

English 4371: Word and Digital Technology

Instructor: Matthew Kelly

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Class Location: CAS 212

Class Time: 4:00-5:20 pm

Instructor's Office:

Instructor's Office Hours: TBD during first week of classes

Course Description

Despite the increasing prevalence of digital technologies in our daily lives, the written word has not been relegated to obsolescence (as some may have feared). In fact, the rapid increase in accessible digital communication technologies has actually increased the amount of writing people produce on a day-to-day basis. Text messages, emails, social media posts, and blogs are all extensions of traditional text-based communication that builds upon (rather than fights against) the new affordances and potential of interactive digital media. Even non-textual media such as audio podcasts rely on written communication to plan, create, and distribute these texts to a variety of audiences.

This course invites you to explore the unique relationship between the written word and extra-textual forms of communication as it is composed and circulated across different digital media landscapes. Throughout this class, we will consider the following questions: how has the synthesis of the written word and digital technologies reshaped our understanding of what it means to "read" and "write" today? In what ways does the written word help facilitate the composition and distribution of new audio/visual genres? How do new technologies shape, build upon, or challenge traditional text-based communications?

This course requires students to compose a wide variety of digital assignments while exploring the rhetorical, poetic, and ethical implications of designing content for new media platforms. Students will learn how to create "texts" (broadly speaking) using sound, images, and quantitative data through both proprietary and open-source software. Class discussions will focus on theories of writing, composing, design, critique, delivery, and networked distributions in virtual environments; critique and analysis of digital media produced by professional and amateur digital media practitioners; and analysis and revisions of digital media composed by students themselves.

As is the case with most digital technologies, you will get better at using specific software by experimenting, exploring, and (figuratively speaking) breaking things. Hence, it is your responsibility to schedule time to tinker around with programs on your own time in order to prepare yourself for projects and class discussions/activities. While this may sound daunting, the most important thing to remember is that we are all novices to some extent when it comes to digital technologies. New apps, platforms, and features will always pop up, and even seasoned programmers, web designers, and audio editors need to sift through FAQs/message boards/wikis to solve unexpected problems.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this class, students should be able to:

1. Understand and master practical aspects about digital composing, including how to work with layers, versions, compression, separation of form and content, the legal and social aspects of asset reuse, and best practices for saving and distributing digitally-native work online.
2. Understand the rhetorical dimensions of digital media objects and what constitutes effective forms of communication in audio, visual, and text-based genres.
3. Understand how the advent of digital media technologies have expanded our conception of "words" to include audio and images in addition to evolving the ways in which the written word can facilitate communication in digital or online environments.
4. Be capable of "teaching yourself" how to access and use digital composing platforms (such as sound editors, image manipulators, or blogging platforms). So much of keeping up-to-date with digital technologies is learning how to be self-directed when seeking out solutions to technical issues, so this class will encourage you to take ownership over your own learning practices when using digital platforms.

Course Materials

You are not required to purchase a text for this class; all readings for the course will be made available online via Canvas or through email. However, you will need to have (or have regular, reliable access to) the following equipment:

- Good quality headphones (preferably not earbuds)
- High speed Internet
- A relatively new computer (less than 5 years old) with at least 4GB of RAM
- An audio recorder (using your phone works well)
- A digital camera (using your phone works well)

In terms of software, I will try to steer you towards free and/or open-source programs whenever possible. However, there will be moments where you will need to create personal accounts to use certain platforms. You may also elect to purchase the Adobe Creative Cloud suite (which has student discounts through UTT's Campus Computing Services).

Major Projects

Audio Podcast: For this project, students will design, script, record, and edit an extended podcast that engages with a topic of your choice. Students will be expected to include an interview element to their podcasts, which will encourage them to rethink how they "quote" another person's language by putting their own voices in conversation with another person's voice. The goal of this project is to explore how audio formats build upon, evolve, or re-shape traditional text-based terms such as "quoting," "transitions," and "authorial voice."

