MENG 6610
Advanced Studies in Genre:
The Novel in the Digital Age

Class meetings: M 5:30 – 8:10 pm (Room TBA)
Office: EH 463
Office hours: TBA
E-mail: jpanko@weber.edu (the best way to reach me outside of office hours)
Phone: 801-626-6596

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course examines the role that the novel plays in the digital age—an age where Big Data dominates and print books seem increasingly obsolete. How have new media and changing ideas about information impacted the development of the novel? How have novelists experimented with the genre’s form in response to these changes? Why might it matter whether we read a novel in a print book or on a computer screen?

To address these questions, we will study innovative novels by a range of contemporary novelists, in conjunction with theoretical writings about the genre’s history, theory, and form. In the process, we will explore such topics as: the relationship between literary form and media formats; the relationship between narrative and information; the relationship between the novel and the book; and the development of hypertext, networked, and serialized narratives. We will also consider how digital technology has added models like “distracted reading” and “distant reading” to the traditional “deep attention” paradigm of novel reading. Ultimately, we will seek to understand both what is new about the novel in the digital age and how contemporary novels build on a long history of experiments with the genre.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Students will:
1. Understand a range of ways that contemporary novelists have experimented with literary form, genre, and media
2. Analyze contemporary novels from multiple theoretical perspectives, including genre theory, media theory, the history of the book, and the digital humanities
3. Be able to describe key issues in the history and theory of the novel
4. Be able to describe how media theory has been brought to bear on literary studies
5. Conduct scholarly inquiry, develop critical arguments, and produce a research paper
**MENG LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The MENG Program is dedicated to helping students master the following learning outcomes. This class focuses specifically on LOs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

- **Learning Outcome 1:** Gather, analyze, and communicate information effectively as well as think creatively and critically.
- **Learning Outcome 2:** Cultivate skills in close reading, critical thinking, logical argument from evidence presented, creative expression, and persuasive writing.
- **Learning Outcome 3:** Apply various theoretical perspectives and literary terminology to interpretations of literary texts to showcase an understanding of theoretical perspectives.
- **Learning Outcome 4:** Acknowledge and articulate the significance of key primary text(s) in one specific literary genre, period, culture or style.
- **Learning Outcome 5:** Demonstrate knowledge of an interaction with current scholarly criticism.
- **Learning Outcome 6:** Ability to employ academic conventions and protocols for written or multimodal presentations, including the application of appropriate conventions, citation formats and style manuals.

**PRIMARY TEXTS**

Mark Z. Danielewski, *The Familiar: Volume 1*  
Eli Horowitz, *The Pickle Index*  
Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*  
J. J. Abrams and Doug Dorst, *S.*  
Eli Horowitz, Matthew Derby, and Kevin Moffett, *The Silent History*  
Kate Pullinger, Chris Joseph, and Participants, *Flight Paths: A Networked Novel*  
(available online – see Canvas)

**SECONDARY TEXTS**

In addition to the above novels, we will be reading scholarly essays, along with selections from the following critical works:

Rob Allen and Thijs van den Berg, eds., *Serialization in Popular Culture* (2014)

Selections from these texts—as well as journal articles and other readings—will be made available via our Canvas website. See Reading Schedule for details.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Grade Breakdown:**

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<th>%</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>MENG Learning Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Statement: Defining the Novel</td>
<td>LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
<td>LO1, LO2, LO5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4</td>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>LO1, LO2, LO3, LO5</td>
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<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Research Paper Proposal + Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>LO3, LO4, LO5, LO6</td>
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<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>LO1, LO2, LO3, LO5, LO6</td>
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<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Conference Abstract</td>
<td>LO1, LO4, LO5</td>
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**Course Grading Scale:**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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**Grading Criteria Used for MENG 6610 Essays and Written Assignments:**

**A:** An essay or paper in this category:
- is well developed and well organized
- clearly illustrates and develops key ideas
- displays a high degree of inventiveness & originality
- displays a sophisticated and superior use of language
- demonstrates syntactic variety
- is virtually free from errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction

**B:** An essay or paper in this category:
- is well organized and developed, though it may have small flaws in organization or paragraphing
- illustrates and develops some key ideas
- displays good control of language and a consistent tone
- demonstrates some syntactic variety
- is generally free from errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction
C: An essay or paper in this category: *(NOTE: ONLY Grades of B- or Higher Count Toward Degree Requirements)*

- is adequately well developed and organized
- illustrates and develops one or two key ideas
- displays capable and accurate use of language
- may display occasional errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction, but not a consistent pattern of such errors

**Participation:** Discussion is a core component of this class. Students are responsible for:
carefully reading all of the day’s assigned texts before class; arriving prepared to discuss the readings; bringing the relevant texts with you to class; and contributing to our discussions regularly. Students are expected to be attentive and focused in class.

