

## c o m m u n i c a t i o n   p r o g r a m m i n g

Department of Communication Studies , Concordia University COMS 490 6 credits  
Friday 8:45am 11:30am, 2000 - 2001

Professor Mary Flanagan

E-mail: marydot@sympatico.ca; <http://www.maryflanagan.com/courses/cprog00.htm>

This course studies the taxonomy of digital media from an information design and programming perspective. Special attention is given to authoring tools, scripting, hypermedia and hypertext applications in their current and developing digital forms. Individual or group projects are completed. Lectures and laboratory average six hours per week. Communication programming was one of the first courses to combine what once were diverse disciplines -- art and technology-- in Canada. This year, communication programming will take this merging strategy to new arenas. We will explore ephemeral and physical space, the networked and the standalone, the personal and the professional.

### **Method of Instruction:**

The course combines assigned readings and class discussions with exploratory exercises and active learning techniques devised by the instructor and the class in response to particular concepts and issues. The class will endeavor to attend relevant digital art exhibits, events, and local company tours whenever opportunity presents itself.

Students will complete high-quality personal and commercial style works both independently and in teams. Students will also read readings and participate in group discussions about interactivity, interfaces, and other related intellectual aspects of digital media production. The course will focus on information design and programming creative projects with an emphasis on the web.

### **Upon successful completion of the course, each student will have demonstrated:**

- a deep understanding of the vocabulary, social aims and ethical concerns of digital media for various kinds of development goals (industry, art, etc)
- adept multimedia production skills and keen problem-solving abilities
- ability to gain new skills on an independent basis and ability to work independently as well as in a team-based setting
- ability to draft artist statements and project proposals
- an advanced knowledge of prevalent applications including advanced design techniques (demonstrated through web design, usability testing, and information design), and an aptitude for personal storytelling using digital media
- a heightened sense of individual, social, and cultural awareness, as well as the implications specific to the medium in terms of personal creativity and expression.

This is a course about being a media maker, an information designer, and creative coder. This includes the theories, ethics, political and cultural issues involved in the area of digital media. Our understanding of the field is ever-evolving.

Students are expected to master the software discussed in class as well as the design principles discussed. The responsibility for learning all the software thoroughly will be left up to the student. This is not a tools course. If students need extra help or assignments, contact the TA and the instructor. Of course, sharing information with each other becoming a team-- will help everyone get up to speed.

**Texts:**

Donald Norman. *The Design of Everyday Things*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Note: 3<sup>rd</sup> party books may help one individual, while online resources may be sufficient for another. Therefore I have not assigned these types of books for purchase.

It is your responsibility to know your limitations and know which type of resources you need.

**Readings from Course Pack:**

*As assigned in syllabus*

**Attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory. Digital media always changes. Keep up to date by coming to each and every class --on time. In addition, it is sometimes a team-based art form. The success of the group depends on your punctuality, attendance, and attention. You will be considered absent if you arrive 10 minutes or more late. Marks will be deducted for tardiness, and four absences constitute grounds for failure of the course. If you need to miss a class, contact the instructor prior to the date and make alternative arrangements.

## Evaluation:

Course grades are based on class participation and completion of short assignments, two group projects, one medium-sized personal, interactive webart work, and one thesis project.

<b>Contributions to class, Exercises, + Attendance:</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Fusion Lab Website:</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Pair Assignment-WebSite for nonprofit:</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Personal Project One-Open Topic:</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Personal Project Two-Games as Art:</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Individual Project - Final Thesis Project:</b>	<b>25%</b>

### **Contributions to class, Exercises, + Attendance: 30%**

Consists of all preparatory and in-class and lab assignments including discussions, evaluation and critique of the work of others, and the special unit called Interface Design Bootcamp . Evaluation will be based on each students willingness to engage in the exploration of creative and intellectual challenges, demonstrated development of sensitivity and skills relating to peer evaluation, and evidence of growth in terms of working with and for fellow students. Also included will be both planned and spot quizzes.

### **Fusion Lab Website : 10%**

Consists of creating proposed logos and web architectures and completing final site

### **Pair Assignment-WebSite for nonprofit group: 10%**

Consists of a project proposal and final website from each team of 2 - 3 students

### **Personal Project One: Open Topic 10%**

A personal interactive project. Grade is based on proposal and execution of project!

