

Transmedia Storytelling

Course Syllabus

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1. ANNOTATION

Brief Description

The course is structured as an introduction to the theories of transmedia phenomena, in-depth analysis of transmedia narratives examples and creative development of transmedia extension.

In order to reach this goal, the course is organized in five units: "Panorama" offers an overview of the current terminology and context involved in transmedia storytelling; "Core Principles" introduces the main concepts and basic tools within transmedia storytelling realm available to contemporary storytellers, including issues around audience engagement, interactivity, participation and worldbuilding, for instance; "Transmediation" links transmedia storytelling to issues around intermediality, intertextuality, and adaptation; "Transmedia Analysis" introduces an original analytical model to critically examines cases of transmedia projects; and finally "Practical Work" gives the students the opportunity to experience the development of a transmedia extension.

Methodology

The course methodology, in the context of media studies, consists of an interdisciplinary approach. More specifically, the course presents a particular analytical model developed by the course's author dedicated to the analysis of transmedia projects aiming to understand how complex transmedia narratives are planned and executed.

The course consists of lectures, seminars and practical work. All students are expected to prepare and present a seminar presentation as formative coursework. The students will work in groups of three in order to develop all the course's activities. The course ends with the written analysis of a given transmedia narrative and respective creative project of a transmedia extension.

Main goals of course

- To support the study of theories of transmedia storytelling;
- To discuss the context in which transmedia practices emerged;
- To provide tools for the analysis of transmedia narratives;
- To critically examine media franchises;
- To develop a theoretical framework for understanding how transmedia storytelling works;
- To familiarize students with the process of practical development of transmedia narratives;
- To creatively plan and execute a short transmedia extension.

After successful completion of the course, the students will share:

- Knowledge of theoretical approaches to transmedia phenomena;
- Ability to analyze the composition of transmedia narratives;
- Ability to evaluate the rethoric of transmedia storytelling;
- Insight into recent developments in the field of transmedia storytelling;
- Hands-on experience on developing a transmedia extension.

Target audience

The course is designed to provide MA level students, especially from the faculty of media communications, an overview of theoretical and practical application of the contemporary developments in transmedia storytelling. However, the course can be of interest for students from other faculties as well, such as cultural studies, integrated communications, and arts. Foreign and exchange MA level students could also participate and benefit from the fact that the course is offered in English.

Requirements

Firstly, it is necessary to have a working level of English in order to be able to fully participate in all activities of the course, which involves lectures, seminar presentations, academic reading and writing. Secondly, it is recommended to have at least basic skills in dealing with photography/video/blog because the course has a creative practical work that incorporates basic technical and aesthetic knowledge. At last, attendance is required.

2. COURSE STRUCTURE

Originality

The proposed course is the result of the recent academic research agenda of the author about transmedia storytelling complexity and transmedia storytelling analysis. The originality of the course lies on the specific analytical model developed by the author to critically examine how transmedia projects are planned and executed. This particular methodological approach is presented to the students and utilized by them in order to analyze given transmedia narratives. Besides it, the referred course offers both theoretical and practical experiences.

Course structure

№	Topic	Total hours	Audience hours			Individual workload hours
			Lectures	Seminars	Practical work	

1.	Panorama: What is transmedia storytelling, overview of the current terminology	12	8	0	0	4
2.	Core principles: Main concepts and basic tools, audience engagement	10	4	0	0	6
3.	Transmediation: Intermediality, intertextuality, and adaptation	18	8	0	0	10
4.	Transmedia analysis: Analytical model to examines given transmedia projects	52	4	8	0	40
5.	Practical work: Creative development of a transmedia extension	58	2	6	10	40
	Total	150	26	14	10	100

Week	Topic
1	1. Panorama: What is transmedia storytelling, overview of the current terminology
2	2. Core principles: Main concepts and basic tools, audience engagement 3. Transmediation: Intermediality, intertextuality, and adaptation
3	3. Transmediation: Intermediality, intertextuality, and adaptation 4. Transmedia analysis: Analytical model to examines given transmedia projects
4	4. Transmedia analysis: Analytical model to examines given transmedia projects
5	5. Practical work: Creative development of a transmedia extension
6	5. Practical work: Creative development of a transmedia extension

3. COURSE CONTENT

3.1. Panorama:

What could be understood as transmedia storytelling? Although there is not yet consensus on what exactly transmedia storytelling means, it is certainly possible to trace its main characteristics and follow its footprints. Starting from the word transmedia itself, there is the prefix *trans-* in combination with media. This Latin prefix means beyond, through, transverse, conveying the idea of transcendence. Consequently, the word transmedia would then go beyond, transcending a variety of media.

