

**DIGITAL POETRY AND THE LIMITS OF INTERPRETATION**  
**ENGLISH 5559: 001 | ATLAS 5519: 006**  
**THURSDAYS 3:45 PM TO 6:15 PM LIBRARY N424B**  
**PROFESSOR LORI EMERSON**

**Instructor Contact Information:**

**Office:** Education 103  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30am - 11am  
**E-Mail:** Lori.Emerson@colorado.edu (this is the best way to reach me)  
**Mailbox:** Hellems 101

**Specific Course Description:**

This course will serve as a graduate-level introduction not only to the field of electronic literature generally and digital poetry in particular, but it will also be a kind of laboratory in which we'll experiment with the limits of literary interpretation. How do we account for texts which are dynamic, emergent, constantly shifting and morphing? If description is the best we can hope for, is description then a form of interpretation? It is my hope that, in conjunction with both live and virtual guest lectures by digital poetry practitioners we will together create a working vocabulary for reading works of electronic literature. Our course will be organized into five broad units: 1) digital poetry and the illegible; 2) reading digital poetry into/out of the early twentieth century avant-garde (through movements such as Dada, Futurism, Vorticism, Imagism); 3) reading digital poetry into/out of concrete poetry from the 1950s and 1960s; 4) procedural writing, computer-generated poetry and code-work; 5) contemporary conceptual writing as digital poetry.

**Required/Recommended Texts:**

The following required texts for our class are available at the CU Bookstore:

- *Digital Poetics*, Loss Glazier (U of Alabama P)
- *Electronic Literature*, N. Katherine Hayles (U of Notre Dame P)
- *New Media Poetics*, eds. Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss (MIT P)
- *Prehistoric Digital Poetry*, Chris Funkhouser (U of Alabama P)
- *Zone: Zero*, Stephanie Strickland (Ahsahta P)

The following is out of print and must be purchased directly from me for \$12.00 (please make check payable to Lori Emerson):

- *WaveSon.nets*, Stephanie Strickland (Penguin Books)

Optional further reading:

- *The Aesthetics of Net Literature*, eds. Peter Gendolla and Jörgen Schäfer (Transaction Publishers)
- *Fashionable Noise: On Digital Poetics*, Brian Kim Stefans (Atelos P)
- *pOes1s: The Aesthetics of Digital Poetry*, ed. Friedrich Block, Christiane Heibach, Karin Wenz (Hatje Cantz Verlag)
- *Media Poetry: An International Anthology*, Ed. Eduardo Kac (Intellect Books)
- *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction*, Nick Montfort (MIT P)

Online resources:

- Electronic Literature Collection Vol. 1 <http://collection.eliterature.org/1/>
- Electronic Literature Directory <http://directory.eliterature.org/>
- Electronic Poetry Center E-Poetry List <http://epc.buffalo.edu/e-poetry/>

### Course Requirements and Policies:

**First**, I expect you to contribute to class regularly. Participation begins with attendance; both absences and tardiness will affect this portion of your grade. Your participation grade will also reflect the quality and thoughtfulness of your contribution in class, respect shown to class members, and evidence of completion of reading assignments. **Second**, I will require that you a) create a blog for our class and subscribe to each of your classmate's blogs, b) post a minimum 250-300 word response to the week's reading by Wednesday 5pm, and c) comment on at least one other person's blog post. **Third**, I will ask each student to give a presentation in which you will be responsible for presenting your thoughts on the assigned reading and leading discussion during the second half of class. **Fourth**, since MA/PhD and MFA students may have different goals, I'm giving you the choice of writing either a final research paper OR writing 6 entries for the Electronic Literature Directory (<http://directory.eliterature.org/>) OR creating a work of digital poetry or fiction. In fact, given that "doing" digital poetry/fiction is an ideal mode of thinking, I strongly encourage you to do a creative project; however, I recognize that you might want to work toward producing an academic article or conference paper.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- Participation 20%
- Weekly blog posts 20%
- Presentation 25%
- Final paper (about 20 pages) OR ELD entries OR creative project 35%