**Statement: Defining the Novel:** Write a 500+ word (~2-page) statement that addresses the following questions: What is a novel? How would you distinguish it from other literary genres? For example, you might consider how it is defined as form or genre, in terms of its cultural role, in terms of its realism, etc. Pick a novel you have read that you would argue is the quintessential example of the genre, and explain why, engaging with the readings for our first class meeting (see Reading Schedule – January 11th). Your statement should reference the course readings but also offer your own original thoughts.

**Presentation:** Each student will sign up to give a 20-minute presentation on one day’s reading(s). Your presentation must include the following three elements:

- **Overview:** For the first 10 minutes, you will teach the class about the assigned reading(s). What are the main ideas? What background should we know about the author(s), theoretical concepts, etc.? In other words, you should bring in some background context to help us understand the work you have signed up to present. (Make sure to practice and time yourself!)
- **Discussion:** For the second 10 minutes, you will lead class discussion on the material. Come prepared with questions that will sustain a conversation. You should look at the weekly discussion questions posted to Canvas to see what your classmates are interested in, but you should develop your own questions and critical agenda for the discussion.
- **Handout:** Bring a typed handout to distribute to the class. The handout should include a summary of your major ideas and observations about the reading. It should not exceed one page.

**Weekly Discussion Questions:** For most (but not all—see Reading Schedule) weeks, you are responsible for posting two discussion questions to Canvas about the readings for the next class meeting. Rather than two single questions, think of them as two clusters of ideas you want to explore in class. Each “question” (which may consist of multiple questions to develop the central idea you are investigating) should be at least 75 words. Aim to probe the major ideas from the reading, clarify critical arguments, delve into specific issues from the week’s novel, consider connections between readings, etc.

So that I and your classmates have time to consider them, these must be posted at least 24 hours before our class meeting—no later than 5 pm on the Sunday before we meet. **Late questions will receive a 0.** You do not need to have finished all of the readings to pose
questions about them, and your questions can address just one, some, or all of the day’s readings.

**Conference Abstract:** You will write an abstract (250-300 words) for a conference paper in response to a call for papers (CFP). A good venue to search for CFPs that interest you is http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/ Your abstract might come out of this course (you are welcome to write an abstract on the topic of your research paper, for instance). You are also welcome to write an abstract based on an essay that you’ve written for any of your other graduate courses, or even for an undergraduate essay that you feel has the potential to be developed.

**Research Paper:** You will write a 12+ page research essay that engages with a theme or critical issue from this course. You may choose any text or topic from this course that interests you. All students are required to meet with me to discuss their paper ideas.

**Research Paper Proposal + Annotated Bibliography:** To help you hone your ideas and begin your research for your final paper, you will prepare a proposal containing the following elements:

- A **400+ word description of the argument you are proposing.** What is the idea you want to investigate? Why? Why is this research important? What is your tentative argument? What questions or issues will guide you as you continue developing your paper? The thesis you propose should be narrow, well-defined, and original. You should provide a provisional outline of the major points you plan to cover in the paper.
- An **annotated bibliography,** listing at least 8 scholarly sources that are relevant to your project. For each source, give the MLA-style citation and provide a brief (75-100 words) annotation that summarizes the source’s main argument and explains why this source is relevant to the field in general and to your argument in particular.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES**

**Attendance**
Since this is a graduate class, your attendance is extremely important. I expect regular and punctual attendance. **There are no excused absences.** Whether you miss class because of an illness, a family commitment, a flat tire, work, etc., it counts as an absence. This semester, you are allowed **one** absence without penalty. Use this wisely: it is for an emergency. Three late arrivals or early departures will count as one absence. **Missing two classes will decrease your final course grade by one letter grade.**
**Missing three classes will result in not passing the course.** Students who miss more than two classes should drop the class this semester and enroll again at another time.

