

# SM2105: NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AND AESTHETICS OF TIME-BASED MEDIA

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## Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Narrative Strategies and Aesthetics of Time-based Media

### Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

### Course Number

2105

### Academic Unit

School of Creative Media (SM)

### College/School

School of Creative Media (SM)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

Nil

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

' Narrative' is an important concept in new media creation. Far more than just story-telling, the idea of 'narrative' invites us to think about structures, processes and systems – essential to time-based organization and spatial composition across diverse media. This course examines narrative strategies for all kinds of creative situations: from photo sequence to moving image aesthetics, montage theories for time-based media, including fiction, documentary, animation, experiments and even ubiquitous screen contexts, game, hypertext, and immersive environments. At the end of the course, students should be able to use the concept of narrative flexibly, playfully, and strategically in their future art experiments and to reflect on the diverse meanings and applications of narrative. The course is intended for creative practitioners and so the focus will be on the impact of narrative concepts and methods on the practice of creative media. An important aim of the course is to encourage students to reflect on their own choices as creative practitioners. Lectures and assignments will highlight the interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary of narrative concepts, for instance by making reference to cognitive psychology, philosophy, literature/cinema/game studies, etc.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Identify and describe the primary narrative and aesthetics elements of a broad range of time-based media.		x	
2	Analyze, describe, and critique time-based media artworks based on the conceptual vocabulary developed during the semester		x	
3	Create their own time-based media work with the conceptual vocabulary used in class.	x	x	x
4	Conduct extra research to discover new artworks and to playfully name and theorize unclassifiable works as new species for the sake of stretching one' s conceptual thinking	x	x	x

#### A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

#### A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

#### A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Students will engage in naming and describing all key issues on narrative – definitions, differentiations, usefulness, variety and medium-specific views	1, 2

2	Take-home reading and writing	Students will engage in guided reading (theory and history) and additional research for relevant texts and artworks	1, 2, 4	
3	Take-home short creative exercise	Students will produce creative projects that respond to key concepts introduced in lectures for personal experiments	1, 3	
4	Research-based Final Report	Students will documentation – written, sketches and other media forms that apply, explore, and reflect on narrative concepts.	1, 2, 3, 4	

**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	1 Short review (assigned reading)	1, 2	15	-	No
2	2 Short review (assigned art work)	1, 2	15	-	No
3	Take-home short creative exercise (a conceptual plan for an innovative narrative on paper using images, maps, text and diagrams) to be presented in class.	1, 2, 3, 4	30	-	No
4	Research-based Final Report (a dossier of found examples of innovative narratives with a naming exercise and explanatory notes) and presentation in class of the main ideas.	1, 2, 4	30	-	No

5	Participation in the discussion and analysis of individual examples and in the critique of other classmates' projects.	1, 2, 3, 4	10	-	No
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**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Examination (%)**

0

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)****Assessment Task**

1. Participation and Contribution to Class Discussion:

**Criterion**

This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the tutorial sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to his/her peer members.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, constructive and perceptive comments that stimulate class discussion.
- In-depth pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Ready to interact with, reflect on, and respond to the opinions of others.
- Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and synthesis with informed views
- Describes the topic in constructively critical ways, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points
- Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

- Attentive in in-class participation, listening with comprehension, but only infrequently contributing
- Adequate pre-class preparation but little familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Fair interaction with and understanding of others' opinions

**Marginal (D)**

- Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people's views
- Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- No interaction with and understanding of opinions

**Failure (F)**

- Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher No pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- No interaction with and understanding of opinions

**Assessment Task**

2. Short Reviews / Final research-based report

### **Criterion**

This assessment will grade on rationality, clarity and fluency of argument and comment. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lies in a student’s ability to negotiate a position that is informed, defensible, and standing on personal insight.

#### **Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

- Describes rich content that interprets and integrates research materials into a rigorous organization with coherent and logical structure and original thoughts.
- Precision in argument, well defined and reasoned points of view with insightful interpretation of existing literature
- The writing responds to views initiated in lectures and class discussions and sheds light on new dimensions of the topic.

#### **Good (B+, B, B-)**

- Describes content clearly,
- integrates various resources into a discussion that advances sheds some light on the topic and puts forward some original thoughts.
- Reasonable organization of the argument with balanced structure and composition
- Responsive to lectures and peer comments.

#### **Fair (C+, C, C-)**

- Adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources into a clear and well-structured organization without any original ideas.
- Describes topic moderately clearly and accurately, albeit with some errors or unclear points.
- Elaborates on ideas moderately relevant to the topic.
- Respond to points made during lectures and class discussion and uses class concepts.

#### **Marginal (D)**

- Weak content, limited use of resources
- Poor organization.
- Makes many points that are unclear, irrelevant to the topic, or inaccurate.
- Not responsive to the ideas introduced in lectures and class discussions.

#### **Failure (F)**

- Does not use the concept of narrative theory or uses them inaccurately.
- No organization, structure or/and composition
- Irrelevant points to the subject matter, no ability to interpret the opinions of authors or the contents of artworks.
- Failure to respond to lectures or class discussions.

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### **Assessment Task**

#### 3.Take Home Creation

### **Criterion**

Students execute creative ideas and projects drawing on the concepts, examples and ideas developed in the class. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lies in a student’s proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned authorship.

#### **Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

- Creates artistic work with a strong affective quality and an original personal style and signature
- Creates artwork with an excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Creates art work that raises questions and generates insights about the process of conception, creative strategies and production.
- Creates work that makes original use of the expressive qualities of the medium.
- Creates artistic work that brings together knowledge from different disciplines (e.g. mathematics, psychology, physics, anthropology, etc.) relevant to narrative construction.