**Please also note: I do not accept late work. If your final research paper or creative project is not submitted by the due date you will automatically receive an F for that assignment.**

### Incompletes:

An I is an incomplete grade. Use of the I is at the discretion of the course instructor. Students must ask for an incomplete grade. An I is given only when students, for reasons beyond their control (usually physical or mental illness), have been unable to complete course requirements; they should not be given when a student just disappears from a course. A substantial amount of work must have been satisfactorily completed before approval for such a grade is given. If an instructor grants a request for I, the instructor sets the conditions under which the course work can be completed; please note that work must be completed within a year otherwise you will receive an F.

### Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

In terms of academic dishonesty more generally, the University of Colorado at Boulder Catalog states:

A student-run Honor Code was instituted on the Boulder Campus in 2002. The intent of the Honor Code is to establish a community of trust where students do not plagiarize, cheat, or obtain unauthorized academic materials...Breaches of academic honesty include cheating, plagiarism, and the unauthorized possession of examinations, papers, computer programs, as well as other class materials specifically released by the faculty. A student accused of academic dishonesty will either accept the accusation made by a faculty member or request a hearing before a student panel, who will make a decision on the accusation of academic dishonesty. In addition to academic sanctions imposed by the faculty, students found responsible for academic dishonesty also face consequences from the honor code council ranging from probation, including attending a mandatory class in ethics to expulsion from the campus. More information about CU-Boulder's Honor Code may be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode>.

### Non-Discrimination Statement:

Our class will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, or political beliefs. Anyone who does engage in any of these forms of discrimination will be asked to leave the class. Also note that the University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and

the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>

#### **Disability Notice:**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and [www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices](http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices)

#### **Student Classroom/Course Related Behavior:**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

#### **Student E-mail Policy:**

All CU students receive an e-mail account from the university that is an official means of sending information to students. Students are responsible for maintaining this CU e-mail address. **Please check your email daily!** The official e-mail address can be used by professors to contact students and provide course-related information. For more information on the student e-mail policy, visit <http://www.colorado.edu/its/officialemail>.

#### **Religious Observances:**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, simply come see me in my office hours to inform me of your circumstances. See full details at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html)

#### **DETAILED DAILY SCHEDULE**

**NOTE:** This is a tentative schedule. It may change as we progress based on the speed with which we cover the material. New written directions from me take precedence over this schedule. Please check your email frequently.

#### **WEEK 1: THE OPENING OF THE FIELD**

**Thursday**  
**Jan. 14**

##### **Homework for next class:**

- read Loss Glazier's *Digital Poetics*; please make sure you browse digital poems mentioned
- read Morris and Swiss' *New Media Poetics*; please make sure you browse digital poems mentioned

#### **WEEK 2: THE OPENING OF THE FIELD CONT.**

**Thursday**  
**Jan. 21**

##### **Presentation 1**

##### **Homework for next class:**

- read Funkhouser's *Prehistoric Digital Poetry*; please make sure you browse digital poems mentioned
- read Hayles' *Electronic Literature*; please make sure you browse digital poems mentioned

### WEEK 3: THE OPENING OF THE FIELD CONT.

Thursday  
Jan. 28

#### Presentation 2

##### Homework for next class:

- read introduction and Ch. 1 of Jerome McGann's *The Textual Condition* (pdf on CU Learn)
- read Charles Bernstein's "Artifice of Absorption" (pdf on CU Learn)
- read introduction and Ch. 1 of Gerald Bruns' *The Material of Poetry* (pdf on CU Learn)
- read introduction of Walter Benn Michaels' *The Shape of the Signifier* (pdf on CU Learn)
- read introduction of Craig Dworkin's *Reading the Illegible* (pdf on CU Learn)
- read work by:
  - Joerg Piringer at <http://joerg.piringer.net/>
  - Mary Flanagan's "The House" at [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/flanagan\\_\\_thehouse.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/flanagan__thehouse.html)
  - Maria Mencia's "Birds Singing Other Bird Songs" at [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/mencia\\_\\_birds\\_singing\\_other\\_birds\\_songs.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/mencia__birds_singing_other_birds_songs.html)
  - Andy Campbell's "Spawn" at <http://www.poemsthatgo.com/gallery/fall2002/spawn/index.htm>