### **Personal Project Two: Games as Art 15%**

Using Macromedia Director, students will create a piece of art that is also a game, or vice versa.

### **Individual Project - Final Thesis Project 25%**

The final project must showcase your understanding of good design, your mastery of software and other tools, and your understanding of the subject/content area you choose to pursue.

**Week 1: Friday, September 8 2000**  
**Introduction to the Course**

The goals of the course will be presented, as well as CD Screenings of web art, cdrom art  
Students are to set up internet accounts with Arts and Sciences

Assignment: Fusion Lab logo in Flash + sketch for lab website (sketch  
/storyboard done in Flash or paper) to be finished in Flash;  
Get Book

Reading for next week: Saul Bass on Corporate Identity by Philip B. Meggs (71 - 77) in *Design  
Culture: An Anthology of Writing from the AIGA Journal*. Edited by  
Steven Heller and Marie Finamore. NY: American Institute of Graphic  
Arts, 1997; <http://www.saulbass.co.uk/>

**Week 2: Friday, September 15 2000**  
**Portfolio Review: Individual Meetings**

Each student will meet with Professor Flanagan for ½hour portfolio reviews. Please come  
prepared to show your work, with material gathered in one place (eg. One zip disk or cd, or two  
if your files are very large). Work must be organized and documented.

Due: Portfolios; Bring Fusion Lab logo/website sketch for feedback  
Reading for next week: Chapter 1, The Psychopathology of Everyday Things *The Design of  
Everyday Things*

**Week 3: Friday, September 22 2000**  
**Cool Flash Effects + Scripting**

Critique of logos, choose favorite; Lecture/demonstration on Flash effects

Due: Fusion Lab logo + website designs  
Assignment: Fusion Lab website version one chosen from proposals: class divides  
into audio, animation, graphics, html groups to complete project  
Reading for next week: Chapter 2, The Psychology of Everyday Access *The Design of  
Everyday Things*

**Week 4: Friday, September 29 2000**  
**Critique, Flash Scripting Continued**

Critique, then lecture on project proposals, techniques, and design Issues.

Due: Fusion Lab website version one; possible quiz on Norman  
Assignment: Fusion Lab website FINAL  
Reading for next week: Chapter 3, Knowledge in the Head and in the World *The Design of  
Everyday Things*

**Week 5: Friday, October 6 2000**

## Information Design- Envisioning Information

Final Critiques, then lecture on project proposals and Edward R. Tufte

Due: Final Fusion Lab Website Posted and Running on the Web  
Assignment: Nonprofit Website Proposal.  
Reading for next week: Chapter 4, Knowing What to Do *The Design of Everyday Things*

**Week 6: Friday, October 13 2000**  
**Issues with the Internet: Flash + HTML**

Proposal reviews, then software workshop

Due: Nonprofit Website Proposal (groups of 2)  
Assignment: Nonprofit Project  
Reading for next week: Chapter 5, To Err Is Human *The Design of Everyday Things*

**Week 7: Friday, October 20 2000**  
**Interface Bootcamp!**

This week will be pure workshop, making interfaces under deadline pressures.

Due: --  
Assignment: Ongoing Nonprofit Project  
Reading for next week: Chapter 6, The Design Challenge *The Design of Everyday Things*

**Week 8: Friday, October 27 2000**  
**Interfaces + Usability**

In this class we will review the sites in their alpha stage and discuss design issues brought forward in the projects as well as review the interfaces generated in the previous class.

Due: Interfaces from Lab and Class Time, Alpha stage of nonprofit site  
Assignment: Group Nonprofit Project  
Reading for next week: Chapter 7, User-Centered Design *The Design of Everyday Things*

**Week 9: Friday, November 3 2000**  
**Workshop Class Finalize Websites. Discuss Reading. Show Sites to Clients.**

Websites should be being finalized, and LOOK Ahead!-- students should begin their Personal Project One proposals.