In this context, the use of the term transmedia to depict a particular form of storytelling emerged in 1991, when Marsha Kinder published the book *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. In her book, she defines “commercial supersystems of transmedia intertextuality” (1991) as referring to relevant franchises distributed on multiple media platforms. Nevertheless, the term transmedia storytelling was first coined in 2003 by Henry Jenkins in his article published by *Technology Review* (2003). Three years later, he improved the concept and published its definition in his

notorious book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006). Probably the most referred terms alongside transmedia storytelling are crossmedia and multimedia. Are they really synonyms? No, definitely not, and this issue will be also discussed.

Core sources (alphabetical order)

- Bolin, Göran (2007). Media Technologies, Transmedia Storytelling and Commodification. In T. Storsul & D. Stuedahl (eds.). *Ambivalence Towards Convergence. Digitalization and Media Change*. Göteborg: Nordicom, 19-31.
- Davidson, Drew *et al.* (2010). *Cross-Media Communications: An Introduction to the Art of Creating Integrated Media Experiences*. Pittsburgh: ETC Press.
- Dena, Christy (2009). Transmedia Practice: Theorising the Practice of Expressing a Fictional World across Distinct Media and Environments. *PhD Dissertation*. University of Sydney.
- Gambarato, Renira R. (2012). Signs, Systems and Complexity of Transmedia Storytelling. In *Estudos em Comunicação*, n.12, 69-83. Covilhã (Portugal).
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- Jenkins, Henry (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jenkins, Henry; Ford, Sam and Green, Joshua (2013). *Spreadable Media – Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: NYU Press.
- Kinder, Marsha (1991). *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure (2004). *Narrative across Media: The Language of Storytelling*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Additional sources (in alphabetical order)

- Iacobacci, Nicoletta (2008). *From Crossmedia to Transmedia: Thoughts on the Future of Entertainment*. <http://www.lunchoverip.com/2008/05/from-crossmedia.html/> (24 May 2008).
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- Mittell, Jason (2006). Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television. In *The Velvet Light Trap*, n.58, 29-40.

Murray, Janet (1997). *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Producers Guild of America (2007). *The 8 Defining Characteristics of a Trans-media Production* (by Jeff Gomez). <http://pganmc.blogspot.com/2007/10/pga-member-jeff-gomez-left-assembled.html> (02 October 2007).

Producers Guild of America (2012). *Code of Credits – New Media*. http://www.producersguild.org/?page=coc_nm#transmedia (18 July 2012).

Rose, Frank (2011). *The Art of Immersion: How the Digital Generation Is Remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the Way We Tell Stories*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

3.2. Core Principles

The overall assumption is that the transmedia space is large enough to embrace distinctive types of stories/experiences. The first one is a collection of mono-medium stories, commonly known as a franchise, in which a book, a film, and a video game, for instance, all contribute distinct stories to one overarching storyworld; the second type is a collection of media that tells one story, for example, an entertainment program that takes place on TV and on the Web simultaneously; and the third one incorporates the other two, embracing more explicitly the inherent complexity of transmedia projects.

In 2009 Henry Jenkins issued *Seven Core Concepts of Transmedia Storytelling* (2009; 2009a; 2011), which include 1) spreadability vs. drillability; 2) continuity vs. multiplicity; 3) immersion vs. extractability; 4) worldbuilding; 5) seriality; 6) subjectivity; and 7) performance.

Core sources (alphabetical order)

Caddell, Bud (2009). *Core Principles of Transmedia Storytelling*. [http:// whatconsumesme.com/2009/posts-ive-written/core-principles-of-transmedia-storytelling/](http://whatconsumesme.com/2009/posts-ive-written/core-principles-of-transmedia-storytelling/) (15 December 2009).