### WEEK 4: DIGITAL POETRY & THE ILLEGIBLE

Thursday  
Feb. 4

#### Presentation 3

##### Homework for next class:

- read excerpt from *Poems for the Millenium 1* on Futurism (pdf on CU Learn)
- read Futurism manifestos at <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/>
- read Peter Nicholls' "Other Spaces: French Cubism and Russian Futurism" (pdf on CU Learn)
- read excerpt from *Poems for the Millenium 1* on Dada (pdf on CU Learn)
- read Peter Nicholls' "From Fantasy to Structure: Dada and Neo-Classicism" (pdf on CU Learn)
- listen to or read the following:
  - Alexei Krucenysh's Zaum poetry at <http://www.ubu.com/sound/krucenysh.html>
  - Tristan Tzara at <http://epc.buffalo.edu/sound/soundpoetry.html#tzara>
  - Hugo Ball at <http://epc.buffalo.edu/sound/soundpoetry.html#ball>
  - Kurt Schwitters at <http://epc.buffalo.edu/sound/soundpoetry.html#schwitters>
  - Joerg Piringer at <http://joerg.piringer.net/>
  - Christian Bok's "Cyborg Opera" at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alTdbe1GCnQ>
  - Jim Andrews' "Nio" at <http://www.vispo.com/nio/>
  - Maria Mencia's "Birds Singing Other Birds' Songs" at [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/mencia\\_\\_birds\\_singing\\_other\\_birds\\_songs.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/mencia__birds_singing_other_birds_songs.html)
  - Giselle Beiguelman's "Code Movie 1" at [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/beiguelman\\_\\_code\\_movie\\_1.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/beiguelman__code_movie_1.html)
  - bpNichol's "First Screening" at <http://www.vispo.com/bp/>
  - Brian Kim Stefans' "The Dreamlife of Letters" at [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans\\_\\_the\\_dreamlife\\_of\\_letters.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans__the_dreamlife_of_letters.html)
  - Jean-Pierre Balpe's "Les Lettres Derange" at [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/burgaud\\_\\_jean-pierre\\_balpe\\_ou\\_les\\_lettres\\_derangees.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/burgaud__jean-pierre_balpe_ou_les_lettres_derangees.html)

- “Pulp Fiction in Typography” at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqc4FqvXIKs>
- “The 8 Rules of Fight Club” at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbMa4MGFCOg&feature=related>

