

ARTG 140: Writing for Interactive Narrative (Summer Session 1, 2021)

Instructor Information

Nick Junius (they/them): njunius@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment*

Class Meeting Link:

<https://ucsc.zoom.us/j/92159191224?pwd=TFFuM3c2U2FDc2s4cnhPZk1vWnpQUT09>

Course Description

This is first and foremost a creative writing class. You will be creating one short story over the course of the quarter. As part of this process, most of class time will be devoted to giving critiques and feedback on each others' work. **This means you should have at least one piece of writing (in any state) prepared before each class session.** This also means that a degree of the course material is up to you and part of the class will deal with how to give and receive feedback on work.

Learning Objectives

From AGPM:

- Demonstrate understanding of the connections between technical commitments and game system design, on one hand, and player experience and cultural communication goals, on the other
- Define, develop, and communicate artistically innovative game ideas—situated historically and employing the methods of multiple art practices

For this Course:

- Develop a personal storytelling practice
- Practice writing in a variety of formats used in interactive media
- Learn to critique work, both for peers and existing media

Assignments

Grading

Story Project Outline: 15%

Story Project Final Draft: 35%

Weekly Bark Assignment: 40% (two submission per week)

In class participation: 10%

Submissions

Unless otherwise stated, all assignments are due at 11:59pm of the date on the syllabus. All final assignments can be submitted as Twine games. The weekly bark assignments should be submitted as a spreadsheet.

Sharing Drafts

There is a folder in the Google Drive for you to put your drafts to be workshopped in class:

- <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lelW6zZaSf9LmQhqlq-PUPzBPTSB5K9l?usp=sharing>

Late, Missing, or Incomplete Assignments

You will be able to submit work late without penalty until the end of the last week of instruction (Week 5, July 19th-23rd). Note that you will likely receive less feedback by default on late work.

Story Project Assignment

Please note that all assignments are individual though it is perfectly reasonable (and encouraged) to discuss ideas and directions with your peers outside of class. **Of the four assignment options below, you will be completing One (1).** These prompts are supposed to be as open as possible to interpretation, so if your idea doesn't neatly fit into one of these categories we can talk about your plans and fit it in as much as possible. **You must submit your projects as exported Twine games.**

None of these assignments has a set length though please keep in mind:

- I am the only one grading these
- There needs to be some form of progression so it cannot be too short
- These **do not** have to be branching narratives
- You have a maximum of **4000 words**. This is so I can actually read and give feedback on work in at all a timely manner. (Note that this word count applies to your final drafts **only**)

Short Story Told as a Dialogue Driven Scene

This is basically a very short play and is usually focused around character interaction.

Outline Requirements:

- Names and brief descriptions of all the characters in your short story
- Descriptions of what will happen in each scene and who is involved

- What is the player doing during this scene?
 - If they are a character what are they allowed to do?
- A brief description of the world you are creating

Short Story Told Through Item Descriptions

This is more focused on the material artifacts of the world and may or may not be written in-universe. They can either be written from the perspective of the person(s) interacting with the objects or from the perspective of a narrator or some other entity all together.

Outline Requirements:

- Names and brief descriptions of each of the items in your short story
- A map or diagram of the world in which these items are found
- How the player interacts with the items
 - Is the full description immediately available or is some of it hidden (and how do they uncover it?)
- A brief description of the world you are creating

Final Draft requires a map or diagram of locations submitted with it.

Short Story Told Through Found Pieces of Writing

This is generally what I'd call audio logs, diary entries, letters, or other things that characters in the world have left behind. These should be written as though the artifact exists in the world rather than being written by a narrator.

Outline Requirements:

- Names and brief descriptions of each of the items and (potentially) characters in your short story
- A map or diagram of the world in which these items are found
- How the player interacts with these artifacts
 - Do they always see them in the same order or can they find things out of order?
- A brief description of the world you are creating

Final Draft requires a map or diagram of locations submitted with it.

Short Story Told Through a Series of Mission Briefing/Debriefing Scenes

These aren't quite the same as more traditional videogame cinematics and generally are used to bookend the in-game segments of action games. They usually involve one or more characters telling another set of characters what they will be doing (think planning scenes in heist movies or the old guy talking to the pilots before the Death Star battle in Star Wars Episode IV).

Outline Requirements:

- Names and brief descriptions of all the characters and entities in your short story
 - Who is giving the briefing and who is listening to it?
- Descriptions of what will happen in each scene and who is involved
- Is what you are describing in each briefing actually going to happen and be what the player experiences?
 - Is there a gradient? Will things mostly happen in the way you describe?
- A brief description of the world you are creating

Bi-Weekly Bark Assignments

Twice a week I will be giving you a prompt for writing a set of character barks. The details of each will be left for when I assign them each week to give you at least some idea of what being a writer on a team in the industry is like (you at least will know when I am asking for new material even if you don't know exactly what it is i will be asking for). **Please submit these as spreadsheets with your name and what the bark prompt is somewhere on the sheet.**

You will be creating a character over the course of five weeks through the incidental things they say during gameplay. Part of this will involve thinking about the role and playstyle of the character you are writing. Are they a healer, mage, tank, damage dealer, etc. (I'm using examples from RPGs here but you can get creative with this). Here's an example of the formatting I want you to use:

Bark	Character Name	Class	State
"I can't believe I have to write 10 of these."	Nick	Instructor	Course Prep

The Bark column is the lines you're actually writing. The Character Name Column is where you put your character's name. The Class column is where you put that character's class or role within the game. The State column is where you will be putting the state the character must be in to say the bark, this will be provided by the prompt along with the number of barks you need to write.