Evans, Elizabeth (2011). *Transmedia Television: Audiences, New Media, and Daily Life*. New York: Routledge.

Ibrus, Indrek and Scolari, Carlos A. (eds.) (2012). *Crossmedia Innovations: Texts, Markets, Institutions*. Berlin / New York: Peter Lang.

Jenkins, Henry (2009). *The Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling* (Well, Two Actually. Five More on Friday). http://henryjenkins.org/2009/12/the_revenge_of_the_origami_uni.html (12 December 2009).

Jenkins, Henry (2009a). *The Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: The Remaining Four Principles of Transmedia Storytelling*. http://henryjenkins.org/2009/12/revenge_of_the_origami_unicorn.html (12 December 2012).

Jenkins, Henry (2010). 'Transmedia Storytelling and Entertainment: An Annotated Syllabus' – *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 24, 6, 943-58.

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Mittell, Jason (2009). *To Spread or To Drill?* <http://justtv.wordpress.com/2009/02/25/to-spread-or-to-drill/> (25 February 2009).

Additional sources (in alphabetical order)

Godest, Olivier (2011). *The Puzzle of Transmedia Classification Criteria*. <http://www.transmedialab.org/en/storytelling-transmedia-2/le-casse-tete-des-criteres-de-classification-transmedia-2/> (3 May 2011).

Jenkins, Henry (2010). *Hollywood Goes “Transmedia.”* http://henryjenkins.org/2010/04/hollywood_goes_transmedia.html (27 April 2010).

Landow, George P. (1997). *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lemke, Jay (2011). ‘Transmedia Traversals: Marketing Meaning and Identity.’ Anthony Baldry; Elena Montagna (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Multimodality: Theory and Practice – Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Multimodality*. Campobasso: Palladino, 576-596.

3.3. Transmediation

In the context of the proposed course, it is essential to take into consideration the issue around adaptation and transmediation. Transmedia storytelling, according to Jenkins (2006), is unlike the current licensing system, which typically generates works that are redundant. Any composition that does not make a distinctive and valuable contribution does not offer a new level of insight and experience. Redundancy can burn up fan interest and may cause franchises to fail. Jenkins and other researches, such as Geoffrey Long, clearly exclude adaptation from the transmedia storytelling realm.

Christy Dena, on the other hand, interrogates this issue in her thesis (2009) and suggests that, in opposition to the main argument by Jenkins, not every adaptation is necessarily redundant. Saldre and Torop also include adaptations of a text in the realm of transmedia. Carlos Scolari tries to conciliate both points of view and this perspective can be the appropriate resolution of the issue, especially taking into consideration the unlimited variety of scenarios in the realm of transmediality. Aspects of intermediality and intertextuality are also discussed in the course.

Core sources (alphabetical order)

Bolter, Jay David and Grusin, Richard (2000). *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Elliott, Kamilla (2004). 'Literary Film Adaptation and the Form/Content Dilemma.' Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.), *Narrative across Media: The Language of Storytelling*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 220-43.
- Grishakova, Marina (2010). 'Intermedial Metarepresentations.' Marina Grishakova; Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.), *Intermediality and Storytelling*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 312-331.
- Herman, David (2004). 'Toward a Transmedial Narratology.' Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.), *Narrative across Media: The Language of Storytelling*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 47-75.
- Lessig, Lawrence (2008). *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Ndalianis, Angela (2004). Polycentrism and Seriality: (Neo-)Baroque Narrative Formations. In Ndalianis, Angela. *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Saldre, Maarja and Torop, Peeter (2012). 'Transmedia Space.' Indrek Ibrus and Carlos A. Scolari (eds.), *Crossmedia Innovations: Texts, Markets, Institutions*. Berlin / New York: Peter Lang, 25-44.

Additional sources (in alphabetical order)

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- Castells, Manuel (2002). *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Manovich, Lev (2002). *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- McLuhan, Marshall and Fiore, Quentin (2001). *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. Berkeley: Gingko Press.
- Mungioli, Maria Cristina (2011). Narratives, Languages and Media in the Context of Interactive Digital Technologies - Interview with Carlos Alberto Scolari. In *MATRIZES*, 4, 2, 127-136.

