

∞ DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT

The Digital Storytelling Project offers you one last opportunity to tap into your creative side, to tell a story—your story—about infinity. Though you have complete freedom to choose the theme you wish to explore, you will capture it through digital storytelling.

British photographer, educator and digital storyteller, Daniel Meadows defines digital stories as "short, personal multimedia tales told from the heart." More specifically, digital storytelling is the practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories. As with traditional storytelling, most digital stories focus on a specific topic and contain a particular point of view. However, as the name implies, digital stories usually contain some mixture of computer-based images, text, recorded audio narration, video clips and/or music. A great way to begin learning about digital storytelling is by watching a few examples:

- <http://www.storycenter.org/stories/>
- <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/>

To complete the project, you will work in pairs to produce a 3-5 minute digital story which includes, at a minimum, a mixture of computer-based images, a soundtrack, and recorded audio narration. The topic of your story should center around one of the many themes we've discussed throughout the semester. *Your digital story should explore this theme in ways that are meaningful and personal to you.*

Assignment: The following list describes the different stages of the project. These general guidelines indicate the minimum work you should complete for each stage. Clearly, the more you do during early stages, the less you have to do later.

- TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24: General story topics and pairings will be determined in class.
- MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30: Send the instructor an email more specifically defining your project.
- TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1: Come to class with a general outline of your story. The outline should contain at the very least details about your story's beginning, middle, and end; and general details about the images you plan to use as well as the soundtrack(s). You will have time in class to develop these initial ideas. You should also come to class with a working knowledge of the software, understanding its capabilities and limitations.

- FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4: You must meet in person with the instructor. You should come to that meeting with a near final storyboard; i.e. a rough draft of the narrative and a description of the images you plan to use.
- TUESDAY, DEC 4: The final project is due in class; plan on showing your project in class. Please upload your project to the 'Assignments' portion of the course Collab site.

Resources: Here are descriptions of and links to some recommended software programs that you can use to create digital stories. Though welcome to use other software, you are responsible for ensuring that your project can be viewed in class and by the instructor outside of class.

Story-creation software

Microsoft Photo Story 3: Photo Story 3 is a free, easy-to-use program from Microsoft that lets you create slideshows using your own digital photos and images you download from the web or scan from old photographs, documents, books, magazines or newspapers. You can touch-up, crop, or rotate pictures, add special effects, music, and your own narration to your photo stories. Photo Story 3 does have some limitations: it is only available for Windows XP and Vista, the stories created with the program can only be played back with Windows Media Player on PCs running Windows and not on Macs, and it only supports the use of still images, not full-motion video clips.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/digitalphotography/photostory/default.msp>

iMovie: iMovie is Apple's answer to Photo Story and is a good choice for Mac users who want to create digital stories. This digital movie creation and editing program has most of the same features as Photo Story, however, it also supports the use of full-motion video clips. Like Photos Story 3, iMovie lets users add titles, effects, and transitions to their digital story projects. And like Photo Story, iMovie has some limitations too, including: it generally just supports video clips in the .MOV format, and it is not free, although it often comes installed on new Macintosh computers.

<http://www.apple.com/ilife/imovie/>

Audio-recording software

Audacity®: Audacity is free, open source software for recording and editing sounds. It is available for Mac OS X, Microsoft Windows, GNU/Linux, and other operating systems.

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Guidelines and Assessment: To create an effective digital story, you should carefully consider the following guidelines (adapted from www.storycenter.org). These guidelines will form the basis for the assessment of your project.

Theme

Stories have themes. Your theme should center around on some aspect of infinity discussed in the course, it should be well-developed, explored in novel ways, and made personal. The theme should be supported by texts we've read, images we've viewed, etc.

Point

Stories are not simply a list of what happened ("This happened, and then that happened, and then the other thing happened"). Instead, stories are told to make a point. Stories help us find meaning that transcends a particular situation. Make sure the point of your story is clear.

Dramatic Question

Making a point, however, doesn't necessarily grab and hold people's attention. A story also should hook the reader/listener/viewer to want to keep going – why did something happen, what did it mean, who cares? Your story should pose a provocative question that raises curiosity and emotion, making the story worthwhile not only for the storyteller, but also for the audience.

Distinct Voice

Every story is told from a perspective; it has a point of view. This perspective is part of "voice," but so is the sound of a person's voice (or several people's voices). The voice of the storyteller is crucial in shaping how the audience experiences the story. Carefully consider your choice of voice.

Power of a Soundtrack

A soundtrack can establish the mood, meaning, and rhythm of a story, transforming the way an audience perceives everything about the story. Choose music that is evocative, that compliments—and complicates—your story.

Images that Matter

Images can serve as a background, doing little more than illustrating the story. However, you should thoughtfully select images that can move your story beyond its text and soundtrack – illuminating the meaning in a way that the words and music do not.

Economy

Your story should use as few words, images, and sounds as possible to effectively convey its meaning—less is more.

Pacing

The rhythm of the words, images, and sounds shape and reinforce a story's point. Storytellers often use pacing to help the audience feel a part of the story – for example, a quick pace feels exciting and urgent, while a sudden change in pace can feel disorienting. Choose a pace the supports, rather than detracts.