COURSE SYLLABUS

HON 329                                                                                                         Fall 2013
Cinema of the Mind: The Design of Interactive Worlds

Catalog Description: Prerequisite: acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor. This course examines the possibilities of the interactive world, not as faceless and inexorable "technology," but from the perspective of systems humanism -- the question of what we can choose if we start over. The only technical content of the course will be the Xanadu document system and the ZigZag visible database, neither of which requires any prior knowledge. (Offered as needed.) 3 credits.

Course Learning Outcomes:
   a) To liberate students from fixation on present-day conventions of electronic documents and interaction.
   b) To understand the history of today's computer world, and the personalities and agendas that created it.
   c) To explore design issues of the interactive world, and their relation to other arts and media-- as initiatives, endeavors, projects and packages.
   d) To work with a new vocabulary for these issues.
   e) To present the instructor's work as a unified body.

Honors Program Learning Outcomes:
Upon completing a course in the University Honors Program students will have:
   a) Obtained a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
   b) Sharpened their ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
   c) Understood how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
   d) Developed effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.

Content:
This course will be panoramic. At the center is a retrospective of the instructor's designs and theories over the last half century.
This will be framed by a variety of issues--

- media and the arts: what they have in common in structure, aesthetics and support issues
- creative control issues
- the lifecycle of projects, from inspiration to closure (and aftermath)
- common sense about design in general: presentation, attention, safety, simplicity, clarity, beauty, excitement, smoothness, unifying ideas
- the design of principles to make ramifications come out right
- personalities and politics in the history of computers, especially electronic documents and "the modern GUI"
- movies as the comprehensive art form, combining the others expensively
- the Hollywood system
- interaction of old-- tricky books, clever toys, penny arcades
- foundations of interactive theory, those of the instructor and others
- today's interactive platforms, some narrowing and some general

We live now in a clutterfield of interactive objects and software. This course, based on a perspective of systems humanism rather than "technology," will consider these interactive worlds as--

- Movies. A movie consists of events on a screen that affect the mind and heart. Interactive software consists of events on a screen that affect the mind and heart, and interact, and have consequences. Thus all the considerations and problems of film-making are central. What would Disney and Orson Welles have given us?
- Art Forms, with the same aesthetic and creative problems of any other. What would Leonardo or Wright have given us?
- Systems of Principles to be Understood. How can a system present itself clearly? How design principles so their ramifications come out right? What would Bucky Fuller have given us?
- Historical Accidents. Who did what that brought about today's electronic documents and software? And what did they think they were doing?
- Radical Alternatives, based on the instructor's designs, ways of thinking, and industry experience.

**Current Required Texts:**

T. Nelson, COMPUTER LIB, lulu.com
T. Nelson, POSSIPLEX, lulu.com
T. Nelson, Geeks Bearing Gifts, lulu.com
T. Nelson, Literary Machines (classic edition), lulu.com
T. Nelson, Selected Papers 1965-1987, lulu.com


Suggested Texts:
Lynda Obst, Hello, He Lied

Required viewing:
T. Nelson, “Computers for Cynics” 0-N
Douglas Engelbart 1968 demo, downloadable from the Internet Archive

Instructional Strategies:
- The class will include lectures, group discussions, student papers, and student projects.
- Students will present papers on various creative issues and theories of interaction.
- Student projects will involve the instructor’s two main designs—xanalogical document structure and the ZigZag visible database.

Methods of Evaluation:
1) Class Attendance: Class attendance is required. You are expected to attend all class meetings and to have assignments prepared when they are due. More than three absences or three index cards not turned in will result in zero points for class participation. Each absence beyond that will result in a 5% deduction from your possible semester grade.

2) Class Participation: Participation does not mean mere presence in the classroom. Instead, it means active listening—that is, the willingness to engage in the back-and-forth of open-ended and reasoned conversations by being open to what others have to say, risking our opinions, asking questions, and surfacing disagreements. Such “active listening” is essential to being a community of scholars.

3) Laptops and Other Communication Devices: Please note that the laptops may only be used for taking notes on the class. Games, email, texting and messaging will be considered as forms of absenteeism, inattention, and bad manners. Cellphones must be turned off.

4) Reading Assignments: You are asked to study carefully all required readings by the day on which they appear on the projected course schedule. It is important to note that you are asked not merely to read all assigned materials but to study them. Such study may require several readings of the material.

5) Class Time: Class meetings will be, for the most part, a mixture of lecture and discussion. All class meetings will allow time for your questions.

6) Index Cards: In order to aid class discussion, you are required to submit an index card to me at the beginning of each class. On one side of the card, you are to write one or two important questions which you have about the assigned reading material for the day. On the other side, you are to write a response to the prior class; you may write, for example, about either something important you learned, your critical
reaction to something said in class, or an issue that you would like the class to revisit. Cards are to be turned in at the beginning of class.

7) Exams: There will be two in-class exams (midterm and final) during the semester. Review questions will be distributed at least one week prior to each exam.

8) Quizzes: These quizzes will be unannounced and will cover the reading material for the day. No makeup of these quizzes will be allowed.

9) Student paper: each student will write, and read to the group, a paper on some aspect of the course (a theorist or issue, the topic to be approved).

10) ZigZag project: each student will present a visual connective structure implemented in ZigZag (gzz version).

11) Xanadu project: a xanalogical document, posted on the Internet (though not necessarily publicized or permanent), showing understanding of the medium and striving for originality and usefulness.

**Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy:**
Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

**Students with Disabilities Policy:**
In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Center for Academic Success, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Prepared by:
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Last revised:
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