**Late Work**
Written assignments are due at the times indicated in the reading schedule. Except in the case of extreme and documented emergency, late written assignments will drop by five percentage points for each day (24-hour period) that they are late. Late discussion questions will not be accepted and will receive a 0.
Core Beliefs
According to PPM 6-22 IV, students are to "[d]etermine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with a student’s core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. This policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student’s request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student’s beliefs."

Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibilities
Academic freedom is the right to teach, study, discuss, investigate, discover, create, and publish freely. Academic freedom protects the rights of faculty members in teaching and of students in learning. Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in teaching, research, and creative activities, subject to the limitations imposed by professional responsibility.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is a violation of the WSU Student Code and is not acceptable in this course (IV.D.2.b). Any sources—whether or not they are scholarly, and whether or not they are quoted directly—must be explicitly acknowledged. Academic dishonesty also includes submitting old or duplicate essays for multiple classes, fabricating sources, or allowing others to produce your work for you. These behaviors will not be tolerated. Students whose work appears plagiarized, or whose sources are not properly documented, are subject to failure (receiving a zero) of a specific assignment or failure of the entire course. Students who plagiarize will receive a Notice of Academic Integrity Violation and will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Emergency Closures
If for any reason the university is forced to close for an extended period of time, we will conduct our class via Canvas. Look for announcements through the class website and your Weber email account. I recommend that you set up your notifications so that you receive Canvas announcements immediately through your email so that you have as much notice as possible about class announcements.

Americans with Disabilities Act
If you require accommodations or services due to a disability, you must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in room 181 of the Student Services Center. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including the syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary. For more information about the SSD, contact them at 801-626-6413, ssd@weber.edu, or http://departments.weber.edu/ssd.

Note
If you prefer an alternate name or gender pronoun, please advise me of your preference and I will happily honor your request.

Much of the language in this syllabus is adapted from material by other instructors at WSU.
The instructor reserves the right to amend course policies at her discretion.
READING SCHEDULE

Readings must be completed by the start of class on the days indicated below.

All secondary readings can be found on Canvas. Make sure to bring either print or digital copies of these readings with you to class.

All written assignments are due at the times and by the delivery methods (electronic copy on Canvas or hard copy in class) indicated below.

Note: Reading schedule and assignment due dates are subject to change (notice will be given).

WEEK ONE: ON NOVELS AND NOVELTY – THEORIZING GENRE

**Monday, January 11th:**
DUE at the start of class, printed: Statement: Defining the Novel

**Read:**
Terry Eagleton, “What is a Novel?” from *The English Novel*
J. Paul Hunter, “Novels and ‘The Novel’: The Critical Tyranny of Formal Definition” from *Before Novels*
Michael McKeon, “Introduction” to *Theory of the Novel*

**Bring your copy of The Familiar: Volume 1**

**Sunday, January 17th**
No Discussion Questions due this week

WEEK TWO: NO CLASS MEETING

**Monday, January 18th:**
We do not meet tonight.
Begin reading ahead for next week’s class (which covers two weeks’ worth of readings).

**Sunday, January 24th:**
**DUE to Canvas by 5pm:** Discussion Questions for *The Familiar v1*, Hayles, Starre

WEEK 3: NOVELS IN THE MEDIA ECOCY – TECHNOTEXTS AND METAMEDIA

**Monday, January 25th:**
Mark Z. Danielewski, *The Familiar: Volume 1*
N. Katherine Hayles, “Material Metaphors, Technotexts, and Media-Specific Analysis” from *Writing Machines*
Alexander Starre, “Reading Metamedia” from *Metamedia*

**Sunday, January 31st:**
**DUE to Canvas by 5pm:** Discussion Questions for *The Familiar v1*, McGann, Hayles
WEEK 4: NOVELS AS INFORMATION MEDIA

Monday, February 1st:
Mark Z. Danielewski, *The Familiar: Volume 1*
Jerome McGann, “Database, Interface, and Archival Fever” (*PMLA*)
N. Katherine Hayles, “Narrative and Database: Natural Symbionts” (*PMLA*)

Sunday, February 7th:
DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *The Pickle Index*, Thompson, Alter

WEEK 5: MEDIUM, FORMAT, PLATFORM

Monday, February 8th:
Eli Horowitz, *The Pickle Index*
Note: You may read any of the three available formats: hardcover, iOS app, or paperback
Wendy Thompson, “The Printed Image in the West: Woodcut”
Alexandra Alter, “The Plot Twist: E-Book Sales Slip, and Print is Far from Dead”

Sunday, February 14th:
No Discussion Questions due this week

WEEK SIX: NO CLASS MEETING

Monday, February 15th:
We do not meet tonight.
Begin reading ahead for next week’s class (which covers two weeks’ worth of readings).

