LMC 3314 Syllabus

Technologies of Representation, A, 3 credit hours

Fall term 2026

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

Description

There are many forms of media representations and forms: books, paintings, film, dance, music - this course explores material performances. These material performances can also have many different forms and shapes but are often described as puppetry or object theater. We will look into the historical, cultural, and theoretical issues at work in technologies of representation that use such material performance. How can our expressions emerge in a material performance form? And how can computers help? To answer these questions, we will lean on two key references: puppetry and tangible interaction design. We will explore the field of puppetry/ object theater and its various means to create expression. This reaches from classic formats to digital puppetry, from shadow puppets to robots, from object performance to tangible interaction.

The second half will provide an introduction into the field of tangible interaction design and issues of digital performance. How can we learn from the ancient material performance forms to support the digital interactions of today?

We will discuss readings from Performance Studies, Media Studies, HCI, and Critical Craft/ Making.

This class will combine practice and theory. We will discuss readings, students will present examples and critically analyze them; but we will also design possible responses and students will ultimately form groups to design and implement one material-digital performance project.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Textual/Visual Analysis: Students will learn to read, analyze, and interpret not only cultural projects such as film, literature, art, and new media, but also scientific and technical documents.

- Interpretive Frameworks: Students will become familiar with a variety of social, political, and philosophical theories and be able to apply those theories to creative and scientific texts, as well as to their own cultural observations.
- Communication Skills: Students will be able to gather, organize, and express information clearly and accurately, with sensitivity to will be able to do so both by using traditional media and by tapping the potential of new digital media.
- Students understand and apply the mathematical principles and computational affordances appropriate to creative digital expression.
- Students can create digital artifacts with an awareness of history, audience, and context.
- Students can work effectively in teams to accomplish a common goal.

Required Course Materials

Readings will be provided online but relevant texts include:

- Bell, J (2008). American Puppet Modernism. Essays on the Material World in Performance. Palgrave, Macmillan, New York, NY.
- Benford, Steve, and Gabriella Giannachi (2011) Performing Mixed Reality. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Posner, D. N., Orenstein, C., & Bell, J. (Eds.). (2014). Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance. Florence, KY: Routledge.
- Tillis, S. (1992). Towards an aesthetics of the puppet: puppetry as a theatrical art. London, UK: Greenwood Press.
- Wiberg, Mikael (2018) The Materiality of Interaction. Notes on the Materials of Interaction Design. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA; London.

Grading Policy:

Grading of individual pieces will be in percentage and then converted to points.

The Honor Code of Georgia Tech applies (see http://www.honor.gatech.edu/).

Grade breakdown:

100-90% = A

89-80% = B

79-70% = C

69- = D

Assignments

	Percentage/ points
Participation	20%
Critical Analysis: Text Presentation	15%

Critical Analysis: Performance Analysis	15%
Making: Translator Object	15%
Making: Final project	35%

Description of Graded Components

Critical analysis: Text presentation: (15 points) students will form small groups and present a reading (with visual materials where feasible) in class; the groups are chosen up by the course instructor; this presentation should cover and explain the key terms and arguments of the text(s) at hand but those texts should be mainly entry points to introduce the class to this specific form/ performance; exemplify them (each reading is associated with a particular performance style/ performer/ group / period) – for example they should include a short video clip of that particular performance style; they should include your own perspective toward that text and puppetry format, what counts is that you make clear that you have understood the text, covered the core components of the designated puppetry format and illustrated them with an example piece; you should have developed and presented an own opinion; each presentation should finish with a list of questions you collected from the material and that you want to open to the class.

you hand in: you deliver that presentation as a powerpoint in class and submit the slides on Canvas before class on the day it is due

Critical Analysis: Performance analysis: (15 points) a critical analysis of an existing puppetry or material performance piece (from online or other source – but it needs to be an existing piece); break down the nature of the performance work, the material operations; particular media qualities; what media strategies are applied? Where do they work? Where not? Why? To what other media does it relate e.g. is this an adaptation, does it use TV or cinematic techniques? If so: what does it change or adapt? Reference at least 2 texts from either in class and/ or beyond to support your argument; Note that there will be an online sign up sheet to avoid doubling or repetition

you hand in: your .ppt for the presentation on Canvas (deadline: 5pm of the due day)

Making: Translator Object: (15 points) pick a digital technology (e.g. cell phone, laptop, smart watch, digital clock …) and a particular use of it (e.g. an app, a function); then build a material performance that will tell/ perform that particular use; to enact that function you can use any kind of material but not the original digital technology; you should build a customized "puppet object" for this performance that embodies through its style and appearance this function; create sketches and design notes; you have to address the control mechanisms, the personality, the means of expression - and be able to explain your choices; why did you chose this design? Who is your puppet? How does it operate technically? And how is it reflected in the design and functionality?