Here is a twitter thread and blog post about writing barks.

Twitter thread of 500+ grenade barks:

<https://twitter.com/CashDeCuir/status/991001576008495104?s=20>

Blog post about the 500 grenade barks:

<https://www.cashdecur.com/blog/2018/5/7/grenade-writing-500-barks>

Attendance and Participation

I will not be taking attendance in this class. Participation involves giving feedback about others' work in class with the **main part of that score being determined by if you had at least one draft of your work read out loud in class, and by draft I mean any piece of in progress writing.**

Schedule

Week 1 (June 21 - June 25)

Day 1 (June 22)

In class activity: discuss outlining and approaches to writing stories

Assigned: Story Project Outline

Due: Bark Prompt 1

Day 2 (June 24)

In class activity: discuss outlining and approaches to writing stories

Due: Bark Prompt 2

Week 2 (June 28 - July 2)

Day 1 (June 29)

In class activity: critique outlines and (possibly) workshop first project drafts

Due: Story Project Outline

Assigned: Story Project Final Draft

Due: Bark Prompt 3

Day 2 (July 1)

In class activity: workshop project drafts

Due: Bark Prompt 4

Week 3 (July 5 - 9)

Day 1 (July 6)

In class activity: workshop project drafts

Due: Bark Prompt 5

Day 2 (July 8)

In class activity: workshop project drafts

Due: Bark Prompt 6

Week 4 (July 12 - 16)

Day 1 (July 13)

In class activity: workshop project drafts

Due: Bark Prompt 7

Day 2 (July 15)

In class activity: workshop project drafts

Due: Bark Prompt 8

Week 5 (July 19 - 23)

Day 1 (July 20)

In class activity: workshop second project drafts

Due: Bark Prompt 9

Day 2 (July 22)

In class activity: workshop second project drafts

Due: Bark Prompt 10

Due: Story Project Final Draft

Safe Space

(from Michael Mateas's syllabi)

It is important that we all work together to help foster an environment in which students feel safe asking questions, posing their opinions, and sharing their work for critique. If at any time you feel this environment is being threatened—by anybody, including the professor—speak up and make your concerns heard. If you do not feel comfortable speaking about it in person, you may send private feedback via email or canvas to the course instructor or any of the TAs. If you feel uncomfortable broaching this topic with the professor in any way or for any reason, you should feel free to voice your concerns to the Dean's office.

DRC Remote Accommodations:

The Disability Resources Center reduces barriers to inclusion and full participation for students with disabilities by providing support to individually determine reasonable academic accommodations. Operations continue via remote appointments. If you have questions or concerns about exam accommodations or any other disability-related matter, email the DRC Schedulers at drc@ucsc.edu for an appointment.

Title IX:

The university cherishes the free and open exchange of ideas and enlargement of knowledge. To maintain this freedom and openness requires objectivity, mutual trust, and confidence; it requires the absence of coercion, intimidation, or exploitation. The principal responsibility for maintaining these conditions must rest upon those members of the university community who exercise most authority and leadership: faculty, managers, and supervisors.

The university has therefore instituted a number of measures designed to protect its community from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and other related prohibited conduct. [Information about the Title IX Office](#), the [online reporting link](#), applicable campus resources, reporting responsibilities, the [UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment](#), and the UC Santa Cruz Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment can be found at titleix.ucsc.edu.

The Title IX Office is actively responding to reports and requests for consultation. If you are not currently working with someone in the office and want to make a report/request a consult, you can expect the fastest response by using our [online reporting link](#).

For more information please visit the [Title IX Operations under Covid-19](#) page.

Academic Integrity

I want to preface this by saying that this is a creative writing course so please, you are doing yourself a disservice if you use other people's work.

Academic integrity is the cornerstone of a university education. Academic dishonesty diminishes the university as an institution and all members of the university community. It tarnishes the value of a UCSC degree. All members of the UCSC community have an explicit responsibility to foster an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. All members of the university community are expected to present as their original work only that which is truly their own. All members of the community are expected to report observed instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty in order to ensure that the integrity of scholarship is valued and preserved at UCSC.

In the event a student is found in violation of the UCSC Academic Integrity policy, he or she may face both academic sanctions imposed by the instructor of record and disciplinary sanctions imposed either by the provost of his or her college or the Academic Tribunal convened to hear the case. Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student's transcript.

For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the [Academic Integrity page](#) at the Division of Undergraduate Education.

Student Resources

Digital Resources

- Video Game Library, in Science & Engineering Library: <https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/videogames>
- Digital Scholarship Commons in McHenry: <https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/DSC>
- [Slug Support](#), including Food Support
- [Basic Needs](#)
- [Student Success Centers](#)
- [CARE \(Campus Advocacy Resources and Education\)](#)
- [CAPS \(Counseling and Psychological Services\)](#)
- [Student Health Center](#)

Additional Campus Resources

- [Writing Centers](#)
- [All Gender Restrooms](#)
- [Lactation Rooms](#)

- [Childcare](#)
- [Prayer Rooms: ISB-475](#)
- [For Veterans](#)
- [Undocumented Student Services](#)
- [Support for Survivors of Assault](#)