3.4. Transmedia Analysis

Theoretical and analytical considerations around the development of transmedia projects are evolving, but are still widely open probably because transmedia storytelling is a relatively new and elusive subject that does not have yet its own specific methods and methodology of analysis. Moreover, transmedia projects are complex phenomena involving multiple dimensions, such as narrative, cultural context, marketing, business models, and legal framework. Currently, the usual approach gives place to methodologically separate analytical perspectives related to some of these dimensions. Scholars and media professionals have been applying different methodological approaches and methods to better understand the structure behind transmedia storytelling (Long 2007; Dena 2009; Saldre and Torop 2012). Usually the methodologies of analysis used to address transmedia projects vary from semiotics (several kinds of semiotics), narratology, sociology, and ethnography to economics, marketing, branding and so forth. The

methods incorporate quantitative and qualitative analyses and can be based on interviews, comparative studies, narrative analyses and documentary research, for instance. Indeed, a plurality of perspectives could be included in an analytical approach interested in understanding a transmedia narrative as a whole.

The analytical considerations explored in the course aim to outline essential features of the design process behind transmedia projects in order to support the analytic needs of transmedia designers and the applied research in the interest of the media industry, considering analysis as a crucial aspect of the design process that can lead towards synthesis (Liestøl 2003). Jay Lemke suggests that larger transmedia complexes have already grown beyond the capacity of individuals to cogently analyze them, which means that it may well take communities to investigate the transmedia phenomena (2011). The analytical model developed by the course's author is a possible way to build an objective view of transmedia storytelling project samples and involves 10 distinctive dimensions that are not restrictive (other layers of understanding can be considered and added as well). Qualitative and quantitative methods can be used accordingly to the nature of the question and the availability of data, if it is the case. The model is based on the following topics: 1) premise and purpose; 2) narrative; 3) worldbuilding; 4) characters; 5) extensions; 6) media platforms and genres; 7) audience and market; 8) engagement; 9) structure; and 10) aesthetics.

Core sources (alphabetical order)

- Bogost, Ian; Ferrari, Simon and Schweizer, Bobby (2010). *Newsgames: Journalism at Play*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Dinehart, Stephen E. (2012). *Transmedial Play: Cognitive and Cross-Platform Narrative*. <http://narrativedesign.org/2008/05/transmedial-play-cognitive-and-cross-platform-narrative/> (14 May 2012).
- Gambarato, Renira R. (forthcoming). Transmedia Project Design: Theoretical and Analytical Considerations. In *Baltic Screen Media Review*. Tallinn (Estonia).
- Gambarato, Renira R. and Alzamora, Geane (2012). Transmedia Storytelling Initiatives in Brazilian Media. In Luger, Kurt (ed.). *Medien Journal – Zeitschrift für Kommunikationskultur: Kommunikationsraum BRIC*, year 36, n. 4/2012. Salzburg (Austria): ÖGK, 51-62.
- Long, Geoffrey A. (2007). Transmedia Storytelling - Business, Aesthetics and Production at the Jim Henson Company. *Master Thesis*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Cambridge.
- Mittell, Jason (2009). 'All in the Game: The Wire, Serial Storytelling and Procedural Logic.' Pat Harrington and Noah Wardrip-Fruin (eds.), *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 429-438.
- Moloney, Kevin T. (2011). Porting Transmedia Storytelling to Journalism. *Master Thesis*. University of Denver.
- Murray, Janet (1997). *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Von Stackelberg, Peter (2011). *Creating Transmedia Narratives: The Structure and Design of Stories Told Across Multiple Media. Master's Thesis*. State University of New York. New York.

Additional sources (in alphabetical order)

Adams, Ernest W. (2013). *Resolutions to Some Problems in Interactive Storytelling. PhD Dissertation*. University of Teesside School of Computing. Middlesbrough, UK.

Austin, Alexander Austin (2007). *Expansions Across Entertainment Media. Master Thesis*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Cambridge.

