

**DCC 106**  
**Performing the Virtual**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Lecture:**

*Tuesdays 4:00-4:50pm*  
Susquehanna 1119

**Sections:**

*Section 0101 (with Krista): Tuesday 6-9pm*  
*in QAMPR*  
*Section 0102 (with Jarah): Wednesday 6-9*  
*in QAMPR*  
*Section 0103 (with Leah): Wednesday 6-9 in*  
*Anne Arundel 0120*

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**Description:**

In a digital culture where we are increasingly communicating through asynchronous forms, what is the value of live events? Does technology enhance or disrupt the practices of face-to-face gatherings? Why are we drawn to virtual experiences? Answers to these questions require us to examine the major themes, issues, and questions that arise

between the relationship of the “virtual” and the “real.” This course will study the idea of virtuality by exploring the long history of the word’s usage, from its Latin roots to later uses in computing culture. We will trace the development of “the virtual” beginning in the 1400s (when it was understood as external forces and powers) through the 1600s (when religious communities used the word to stand in for a link between the physical world and the metaphysical world of the afterlife). Looking at our contemporary practices through this historical lens, we will see that these practices of virtuality are founded on an experience of layered reality.

This team-taught course is heavily dependent on an interdisciplinary approach, coupling hands-on experimentation with a curriculum designed to focus awareness on the historical, theoretical, and cultural contexts in which digital creativity happens. Therefore, the questions and ideas raised above will be explored in tandem with creating a large-scale digital production. As a class, you will collaborate from inception to production to develop one vital component of this larger production. The outcome might range from live performance to game design but will focus on the major themes of the course.

**Some questions this course will pose:**

- Does technology enhance or disrupt the practices of face-to-face gatherings?
- Why are we drawn to and value virtual experiences?
- What does it take for a medium to be immersive? When and why do we like our media to be immersive?
- What considerations do practitioners need to keep in mind when using digital media to create live performance?
- How is what you create for digital media transformed by a broad historical understanding?

**What You Will Learn in this Class (Some of Our Course Objectives):**

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history and theory of digital cultures and how technology is used in society.
- Student will understand the “digital” not as a byproduct of specific hardware or software but as a way of thinking about the world that transcends momentary technological enthusiasms.
- Students will identify their own assumptions and values about emerging technologies and understand the underlying political, social, economic, and ethical dimensions in these assumptions.
- Students will create a collaborative digital media production that clearly addresses the major themes and issues prevalent with the use of new media technologies.
- Student will articulate through written critical analysis how theory meets practice by exploring the relationship of the objects and media they are creating to larger historical trends, ideas and questions important in creative digital expression.

**Required Texts:**

All readings will be available through online links in the syllabus or posted on ELMS.

**Grades:**

- Active Engagement & Collaboration (engagement with lectures and discussions, collaboration with classmates, weekly questions, 2 “Labs” — e.g. workshops, talks from guest speakers, films, working groups): **20%**
- Production Logbook: **15%**
- Twitter: **10%**
- Midterm (Proposal and Presentation. Top 3 Schematic Designs, Budget, Materials): **20%**
- Group presentation on production area in lecture: **10%**
- Final production: **25%**
  - **NOTE:** *The final performance will be self-graded. You will come up with a rubric of 10 items related to how well executed your portion of the performance was and goals you’ve set for yourself throughout the semester. This rubric will be due at the beginning of the semester in lab: Feb. 5.*

**Collaborative Final Project:**

An integral component of this course is the collaborative digital media production, which will be performed as part of your final at the end of the semester. Therefore, participation in this production is a significant component of your grade. The class will be divided into 3 labs based upon interest. Each group will be responsible for developing a particular component of the production and it is expected that you fully participate in every aspect of the process.

This semester we will create an adaptation of “The Machine Stops” by E.M. Forster utilizing hybrid puppetry as the method of creative expression. This production aims to push the boundaries of puppetry by fusing digital technologies into the very fabric of the objects created. In addition, the Kinect will be utilized alongside video projections to explore the ways in which various technologies can push performance and cause us to examine our ideas of the “virtual” and the “real.”

The collaborative final project will be worth 25% of your grade.

**Lab Structure:**

Labs each week will be structured (loosely) as follows:

Part I: Discussion

- Context and Artist case studies
- During discussion every week, each subteam will think about/ discuss their ‘object/focus’ in relation to the course readings and lecture during discussion time. See weekly assignments for more details.

Part II: Production

- Production team recap
- Design and Build
- Production team questions

NOTE: There will be a 15 minute break during this 3 hour block. Please either eat before class or bring snacks with you as the break will not be long enough for you to go to the dining hall.

