

ENG 563 – Literature of the Fantastic

Final Project

Goal: Your final project will be a multimodal exploration of *House of Leaves*. Your project (completed in Literature Circles groups) should explore the narrative structure of the text and connect it to a larger concern of the class.

What is multimodal? A mode is a representational medium, a means of communication. For example, the traditional mode in literary studies is the essay: you are tasked with communicating your argument about a particular idea in a written text that conforms to certain generic conventions of organization, formatting, and content. The term multimodal indicates an opening up to various representational media, an idea that frequently focuses on the expansive media world of digital technologies, but that also includes other analog means of communication (movement, collage, painting, etc.). In a multimodal assignment you are encouraged to explore these non-traditional media for their communicative possibilities.

Why multimodal? One of the key characteristics of fantastic narratives is their quality of hesitation, an effect often created by the experience of rupture, revision or reversal, a kind of madness that infects and affects any single interpretation of a text. A traditional essay that argues a single central idea about the text might be difficult, even impossible when addressing the fantastic. Certainly it would do violence to this important characteristic of this writing: its openness, uncertainty. The fantastic, we might say, *distrusts and asks us to distrust* stable forms, and by exploring *other* means of writing about our text, we might discover ways to respond to and analyze the narrative that acknowledges instead of refuses this important idea.

So what exactly do I need to turn in? You will turn in four items in this project:

1. Group evaluations – an anonymous ranking of all group members based on their participation in and contributions to the project. All group members will submit evaluations. (10%)
2. Final project – no matter what medium or mix of media you choose to pursue in your project, it needs to be something you can *turn in* to me. This may mean you need to record or export your project into a portable form, and the shape of that form should be something you consider in your SOGC (below). Each group will submit one project. (45%)
3. Statement of Goals and Choices – the SOGC is a very important document for your project, a record of what you wanted to accomplish with your project and the process you went through to create a project that fulfilled those goals. The exact requirements for the SOGC is available below. Each group will submit one SOGC. (40%)
4. DesignLab report – you will need to meet with a DesignLab consultant early on in the project development in order to map out the choices available to you in terms of communicating your project. Each group will submit one report to me for feedback. (5%)

Statement of Goals and Choices (SOGC)

Your SOGC is a document that maps out what you wanted your project to accomplish and how, why, and under what conditions you made the compositional, technological, and methodological choices in the final project (Shipka 113). This is an important document/portfolio and groups should note that it is worth nearly as much as the final project itself. Successful SOGCs will document in a thorough and thoughtful way the group's ability to understand and reflect upon the process required by the multimodal project.

We will base our approach on the assignment laid out in Jody Shipka's *Toward a Composition Made Whole*. There, Shipka identifies three areas for reflection in the SOGC. Following this model, each group SOGC should respond to the following questions:

1. What, specifically is this piece trying to accomplish – above and beyond satisfying the basic requirements outlined in the task description? In other words, what work does, or might, this piece do? For whom? In what contexts?
2. What specific rhetorical [communicative, persuasive strategy], material, methodological, and technological choices did you make in service of accomplishing the goal(s) articulated above? Catalog, as well, choices that you might not have consciously made, those that were made for you when you opted to work with certain genres, materials, and technologies.
3. Why did you end up pursuing this plan as opposed to the others you came up with? How did the various choices listed above allow you to accomplish things that other sets or combinations of choices would not have?

(Shipka 114)

Please note that these questions must be answered by your SOGC, but the format should not be merely a Q&A.

In addition to responding to these three areas, mapping out the goals of your work and the choices you made to best meet those goals, you need to include a list of "credits," a "list [of] all the actors, human and nonhuman, that played a role in helping [the group] accomplish a given task" (114). The goal here is for us to be conscious of composition, especially multimodal composition, as an already-networked task, the "individual and social aspects of textual production," as Shipka calls it. Here you have the opportunity to consider the number and variety of resources that may not be immediately recognizable if your audience only sees the final project.

Works Cited

Shipka, Jody. *Toward a Composition Made Whole*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2011.