Overview
Honors Program in Multimedia Scholarship
Institute for Multimedia Literacy
University of Southern California

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Summary

This document presents a conceptual overview of the key concepts and basic principles that will be followed in developing the curriculum for the Honors Program in Multimedia Scholarship offered by the Institute for Multimedia Literacy. In creating this overview I consulted several sources including the original proposal for the Honors Program sent to the USC Curriculum Committee, materials prepared by key faculty teaching in the program, the guidelines established by the former director of the IML, articles by Dean Elizabeth Daley, and teaching materials created by IML teaching assistants and peer mentors.

Guiding Principles:

The guiding principles that I would seek to establish for this program are the ones that I believe are essential to the creation of a truly interdisciplinary scholarly program:

Intellectual Flexibility
Intellectual Generosity
Intellectual Confidence
Intellectual Humility

Central Academic Objectives:

1) Students will learn to use the languages of new media in the production of scholarly knowledge.

2) They will demonstrate the skills and abilities to engage in collaborative critical and creative work.

3) Students learn by doing by engaging in project-based activities. The work they create are examples of scholarly research projects.

4) By participating in the practices of scholarship, students learn to think of themselves as scholars and creators of new meaning.

5) Students are taught how to employ multiple perspectives in the creation of new knowledge.

6) Students are taught methods of critical analysis, and taught how to reflect on the means of production of knowledge.

Courses Year 1: IML 101, IML 104

Core Concepts I: Learning to Read Multimedia Critically

1) Scholarship: Focus on the process of meaning making

Students identify the steps and stages of the scholarly process as it practiced by professionals in their disciplines (what do scholars do)

- Identification of foundational theoretical sources
- Identification of key debates among current researchers
- Research project development practices
- Citation skills
- Discipline-based research methodologies
- Innovations in interdisciplinary research
- Collaborative research and creative practices

2) Modes of Formal Analysis; Explores the relationship between meaning and form

Students demonstrate proficiency with the modes of formal analysis required for the critical evaluation of a multimedia artifact or interactive experience:

- Single image
- Image/Text relationship
- Multiple images
- Moving image: screen dynamics
- Sound design and composition
- Music
- Information Visualization
- Typography
- Interface Design
- Interactivity
- Material form
- Corporeal practices

3) Theoretical/Conceptual Frameworks

Students become familiar with the major theoretical frameworks guiding the development of contemporary multimedia applications and interactive experiences.

- Cultural Theory
- Linguistics and Language Studies
- Literary and Composition Studies
- Fine Arts
- Architecture
- Archeology
- Cinema Studies and Production
- Communication and Media Studies
- Computer Graphics
- HCI
- Philosophy

Core Concepts II: Learning to Write Multimedia Creatively

1) Research and Authoring Process

Students identify the iterative steps and stages of intellectual investigation and creative knowledge production

- Preparation
- Criticism
- Reflection
- Idea formation
- Feedback
- Reframing
- Production
- Archiving
- Publication
- Reflection
    - Written/position papers about project

2) Writing For Multimedia

Students learn techniques of meaning-making employed in the creation of multimedia applications and interactive experiences

- Audience analysis
- Rhetorical strategies: textual and visual
- Emotion and aesthetics
- Illustration
- The elements of narrative
- Poetics across media
- Semantics and the development of conventions
- New Media Genres

3) Technical Accumen

Students demonstrate basic understanding of the key components of digital media

- Analog vs digital
- Digital Storage
- File management
- Database architecture
- Data Compression
- Network architecture
- Systems architecture
- Computer languages
- Programming logic

4) Design

Students learn basic frameworks for design

- Design process
- Color theory: additive versus subtractive
- Grid methodology
- Layout
- Balance/symmetry/contrast
- Rhythm and duration
- Mutability
- Information Design

5) Production Basics

Students learn how to use basic tools and equipment

- Presentation basics
- Camera basics
- Audio/sound basics
- Interface basics
- Interactivity basics
- Editing basics
- Software applications

Year 2: IML-related General Education courses

One course is already approved; others need to be developed and submitted to the University's General Education Curriculum Committee.

Additional courses to develop:

"History of the Development of Reading, Writing and Communication Forms." To be created in consultation with the Writing Program, the School of Communication, and the IML Honors Program Steering Committee.

Year 3: IML Methodology Course

1) Project Planning and Implementation

Students learn how to conceptualize a scholarly project from beginning to end; and carry through a year-long project to completion

- Conception
- Specification
- Communication with audience
- Professional presentation
- Planning
- Resource Acquisition
- Scheduling
- Deliverables
- Assessment
- Critique
- Reflection: Written position paper

2) Modes of Expression for Final Project

Students learn how to evaluate the appropriate form for their final project. Possible forms include:

1) Video/audio product (sequential)
2) Interactive: DVD, website, games
3) Exhibition/environmental installation: kiosk

3) Integration within specific discipline

Students are coached on how to develop their research project in terms of the specific methodologies of their disciplines and in dialogue with key theoretical debates.

4) Collaborative Research and Production

Students are organized into small teams to work on their final projects. The team members include freshmen and sophomore students in the Honors Program who serve to provide production support for the final project. Senior students learn how to direct and integrate the work of others and to create a collaborative team effort.

How to Assess:

1) Completion rate
2) Attritian rate
3) Student Portfolio assessment: 1st year, 4th year
4) Program-based assessment
    Cohort assessment
    Cross-sectional assessment
5) After year 3: Are they ready to begin a self-directed final project?
6) Self and peer evaluation
7) First year: specific concepts and skill assessment