Eco, Umberto (1979). *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Liestøl, Gunnar (2003). 'Gameplay': From Synthesis to Analysis (and Vice Versa): Topics of Conceptualization and Construction in Digital Media.' Gunnar Liestøl, Andrew Morrison, and Terje Rasmussen (eds.), *Digital Media Revisited*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 389-413.

3.5. Practical Work

In the second half of the course, after the preliminary theoretical introduction, the students divided in groups have the opportunity to develop a creative project as a transmedia extension connected to the transmedia project they are analyzing as part of the final exam. The practical work sessions in class are dedicated to start up the creative process of developing the transmedia extension under the supervision of the course's instructor.

Core sources (alphabetical order)

Bernardo, Nuno (2011). *The Producers Guide to Transmedia: How to Develop, Fund, Produce and Distribute Compelling Stories across Multiple Platforms*. London: CR Entertainment Ltd.

Gottschall, Jonathan (2013). *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make us Human*. Boston: Mariner Books.

Hayes, Gary (2011). *How to Write a Transmedia Production Bible*. Sydney: Screen Australia.

Hosein, Hanson (2011). *Storyteller Uprising: Trust & Persuasion in the Digital Age*. Seattle: HRH Media and University Book Store Press.

Phillips, Andrea (2012). *A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling: How to Captivate and Engage Audiences across Multiple Platforms*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pratten, Robert (2011). *Getting Started in Transmedia Storytelling: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. Seattle: CreateSpace.

Scolari, Carlos (2009). Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers, Narrative Worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media Production. In *International Journal of Communication* 3, 586-606.

Vogler, Christopher (2007). *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions.

Tierno, Michael (2002). *Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters: Storytelling Secrets from the Greatest Mind in Western Civilization*. New York: Hyperion.

Additional sources (in alphabetical order)

Brookey, Robert A. (2010). *Hollywood Gamers: Digital Convergence in the Film and Video Game Industries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Burgess, Jean (2009). *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Groth, Simon (ed.) (2011). *Hand Made High Tech – Essays on the Future of Books and Reading*. Institute for the Future of the Book in Australia.

Hartley, John and McWilliam, Kelly (eds.) (2009). *Story Circle: Digital Storytelling around the World*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Manovich, Lev (2013). *Software Takes Command*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Marx, Christy (2007). *Writing for Animation, Comics, and Games*. Boston: Focal Press.

Miller, Carolyn H. (2004). *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*. Burlington: Focal Press.

Seminars

Seminar 1 (1 hour): Alternate Reality Game

Seminar 2 (1 hour): Augmented Reality

Seminar 3 (1 hour): Locative Media

Seminar 4 (1 hour): Gamification

Seminar 5 (1 hour): Interactive Cinema

Seminar 6 (1 hour): Newsgames and Immersive Journalism

Seminar 7 (1 hour): Transmedia for Social Change

Seminar 8 (1 hour): Transmedia Storytelling in Russia

The complete instructions to prepare and present the seminars are available on the author's Web site: <http://talkingobjects.org/transmedia-2/transmedia/>.

Final Exam

The final exam consists of a Web site displaying the written transmedia analysis of a given transmedia project and incorporating the creative transmedia extension (connected to the analyzed project) develop by each group of students.

Transmedia projects to be analyzed:

- The Cosmonaut
- World without Oil
- True Blood
- Game of Thrones
- Beat Girl
- Angry Birds
- The Great British Property Scandal: Every Empty Counts
- The Power Inside

The complete instructions regarding the final exam (Transmedia Analysis Web site + Transmedia Extension) are available on the author's Web site: <http://talkingobjects.org/transmedia-2/transmedia/>.

4. GRADING

Grading is based on four elements:

- Attendance
- Seminar presentation
- Final exam -Transmedia analysis Web site
- Final exam - Transmedia extension

The evaluation criteria are:

- Attendance: Presence and participation in class
- Seminar presentation: Content, visual presentation, oral presentation
- Final exam - Transmedia analysis Web site: Content, navigability, visual aspects
- Final exam - Transmedia extension: Creativity, concept, execution

Each grade is attributed according to 10-point scale and then is weighted according to the following percentage:

Attendance	10%
Seminar presentation	30%
Final exam - Transmedia analysis Web site	30%
Final exam – Transmedia extension	30%

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