**Active Engagement and Collaboration:**

Being *actively engaged* with the course material and being a constructive collaborator is crucial to the learning you will experience in this class. Because this is a discussion-driven and hands-on class, the quality of the class for everyone is in large part dependent on the quality of preparation and visible engagement of each participant. Please realize that although you may have prepared the readings and assignments and may be listening to others, if you do not actively demonstrate your preparation and ideas in discussion, there is no way to observe and, hence, evaluate the quality of your preparation and participation.

During lab every week, each subteam will think about/discuss their ‘object/focus’ in relation to the course readings and lecture during discussion time. Each group must submit via e-mail to your lab faculty 3-5 questions prior to the beginning of lab every week. Come to class prepared to facilitate dialogue around those questions.

Each student will be required to either participate in a working group for the semester or attend two co-curricular labs, including film screenings, talks from guest speakers, and workshops. The schedule for co-curricular labs will be posted on the calendar on the DCC website.

Your active engagement and collaboration is worth 20% of your final grade.

**Production Logbook:**

You will be required to keep a production book documenting your work process and team decisions. The format and outcome will vary based on which section and will be discussed in lab. Throughout the semester, you will record written critical analyses in your production log. These should move beyond mere summary to critically analyze what you are learning and explore the relationships between ideas. The intent is to synthesize the theoretical with the process of creation taking place in the lab space and then offer your own analysis, response, and questions. Course readings should also be thoughtfully integrated as you explore the major issues and questions posed by the course.

You will turn in your logbook twice during the semester: once halfway through the semester on **March 12<sup>th</sup>** and at the end of the semester on **April 30<sup>th</sup>**. Your production logbook is worth 15% of your final grade.

**Twitter Responses:**

You will need a Twitter account to interact with the course readings and the in-class lectures. You may set up a separate account just for this class. Please be sure to give your username to your section leader.

- You must post to Twitter twice during the week:
- once during lecture (or immediately after a hands-on exploration),
- once outside of class. These tweets can be about the readings for that week, what was said in discussion section, or reflecting back on lecture.

- After Week 10, you will tweet constructive, positive feedback on group presentations in-lecture as well as a second weekly tweet about how your production is progressing.

All tweets must include the hashtag **#dcc106**.

Your baseline score is out of 16 points; exceptional posts and uses of Twitter may garner you a bonus score up to a maximum of 20. To gain the 4 bonus points (for a total of 20 points for the semester), you must post especially insightful posts, provides useful links to outside material, or offers consistently helpful and engaged responses to classmates' posts. Tweeting multiple times in some weeks will not make up for weeks that you miss.

At the end of the semester, you must turn an archive of your tweets throughout the semester. This archive must be emailed to [dcc-honors@umd.edu](mailto:dcc-honors@umd.edu) by **April 30th**. You may want to use archiving tools like Tweetbackup.com, Archivist, or the Google Docs spreadsheet found at: <http://bit.ly/twitter-archive-gdocs>

Your Twitter Responses are worth 10% of your grade.

### **Written Assignments:**

Throughout the semester, you will turn in several written assignments. These should move beyond mere summary to critically analyze what you are learning and explore the relationships between ideas. The intent is to synthesize the theoretical with the process of creation taking place in the lab space and then offer your own analysis, response, and questions. Course readings should also be thoughtfully integrated as you explore the major issues and questions posed by the course.

These papers must be written in 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, and cite sources accurately in MLA or APA style. You must turn in your written assignments electronically as Word documents or PDFs. You must email your paper directly to your lab leader. No late work will be accepted.

### **Midterm**

Your midterm will include the following components. Please note that the due dates for these elements fall on different dates (see the schedule below).

#### ***Proposal:***

As a group you will write 3 pages documenting your proposed team plan for your particular object or focus area. This should include title, description, audience experience, what you're doing, how you're doing it. As an individual, you will also turn in 1 page detailing your own process and responsibilities.

Your proposal must be written in 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, and cite sources accurately in MLA or APA style. You must turn in your written assignments electronically as Word documents or PDFs. You must email your paper directly to your lab faculty. No late work will be accepted.

#### ***Schematics:***

Include your team's 3 best schematics for your design. This can be hand-drawn or

digital, however you must annotate the designs so that anyone looking at them can understand how it will be built.

***Materials List:***

This list should include all components and tools you will need to create your object(s). You will source every component and list 2 places where each item can be purchased. Also include any other information needed to purchase these items.

***Budget:***

Using your materials list, create a budget for your project. All components and tools must be included in this list. Include high and low prices.

***Note on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:***

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html>.

Any source that you draw ideas and quotes from must be cited accurately in your paper in APA or MLA style. If you use any source in your work without correctly citing the work, this constitutes plagiarism. Any intentional plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment and may result in a failing grade for the course.