#### WEEK 5: DIGITAL POETRY INTO/OUT OF THE AVANT GARDE

Thursday  
Feb. 11

##### Presentation 4

##### Homework for next class:

- continued

#### WEEK 6: DIGITAL POETRY INTO/OUT OF THE AVANT GARDE CONT.

Thursday  
Feb. 18

##### Presentation 5

##### Homework for next class:

- read Ellen Solt's *Concrete Poetry: A Worldview* at <http://www.ubu.com/papers/solt/index.html>
- read Emmett Williams' *Anthology of Concrete Poetry* (pdf available on CU Learn)
- read Dom Sylvester Houedard's "Concrete Poetry" at <http://books.google.com/books?id=sqzpdW2PSRMC&pg=PA146&lpq=PA146&dq=%22#v=onepage&q=&f=false>
- browse through the following:
  - About Your World of Text. <http://ianab.com/yourworld/>.
  - Augusto de Campos - Site Oficial - UOL. <http://www2.uol.com.br/augustodecampos/clippoemas.htm>.
  - concrete poetry generator. <http://www.newpollution.co.uk/101/concretepoetry/poem.php>.
  - poems that GO: special issue on Typography. <http://www.poemsthatgo.com/>.
  - Robotype.net >> Design & Development: Inklude.com. <http://robotype.net/>.
  - The Graffiti Creator - Home Of Graffiti Art. <http://www.graffiticreator.net/>.
  - TYPEDRAWiNG <http://www.storyabout.net/typedrawing/>.
  - Cayley, John. wotclock. [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/cayley\\_\\_wotclock.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/cayley__wotclock.html).
  - Chan, Paul. ALTERNUMERIC V.4. <http://www.nationalphilistine.com/alternumerics/>.
  - Farbrook, Joseph. Textile. <http://farbrook.net/website/textile.html>.
  - ---. Voice Inside My Head. <http://farbrook.net/voice/index.html>.
  - Futamura, Kojiro. gumob. <http://gumob.tumblr.com/>.
  - Gherban, Alexandre. roboletries. <http://gherban.free.fr/cadrac.htm>.
  - Gyori, Ladislao Pablo. Vpoem14. <http://www.cceba.org.ar/cvirtual/tpl/muestra-02/Vpoem14.htm>.
  - Howe, Daniel. text.curtain. <http://mrl.nyu.edu/~dhowe/textcurtain/>.
  - Johnston, David Jhave. SOFTIES. <http://glia.ca/conu/SOFTIES/>.
  - ---. THOEMS <http://glia.ca/thoems/thoems.html>.
  - Magruder, Michael. Textweave. <http://www.takeo.org/>.
  - Stefans, Brian Kim. dreamlife of letters. [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans\\_\\_the\\_dreamlife\\_of\\_letters/dreamlife\\_index.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans__the_dreamlife_of_letters/dreamlife_index.html).
  - ---. Kluge. <http://www.arras.net/kluge/>.
  - ---. LetterBuilder : Built with Processing. [http://www.arras.net/processing\\_test/LetterBuilder/applet/](http://www.arras.net/processing_test/LetterBuilder/applet/).
  - ---. Star Wars, one letter at a time.

[http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans\\_\\_star\\_wars\\_one\\_letter\\_at\\_a\\_time.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans__star_wars_one_letter_at_a_time.html).

- Jeffrey Shaw on "The Legible City" [http://www.jeffrey-shaw.net/html\\_main/show\\_work.php3?record\\_id=83](http://www.jeffrey-shaw.net/html_main/show_work.php3?record_id=83)
- Camille Utterback on "Text Rain" <http://www.camilleutterback.com/textrain.html>

#### WEEK 7: DIGITAL POETRY INTO/OUT OF CONCRETE POETRY

Thursday  
Feb. 25

Presentation 6

Homework for next class:

- continued

#### WEEK 8: DIGITAL POETRY INTO/OUT OF CONCRETE POETRY CONT.

Thursday  
March 4

Presentation 7

Homework for next class:

- read Tristan Tzara's "How to Make a Dadaist Poem" at <http://www.madsci.org/~lynn/juju/surr/games/dada-poem.html>
- read William Burroughs' "Cut-up Technique of Brion Gysin" at [http://www.ubu.com/papers/burroughs\\_gysin.html](http://www.ubu.com/papers/burroughs_gysin.html)
- read Raphael Rubinstein's "Brief History of Appropriative Writing" at <http://www.ubu.com/papers/rubinstein.html>
- read excerpt from Warren Motte's *Oulipo: A Primer* (pdf on CULearn)
- read excerpt from Charles O. Hartman's *Virtual Muse* (pdf on CULearn)
- browse through the following:
  - poems by Racter (pdf on CULearn)
  - Flarf poems in *Jacket Magazine* special feature at <http://jacketmagazine.com/30/index.shtml>
  - John Cayley's "Translation" at [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/cayley\\_\\_translation.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/cayley__translation.html)
  - Loss Glazier's "White-faced Bromeliads" at [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/glazier\\_\\_white-faced\\_bromeliads\\_on\\_20\\_hectares.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/glazier__white-faced_bromeliads_on_20_hectares.html)
  - excerpt from Charles O. Hartman and Hugh Kenner's *Sentences* (pdf on CULearn)
  - excerpt from Erin Moure's *Pillage Laud* (pdf on CULearn)
  - excerpt from Darren Wershler and Bill Kennedy's *Apostrophe* (pdf on CULearn)