Sunday, February 21st:
DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Patchwork Girl*, Hayles, Armstrong

WEEK SEVEN: HYPERTEXT NARRATIVE

Monday, February 22nd:
Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*
N. Katherine Hayles, “Entering the Electronic Environment” from *Writing Machines*
Nancy Armstrong, “Introduction: The Politics of Domesticating Culture, Then and Now” from *Desire and Domestic Fiction*

Sunday, February 28th:
DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *S., Mod, Jackson*
**WEEK EIGHT: PRINT, BOOKS**

**Monday, February 29th:**  
J. J. Abrams and Doug Dorst, *S.*  
Craig Mod, “Books in the Age of the iPad”  
H. J. Jackson, “Physical Features” from *Marginalia*

**Sunday, March 6th:**  
No Discussion Questions due this week

**WEEK NINE: SPRING BREAK**

**Monday, March 7: Spring Break—No Class Meeting**  
We do not meet tonight.  
Begin reading ahead for next week’s class (which covers two weeks’ worth of readings).

**Sunday, March 13th:**  
DUE: to Canvas by 11:59 pm: Research Paper Proposal + Annotated Bibliography  
No Discussion Questions due this week

**WEEK TEN: TRANSMEDIA**

**Monday, March 14th:**  
Abrams and Dorst, *S.*  
Explore the transmedia extensions of *S.*:  
Book Trailer; Jen and Eric on Twitter; The S. Files; WholStraka; RadioStraka  
Henry Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling 101”

**Sunday, March 20th:**  
DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Silent History*, Watt

**WEEK ELEVEN: MOBILE MEDIA**

**Monday, March 21st:**  
Eli Horowitz, Matthew Derby, and Kevin Moffett, *The Silent History*  
Ian Watt, “Realism and the Novel Form” from *The Rise of the Novel*

**Sunday, March 27th:**  
DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Silent History*, Turner
WEEK TWELVE: SERIAL NARRATIVE

Monday, March 28th:
Horowitz, Derby, and Moffett, *The Silent History*
Field Reports from *The Silent History*
Mark W. Turner, “The Unruliness of Serials in the Nineteenth Century (and in the Digital Age)” from *Serialization in Popular Culture*

Sunday, April 3rd:
DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Flight Paths*, Meurer

WEEK THIRTEEN: NETWORKED NARRATIVE

Monday, April 4th:
Kate Pullinger, Chris Joseph, and Participants, *Flight Paths: A Networked Novel*
David M. Meurer, “Towards Network Narrative: Electronic Literature, Communication Technologies, and Cultural Production” (*Dichtung Digital*)

Sunday, April 10th:
DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for Birkerts, Hayles, Moretti

WEEK FOURTEEN: READING THE NOVEL: DEEP/DISTRACTED/DISTANT

Monday, April 11th:
Sven Birkerts, “Reading in a Digital Age” (*The American Scholar*)
N. Katherine Hayles, “How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine” (*ADE Bulletin*)
Franco Moretti, “Graphs” from *Graphs, Maps, Trees*

Sunday, April 17th:
No Discussion Questions Due This Week

WEEK FIFTEEN: READING THE NOVEL: DIGITAL HUMANITIES APPROACHES

Monday, April 18th:
Kenneth M. Price and Ray Siemens, “Introduction” to *Literary Studies in the Digital Age*
Johanna Drucker, “Data Mining and Text Analysis”
Patrician Cohen, “Analyzing Literature by Words and Numbers”

Wednesday, April 20th:
DUE: to Canvas, by 11:59 pm: Research Paper

Sunday, April 24th:
No Discussion Questions due this week
WEEK SIXTEEN: CONCLUSIONS

Monday, April 25th:
Leah Price, "Reading as if for Life" (Michigan Quarterly Review)
Michael McKeon, “Generic Transformation and Social Change: Rethinking the Rise of the Novel” (Cultural Critique)
Search online for the phrase “Future of the Novel” and choose a result that interests you

Wednesday, April 27th:
DUE to Canvas by 11:59 pm: Conference Abstract