

## Teaching Philosophy

My pedagogical strategies are dedicated to teaching the principles of humanistic research through dynamic, hands-on, methods. Interactive and creative practices encourage students to become not just critics but active participants in the social sphere of knowledge production. In order to facilitate this creativity, I often draw upon new media platforms as tools for writing, literary exploration, and critical analysis. For example, while teaching Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* in an introductory literature course, we tweet plot developments through the eyes of the characters on a course Twitter feed and build an interactive map that charts the various routes associated with Dominican-American histories while analyzing and writing about the ways digital practices alter and supplement the text. In addition to implementing digital methods into writing and literature classes, I also teach courses in which I integrate digital content and digital methodologies.

In December 2014, I was awarded a competitive campus-wide Innovation in Teaching Award (4 graduate students received this award out of a total of 2,000 eligible teachers). Guided by my research in pedagogical games, my teaching methods reflect a studio-based pedagogy that encourages students to tinker and build in a participatory workshop setting. In English 550: *Studies in Criticism*, my students explore ways that abstract theoretical concepts can be situated in real spaces while role-playing as design teams. In our first collaborative project, we use the concepts and information architectures of theory comics to build games in ARIS, Augmented Reality Interactive Storytelling. This locative, GPS-based storytelling platform situates design elements, media, and text onto a specific location on a map, which appears to the player when they enter a designated space. For example, one group combined local history with post-colonial theory to animate the paradoxical histories of Bascom Hall, an historic and iconic building on the UW-Madison campus, so that as the player walks through the building with an iOS device, they can interact with Bascom Hall's paradoxical histories of colonialism (e.g. its placement on effigy mounds) and democracy (e.g. its history of land grants and public education). I have found that locative-based game design has particularly exciting possibilities for learning. For example, as a student builds a game, I ask her to be attentive to the ways that the story structure (the narrative development/divergence, the pathways of the game, the conceptual architecture) and the design elements of the game (sounds, images, colors) affect the structures of knowledge within the game, the story arc, the affective augmented environment of the player, and the learning outcomes that result from these combination of choices. As students craft stories and experiences for other users, they reflect on the processes that drive the ways they think about and perceive the world around them.

My aim is to encourage this same sense of reflection and exploration in my students' writing practices at SUNY-Canton. Creating media projects does not diminish the importance of writing; rather, I use writing to guide the conceptual design, to create the dialogue text, and to craft a robust proposal that explicates the students' interpretations of a text or problem. For example, in the course *Stories, Maps, Media*, I ask students to write proposals that clarify the importance of their game or video deliverable, the specific question that the project seeks to answer, and

the design decisions that support the conceptual foundations of the game. I often find that when students write in order to convince a specific audience of the importance of their ideas, they become extremely invested in the process of argumentation, investing additional time and effort in the project.



ARIS Dow Day screen 1

My extensive teaching experience at Edgewood College, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and now at SUNY-Canton along with my broad research interests make me confident and enthusiastic about teaching a wide variety of courses, from technical writing to media writing to game design courses. I am comfortable combining lectures, in-class and online discussions, and analytical and creative media assignments to help students become aware of the ways that texts construct meaning, but also to inspire them to become the makers of new texts and knowledge formations. In sum, my pedagogical strategies are dedicated to teaching the principles of humanistic research in dynamic, hands-on ways that will remain with the student long after he or she leaves my classroom.