#### WEEK 9: PROCEDURAL WRITING & COMPUTER-GENERATED POETRY

Thursday  
March 11

Presentation 8

Homework for next class:

- continued

#### WEEK 10: PROCEDURAL WRITING & COMPUTER-GENERATED POETRY CONT.

Thursday  
March 18

**CLASS CANCELED: stay tuned for make-up class**

Homework for next class:

- digital concrete poetry continued
- read excerpt from Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson's *Conceptual Art: Critical Anthology* (pdf on CULearn)
- read Craig Dworkin's *Anthology of Conceptual Writing* at <http://www.ubu.com/concept/>
- read Kenneth Goldsmith's "Conceptual Writing" [epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/Goldsmith\\_ConceptualWriting.pdf](http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/Goldsmith_ConceptualWriting.pdf)
- read Vanessa Place and Rob Fitterman's *Notes on Conceptualisms* (pdf on CULearn)

- read Craig Dworkin's "The Imaginary Solution" (pdf on CULearn)
- browse the following:
  - Kenneth Goldsmith's "All the Numbers from Numbers" at [http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub/Unpub\\_031\\_Goldsmith.pdf](http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub/Unpub_031_Goldsmith.pdf)
  - Kenneth Goldsmith's *Day* at [http://books.google.com/books?id=kKOefRuY954C&dq=%22Kenneth+Goldsmith%22+day&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=6jxhohu9ag&sig=kJ-kij06edsd\\_gq3ufHj\\_vGA0Dg&hl=en&ei=QEhCS-r2G6bMtAP\\_jNjCBA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CBEQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=kKOefRuY954C&dq=%22Kenneth+Goldsmith%22+day&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=6jxhohu9ag&sig=kJ-kij06edsd_gq3ufHj_vGA0Dg&hl=en&ei=QEhCS-r2G6bMtAP_jNjCBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CBEQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=&f=false)
  - Kenneth Goldsmith's *The Weather, Traffic, Sports* at <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/>
  - Darren Wershler's *Tapeworm Foundry* at [http://www.ubu.com/ubu/wershler\\_tapeworm.html](http://www.ubu.com/ubu/wershler_tapeworm.html)
  - Jim Carpenter's *Issue One* at [http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub/Unpub\\_039\\_Tegeder.pdf](http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub/Unpub_039_Tegeder.pdf)
  - Flarf and Conceptual Writing issues of *Poetry Magazine* at <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/journal/article.html?id=237176>

#### WEEK 11: SPRING BREAK

Thursday  
March 25

**Homework for next class:**

- continued

#### WEEK 12: CONCEPTUAL WRITING AS DIGITAL POETRY

Thursday  
April 1

**Presentation 9, 10**

**Homework for next class:**

- continued

#### WEEK 13: CONCEPTUAL WRITING AS DIGITAL POETRY CONT.

Thursday  
April 8

**Marie-Laure Ryan Lecture: "Between Play & Politics: Dysfunctionality in Web Art."**  
**Presentation 11**

**Homework for next class:**

- read Stephanie Strickland's *Zone: Zero*, "slippingglimpse" at <http://slippingglimpse.org/>, *WaveSon.nets*, and "Vniverse" at <http://vniverse.com/>

#### WEEK 14: INDIVIDUAL AUTHOR STUDY/STEPHANIE STRICKLAND

Thursday  
April 15

**Presentation 12**

**Homework for next class:**

- read works by YHCHI at <http://www.yhchang.com/>

#### WEEK 15: INDIVIDUAL AUTHOR STUDY/YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES

Thursday  
April 22

**Presentation 13**

**Homework for next class:**

- read works by Jason Nelson at <http://secrettechnology.com>

#### WEEK 16: INDIVIDUAL AUTHOR STUDY/JASON NELSON

Thursday  
April 29

**Presentation 14, 15**

**Have a great summer!**