for looking at one another’s assignments after they are completed. Design awards will be based on scripting competence, general design, and obvious effort expended in the completion of the assignment.

Performance Reviews

Since the structure of the class borrows from corporate models, the metaphor for the grading scheme will that of the performance review. Two midterm performance reviews, each worth 20% of the grade, will be administered at week five and week ten. Performance reviews consist of the evaluation of a student’s contribution to the class in terms of assisting progress towards project completion (see also Course Components for more specific descriptions of evaluation criteria). While progress during the first five weeks will most likely consist of contributing to brainstorming and planning, during the latter weeks, the majority of the class period will be dedicated to cycling through the various design

groups, with each providing a progress update that leads to discussion essential to the iterative design process. Ideally, each design group will be presenting a progress update each week.

The final review, worth 30% of the grade, will consist of an evaluation of: (1) your design group's finished module; (2) your participation in the integration of the different modules; (3) your overall performance in a particular job role. While not everyone will be assigned a job role initially, by the middle of the semester, it is expected that each person will have stepped up to fulfill some need or set of tasks essential to the production process as a whole. Job roles that will be assigned at the start of the semester include:

- Producer
- Project Manager
- Technical Architect
- Aesthetic Coordinator
- Usability Consultant
- Quality Assurance Engineer, Modular Integration
- Domain Expert
- Information Architect, Modular Integration
- Marketing Manager
- Sound Designer
- Legal Consultant
- Archivist

In short, the grade breakdown will be as follows:

- 30% scripting assignments (6 scripting assignments each worth 5% of the grade)
- 40% midterm performance reviews (2 midterm reviews each worth 20%)
- 30% final performance review

Course Calendar

Although the exact topics and assignments may shift slightly once students' level of scripting expertise and areas of interest are assessed, the following schedule reflects the general expectations for the course.

August 25	Assessment Quiz. Design brainstorming. Scripting topic: Lingo syntax and vocabulary.
September 1	Preparatory materials due. Scripting topic: external casts and customized menus. Discussion of Narrative Mechanics (reading due).
September 8	Scripting Assignment "The Time Travel Story" due. Scripting topic: randomization and debugging. Mapping out of suspect list.
September 15	Preparatory materials due. Scripting topic: sound, video, and QTVR control using Lingo.
September 22	Scripting Assignment "Dream Generator" due. Scripting topic: linear and property lists.
September 29	Preparatory materials due. Scripting topic: lists within lists and arithmetic operations.

October 6	Scripting Assignment “The Yard Sale Game” due. Scripting topic: text strings and concatenation.
October 13	Preparatory materials due. Scripting topic: editable text fields.
October 20	Scripting Assignment “The Magic 8 Ball. Part I” due. Scripting topic: MIAWs.
October 27	Preparatory materials due. Scripting topic: netLingo.
November 3	Scripting Assignment “The Magic 8 Ball. Part II” due. Scripting topic: timers and cursors.
November 10	Preparatory materials due. Scripting topic: custom behaviors.
November 17	Scripting Assignment “Old MacDonald’s Farm” due. Scripting topic: parent/child scripts and OOP.
November 24	Let’s make a deal.
December 1	Finalizing of design modules.
December 8	Formation of Modular Integration Plan.