***Plagiarism:***

***Category A:***

Sloppiness. Automatic “0” on paper, with option to rewrite for no better than a “C”

***Category B:***

Ignorance. Automatic “0” on paper, with option to rewrite for no better than a “C”

***Category C:***

Obvious Conscious Cheating. Automatic “0” on paper, with no option for rewriting

Students caught plagiarizing a second time will be asked to leave the class and will receive an automatic “0” in the course.

***Types of Plagiarism***

- Buying papers, borrowing papers, or recycling former papers unrevised and claiming these types of papers as your own for your assignment in this course. (This constitutes a Category C offense)
- Cutting and pasting parts of a webpage or borrowing passages from a book for your paper without properly citing these parts and claiming the material as your own for the expressed intent of cheating. (This constitutes a Category C offense)

- Failing to use proper citation style for material you borrow, accidentally. (This constitutes either a Category A or B offense)

**Students with Disabilities:**

Any student eligible for and requesting reasonable academic accommodations due to a disability is requested to provide, to the instructor in office hours, a letter of accommodation from the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) within the first two weeks of the semester. It is also the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences from exams for religious observances during the first two weeks of the semester. Any regrade requests will need to be submitted in writing, within two business days of the grades being posted, and please note that regrades might lead to scores going down if we notice additional errors.

***—Please Note: This syllabus is subject to change at any time according to the professor's discretion. The assignments below may also include readings handed out in class, which each student is responsible for completing.***

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*Schedule*

**Part I: The Context of Performance and Virtuality**

**Week 1 — Introduction to the Course**

Jan. 29

- Please have *The Machine Stops* read before coming to class today
- **Due in Lab:** Turn in 3-5 questions/reactions and impressions about *The Machine Stops*

**Week 2 — The Virtual and the Real**

Feb. 5

- Adriana de Souza e Silva and Daniel M. Sutko, "Theorizing Locative Technologies through Philosophies of the Virtual," in *Communication Theory* 21 (2011): 23-42.
  - **Due in Lab:** Grading rubric for final production

**Week 3 — Social Media and Performances of Identity**

Feb. 12

- Andrew L. Mendelson and Zizi Papacharissi, "Collective Narcissism in College Student Facebook Photo Galleries," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture\_ on Social Network Sites*
- **Due in Lab:** 3-5 Questions

**Week 4 — Immediacy and Hypermediacy: Performing Immersion**

Feb. 19

- Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation*, Introduction and Ch. 1
- **Due in Lab:** 3-5 Questions

**Week 5 — From Kitchen Sink Dramas to Breaking the Fourth Wall: The Journey from Realism to the Avant-Garde**

Feb. 26

- Walter Benjamin, “What is Epic Theatre? [Second Version],” in *Understanding Brecht*, pg. 16-22.
- **Due in Lab: Part 1 of Midterm: Proposal and Presentation. Top 3 Schematic Designs.**

**Part II: A Historical Overview**

**Week 6: The History of Technologies in Performance**

March 5

- Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres*, Introduction.
- Euripedes, *The Medea*, pg. 94-108 (final scene of the play).
- **Due in Lab: Part 2 of Midterm: Budget, Materials List, and Timeline. 3-5 Questions.**

**Week 7 — Recording, “Real Time,” and Liveness**

March 12

- Philip Auslander, “Music as Performance: Living in the Immaterial World” in *Theatre Survey* 47.2 (2006): 261-269.
- **Due in Lab: 3-5 Questions and Production Logbook**

**Week 8 — Spring Break**

March 19

**Week 9 — Cyborg Theatre: The Body in Performance**

March 26

- Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, “Introduction: Why Cyborg Theatre?” in *Cyborg Theatre*
- **Due in Lab: 3-5 Questions**

**Week 10 — Theatre as a Site for Opposition and Resistance**

April 2

- Watch, “Augusto Boal, Founder of the Theater of the Oppressed” on Democracy Now:  
[http://www.democracynow.org/2009/5/6/augusto\\_boal\\_founder\\_of\\_the\\_theater](http://www.democracynow.org/2009/5/6/augusto_boal_founder_of_the_theater)
- **Due in Lab: 3-5 Questions**



**Part III: Issues in Practice and Creation**

**Week 11 — Open Lab and Studio Time**

April 9

**Week 12 — Group Presentations: Section 0102**

April 16

**Week 13 — Group Presentations: Section 0103**

April 23

**Week 14 — Group Presentations: Section 0101**

April 30

- **Due: Twitter Archive and Production Logbook**

**Week 15 — No Lecture: Full Run Through of Performance**

- **May 7: Full Run Through in the Hoff Theatre**
- **May 8: Final Performance**

**Week 16 — Finals Week**

- **Good luck on all of your final exams!**