You will present your "Translator Object" in class; your presentation should reflect the nature of the object: What is the history of that design in terms of digital and mechanical technology? What

are the particular qualities of it? How do they operate? What is this performance's "language"? Present your piece in a short scene to perform with your hybrid object and give it context

you hand in: 10 pictures of your translator object, 10 pictures of the assembly process, the; a 60 seconds (or longer) video of your object in action (deadline: 5pm of the due day)

Making: group project: (35 points) we will form groups of ~3 students working on final group projects; the project will consist of a performance video; you will create at least one puppet/ material performance object that will perform a short scene which combines digital media affordances with physical ones and that is a practical reflection of the themes discussed in the class; you will have to produce a short video of the project, so start documenting early

first you will present your project idea in a powerpoint presentation to the class; this will clarify: who does what on the project? What is the project about? What is its name? How will it look and feel and work?

second you will show a running technical prototype that shows your basic concept operational (informal in-class presentation)

third you will present your full-blown performance video; include explanations and reflections on your project in the final presentation – what worked, what did not? Which readings were applicable? How does your piece relate to them?

fourth you will create a short video of the project (this is not a video of the performance only but one that shows the original idea, object design and implementation, and ends with parts of the final performance)

you hand in: submit the whole project on Canvas; what you submit: a simple web site that contains all the material of your project such as: design documents, sketches, code, 10 images of the project and its development; 2 min (or longer) video of the project in action (with titles and credits); your powerpoint presentation;

Participation: (20 points) regular attendance (see also attendance policy) and punctuality; (note that attendance is crucial but does not equal participation); participation in class; contributions to discussions; engaging the opening discussions of theory sessions; teamwork! Help your fellow students, come up with suggestions in the design discussions, assist whenever somebody is stuck; one measure of attendance will be your contributions to direct questions (often posed at the beginning of the sessions)

you hand in: nothing to hand in; participation will be assessed over time

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

Class attendance is required. If a student needs to miss a class due to an approved absence (see https://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/), contact the instructor 24 hours in advance. If Institute Approved Absences collide with class times please contact the instructor in advance to make sure the workload can be distributed. If a student has four excused absences, they need to meet with the instructor to assess whether completion of the course is still possible.

Depending on the impact, each unexcused absence will affect your end of semester final grade. Four unexcused absences (or more) lead to a fail for the class. Any exam or class presentation missed due to an unexcused absence will be recorded as a zero.

Attendance performance will impact the participation grade.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review Georgia Tech's Honor Code and the student Code of Conduct.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Core IMPACTS

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Humanities area.
Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance, and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy

Intercultural Competence

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your

special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

In this class, we strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and students. A basic breakdown of these expectations is here: The Student-Faculty Expectations.

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

Pre-requisite LMC 1102 English

Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI

Individual assignment need to be developed and presented by each individual students. Group assignments will require collaboration and teamwork.

The use of AI for background research is allowed but students must be able to understand, critically interrogate, and explain any material. AI is not permitted in the generation of any final deliverable (text, presentation, media, code) unless specifically allowed by the instructor.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Late submissions lead to automatic reductions of the grade unless a valid excuse is provided. Any 1 day delay, meaning anything after 5pm of the due day, will have 10% reduced from the grade; any 2 day delay will have 20% reduced, 3 day delays will not be accepted.

Extensions and make-up assignments are given for illness, approved Institute activities or religious observances (see https://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/).

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

No use of cell phones (including texting) or headphones in class unless it is for coursework or approved by the instructor.

Additional Course Policies

Students should not record class sessions unless permitted by the instructor.

Resources for Students

Student Well-Being:

Your health is more important than this class. Sometimes it is difficult for the instructor to have enough personal contact to see how you are. But you should know that your health and wellbeing are much more important than any grade or coursework. Let us help if any situation develops – the earlier the better. Again, please inform the instructor of any issues or challenges and do not hesitate to reach out.

Coursework can be demanding and everybody can encounter challenges sometimes. There are many reasons, such as an illness or a family emergencies, that might affect focus and studying conditions. If this happens to you, come and see the instructor about it as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for work that has been missed, and continue coming to class.

If you encounter more pressing difficulties, anxieties, or mental health challenges, then please let the instructor know but also turn to the support we have in place at the Institute. This includes the Counseling Center (https://counseling.gatech.edu/).

A comprehensive list of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being (student-resource-guide (gatech.edu)

Additional Syllabus Components

Please be aware that your work might be accessible to others in future classes or in other academic presentations. This regards your code, presentations in class, as well as the videos and other deliverables. Unless you explicitly state that you do not want your work shared, it is implied that you give permission for sharing work with others in the class, with future students, and possibly wider general audiences. If you are not comfortable with this, please let the instructor know. Unless you inform the instructor in writing (email) that you do not want your work shared with others in the context of current and future versions of this course, it is assumed that it is available.