- Designs plans and strategies effectively in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment.

#### **Good (B+, B, B-)**

- Creates work that explores and applies the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium with some original uses of the medium.
- Creates work that raises some insights about its own creative processes.
- Designs plans and strategies effectively in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/ suggestions

#### **Fair (C+, C, C-)**

- Limited appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Limited ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Some adjustment of plans and strategies in response to the resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

#### **Marginal (D)**

- Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Creates project/ work that lacks an innovative style.
- Very limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

#### **Failure (F)**

- No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium
- Fails to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc.) available

#### **Additional Information for AR**

All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

## **Part III Other Information**

#### **Keyword Syllabus**

- a. Basic concepts of narrative: Fabula vs. Syuzhet; Meta-narrative; Inter-textuality.
- b. Time and space in cinema.
- c. Focalization and Levels of Narration. Parametric narration, Serialism, and Micro-narratives
- d. Moving image mise-en-scene. Cinematography. Strategies and styles of editing. Montage. ContinuitySound design and aesthetics.
- e. Different approaches to narrative form: cognitive, psychoanalytic, hermeneutic.
- f. Different kinds of narrative: Fiction. Documentary form. Classical Hollywood narrative. Modernism. Realism. Experimental form.
- g. Animation. Deconstructing the cartoon. Experimental animation. Non-objective and non-linear animation. Early comic strip cartoon concepts. The problem of realism. Metamorphosis, condensation, synecdoche, symbolism and metaphor, fabrication and associative relations, choreography and penetration as narrative strategies in animation.
- h. Beyond traditional narrative forms. Hypertext. Expanded cinema. Combinatorial forms.Game and interactive art.

#### **Reading List**

#### **Compulsory Readings**

	<b>Title</b>
1	H. Porter Abbott, 2011: The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative (2nd edition). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
2	Mieke Bal, 2009: Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative (3rd edition). University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, Toronto.

3	David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith. 2022: <i>Film History</i> (5th edition). McGraw-Hill, New York.
4	David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. 2011: <i>Minding Movies: Observations on the Art, Craft, and Business of Filmmaking</i> . University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
5	Sheila Curran Bernard, 2010: <i>Documentary Storytelling, Third Edition: Creative Nonfiction on Screen</i> . Focal Press, Burlington (USA) and Oxford (UK).
6	W. John Hill and Pamela Gibson (eds.), 1998: <i>The Oxford Guide to Film Studies</i> . OUP, New York.
7	Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (ed.), 1999: <i>The Oxford History of World Cinema</i> . OUP, New York.
8	Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro, 2011: <i>Crafting Truth: Documentary Form and Meaning</i> . Rutgers University Press
9	John Canemaker, 1988: <i>Storytelling in Animation: the Art of the Animated Images</i> . Samuel French Trade.
10	Donald Craftton, 1982: <i>Before Mickey</i> . MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, USA.
11	Lois Rostow Kuznets, 1994: <i>When Toys Come Alive: Narratives of Animation, Metamorphosis, and Development</i> . Yale University Press.
12	Scott McCloud, 1993: <i>Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art</i> . HarperCollins, New York.
13	Jayne Pilling (ed.), 1997: <i>A Reader in Animation Studies</i> . John Libbey & Company
14	Jayne Pilling 2001: <i>Animation: 2D and Beyond</i> (Rotovision, New York)
15	Charles Solomon, 1994: <i>The History of Animation: Enchanted Drawings</i> . Random House
16	Paul Wells, 1998: <i>Understanding Animation</i> . Routledge.
17	Raymond Queneau: <i>Exercises On Style</i> . Trans. Barbara Wright. London: John Calder Publishers, 1998.
18	Douglas Grant and Jim Bizzocchi, "How Story Can Tell Games: Narrative and Micronarrative as Components of Game Experiencee"; <a href="http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/mit4/papers/grant%20bizzocchi.pdf">http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/mit4/papers/grant%20bizzocchi.pdf</a>
19	The International Journal of Computer Game Research (2001-2007)
20	Ben Mcintosh, Randi Cohn and Lindsay Grace, 2010: "Nonlinear Narrative in Games: Theory and Practice" (uploaded August 17, 2010: <a href="http://www.gamecareerguide.com/features/882/nonlinear_narrative_in_games_.php?page=1">http://www.gamecareerguide.com/features/882/nonlinear_narrative_in_games_.php?page=1</a>
21	Martin Rieser and Andrea Zapp (eds.), 2002: <i>New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative</i> . BFI, London.
22	Story Structure: Patterns in Narrative Structure for Interactive Media: <a href="http://staff.jccc.net/mfitzpat/storystructures/index.htm/">http://staff.jccc.net/mfitzpat/storystructures/index.htm /</a>
23	Storytelling Alice: <a href="http://www.alice.org/kelleher/storytelling/#">http://www.alice.org/kelleher/storytelling/#</a>
24	Simon Egenfeldt- Nielsen et al - <i>Understanding Video Games: the Essential Introduction</i> (2008)
25	Jesper Juul: <i>Half Real</i> (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2006)
26	Alexander R. Galloway: <i>Gaming: Essays On Algorithmic Culture</i> (University of Minnesota Press, 2006)

### Additional Readings

Title	
1	Lastowka E. Gregory & Dan Hunter, "The Laws of the Virtual Worlds," <i>California Law Review</i> volume 92, Issue 1 (January 2004)