Data Visualization: For this project, students will research and design a visual composition that identifies and communicates a specific trend on a local or national level. Students are welcome to use either a infographic platform (such as Piktochart) or any other technology that visualizes complex, quantifiable data (such as Google Maps, Open Street Maps, or similar geo-location systems). The goal of this project is to test your ability to visually re-present a complex set of data to an audience in a coherent, streamlined fashion while also considering how text-based terms such as "thesis," "argument," and "analysis" evolve when applied to visual media.

Coordination of Digital Media Showcase: In this project, small groups of 2-3 students will undertake specific roles for facilitating and coordinating an end-of-semester digital showcase of the work you've produced throughout the course. Each group will take on different technology-based responsibilities (such as building a website to host all student projects in a single space, designing fliers to advertise the project, etc.). All groups will be expected to create a set of design documents that explains what their specific responsibilities are and how they will go about satisfying these responsibilities. The main goal of this project is to give you an opportunity to apply skills from class to real-world scenarios for the sake of professionalization.

Grade Distribution

The three major assignments will be graded out of 25 points. At the end of the semester, all short writing assignments will be tallied up in such a way that each assignment will have equal weight for the remaining 25% of your grade. For example, if there are a total of 10 short writing assignments by the end of the semester, then each assignment will be worth 2.5 points.

Audio Podcast	25%
Data Visualization	25%
Coordinating Showcase	25%
Short Writing Assignments	25%

Final Grade Computation

To compute the final course grade, all points from the three major assignments and short writing assignments will be added up. Your final grade will be based on the point breakdown listed below:

- A = 90-100 points
- B = 80-89 points
- C = 70-79 points
- D = 60-69 points
- F = 59 points and below

Additional Course Policies:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Please see UT Tyler's policy on scholastic dishonesty:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php>

This class has a Zero Tolerance Policy for Scholastic Dishonesty. Any deliberate act of scholastic dishonesty will result in immediate failure of the entire course.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Because this class incorporates frequent small- and large-group activities, students who are absent affect not only their own learning, but that of their fellow students. Therefore, only **two weeks' worth of absences (six classes)** will be allowed for the semester, regardless of reason, including documented illness or emergency. Students who exceed two weeks' worth of classes will fail the course, unless they withdraw by the census date. See "Standard UT Tyler Syllabus Policies" below for information on the census date.

Late Arrivals

Being late (showing up after I take attendance) twice equals one absence.

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors.

Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products.

There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. (For Spring, the Census Date is Jan 28th). Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date (Jan 28th) is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site. and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office

will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site. , the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

i. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student's test paper;
- using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test; failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;

- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
- paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
- falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
- taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

ii. “Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit.

iii. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu

UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu

The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.

UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

Semester Schedule (please note this calendar is tentative and subject to change)

Week	Topic	Assignments Due
1	- Introduction to course policies - Introduction to podcast project	- Tech proficiency worksheet
2	- Framing audio essays - Using quotations in audio formats	- "This American Life" worksheet - Podcast topic and framing worksheet
3	- Creating ambiance in sound projects - Composing productive interview questions	- "Welcome to Night Vale" worksheet - Interview question worksheet
4	- Introduction to Audacity audio editor - Copyright, trademarks, and licensing - Using what works in other podcasts	- "Finding your own podcast" worksheet
5	- Peer review workshops	- First 5 minutes of podcast
6	- Readings TBD	
7	- Introduction to data visualization project - Rhetorical analysis of infographics	- Final draft of podcast - "Information is beautiful" worksheet
8	- Rhetorical analysis of GPS-based projects - Creating arguments in visual documents	- Digital Scholarship Lab worksheet - Data Visualization topic worksheet
9	-Spring Break (no classes)	
10	- Introduction to Group Presentation project	- Group presentation
11	- Peer review workshops	- Working draft of Data Visualizations
12	- Effective presentation techniques	- Final draft of data visualization