Due: --  
Assignment: Group Nonprofit Project  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 10: Friday, November 10 2000**  
**Presentation of Nonprofit Websites to Class**

Due: Final Websites  
Assignment: Personal Project One proposals  
Reading for next week: From Participation to Interaction: Toward the Origin of Electronic Art by Soke Kinkla, in *Clicking In: Hot Links to a Digital Culture*, edited by Lynn Hershman Leeson. Seattle: Bay Press, 1996 (in Learning Center)

**Week 11: Friday, November 17 2000**  
**Director**

Due: Personal Project One proposals  
Assignment: Personal Project One  
Reading for next week: Art in the Age of Digital Simulation ch 5 from *Postmodern Currents: Art and Artists in the Age of Electronic Media*, by Margot Lovejoy. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997. (in Learning Center)

**Week 12: Friday, November 24 2000**  
**Physical Interfaces and Installation**

This week will showcase a demonstration of physical interfaces for the computer. We ll also review various installation works.

Due: --  
Assignment: Personal Project One  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 13: Friday, December 1 2000**  
**Festival**

Students will show their first personal projects of the semester.

Due: Personal Project One!  
haPPy HoliDAys!

**Week 14: Friday, January 5 2001**  
**Director Tips + Tricks**

This week we ll spend time on Director exercises to make sample games and also screen the work of game artists Natalie Bookchin and others. We ll also discuss commercial games and gaming culture.

Due: Well documented and archived work from first semester  
Assignment: Personal Project Proposal 2 -Games as Art; Students should bring inspirational material (web sites or cds) to class to share  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 15: Friday, January 12 2001**  
**Typography**

In this class we ll explore issues of typography and work specifically created by graphic design artists.

Due: --  
Assignment: Ongoing Project 2  
Reading for next week: none

**Week 16: Friday, January 19 2001**  
**Working With Sound**

Sound is an integral but often overlooked aspect of media production. We ll look at handling sound in Director as well as discuss general principles of sound design and theories of listening.

Due: --  
Assignment: Ongoing Project 2  
Reading for next week: none

**Week 17: Friday, January 26 2001**  
**GameShow!**

This class is devoted to screen and playing each other s finalized games. Students will watch each other play the games and report on usability and playability at the end of class.

Due: Personal Project 2 -Games as Art  
Assignment: Final Thesis Project Proposal, Revisions to Project 2  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 18: Friday, February 2 2001**  
**Individual Meetings**

We ll review the final project proposals and revisions to Project 2 individually. Sign up with the instructor on her door.

Due: Final Project Proposal and Project 2 Revisions  
Assignment: Final Thesis Project  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 19: Friday, February 9 2001**  
**Information Design for Education and Exhibits**

This week we ll spend even more time honing our Director exercises and will review clever work of interaction designers. We ll also discuss information design in educational and exhibit settings.

Due: Final Thesis Project Proposal  
Assignment: Final Thesis, Ongoing  
Reading for next week: C.G. Screven, Information Design in Informal Settings: Museums and Other Public Spaces. In *Information Design*, ed. Robert Jacobson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999, 131 192. (in Learning Center)

**Week 20: Friday, February 16 2001**  
**Object Oriented Programming**

Today we will discuss issues with object-oriented programming

Due: --  
Assignment: Final Thesis Project, Ongoing  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 21: Friday, February 23 2001**  
**No Class**

Mid Term Break!

**Week 22: Friday, March 2 2001**  
**Mid Project Peer Review**

Students gather in groups of three and critique each other s work during class and laboratory time

Due: FINAL PROJECTS ½WAY POINT  
Assignment: Final Thesis Project, Ongoing  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 23: Friday, March 9 2001**  
**Company Tour**

This week we will tour 13 new media companies in Montreal! Don't miss the opportunity!

**Week 24: Friday, March 16 2001**  
**Final Project Workshop/Critique**

Due: Students 1-6 alpha/beta stage projects  
Assignment: Final Thesis Project, Ongoing  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 25: Friday, March 23 2001**  
**Final Project Workshop/Critique**

Due: Students 6-12 alpha/beta stage projects  
Assignment: Final Thesis Project, Ongoing  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 26: Friday, March 30 2001**  
**Final Project Workshop**

Due: --  
Assignment: Final Thesis Project, Ongoing  
Reading for next week: --

**Week 27: Friday, April 6 2001**  
**Thesis Project Show**

Students will plan a show for this evening to show their final projects. Last Class!