

SPATIALIZING NARRATIVE 2

011 Kariotis Hall, February 11, 2020, 1:35 – 5:05 P.M.

A micro-conference embedded in ARTD 2100-01 Narrative Basics

The goal of this event is to kick off the project phase of the course by framing the challenge of creating a compelling narrative using room-scale virtual reality technology. Open to members of the Northeastern University community.

Opening Remarks 1:35 P.M.

Part I: Presentations 1:45 P.M.

Jeffrey Jacobsen: **The Technical Foundations of Virtual Reality**. An introduction to the psychological and technical foundations of VR, and how it relates to other forms of communication. Like any medium, VR has particular strengths and weaknesses. We will look at VR from an information theory point of view, showing how narratives are built from virtual objects and spaces. We'll end with a look into the near future when VR becomes part of daily life and your headset is just another appliance.

Ellen Fontana: **The Responsibility of a Writer**. The primary responsibilities of a writer is to keep the audience engaged the story moving forward. Every other element in a story, beginning with the creation of the story world, characters, action, and dialogue, lines up behind these responsibilities. Keeping the audience engaged means putting them in the position to constantly refer back to themselves; to make them think and feel, "I am the protagonist." In that way, the specific narrative work of a screenplay differs from that of immersive media because the participant is already immersed in the story world and their connection to the protagonist is a given.

Peter (Zak) Zakrzewski: **Designing the Medium**. This talk distinguishes invention and design and argues that the new immersive medium should be designed and not invented. The established philosophical stance, methods, and practice rooted in user-centeredness, transdisciplinarity, perspective-taking, and aggregation make design an ideal meta-discipline equipped to lead the process of immersive augmentation of human intellect. It advocates for the elevation of desirability as the fundamental XR research problem, which will allow design researchers to connect their research findings to a broader discussion about core human needs and ethics aimed at stakeholders outside of the design community.

Celia Pearce: **Spatial Literacy**. The spatial turn in media, whether through digital forms such as video games and VR, or physical spaces such as Theme Parks, Escape Rooms and Immersive Theatre, demands that audiences develop new modes of spatial literacy, understanding how to "read" and interact with space in new ways. Spatial literacy becomes particularly important, as authoring these spaces is moving with increasingly fluidity between the digital and physical through both mutual influences and also through hybridization strategies such as AR, pervasive games and embedded computing.

Break with refreshments 3:05 P.M.

Part II: Panel Discussion with Q & A 3:35 P.M.

Panelists will discuss their perspectives on the challenge of creating compelling narrative experiences using room-scale virtual reality technology, offer practical advice, and explore the ultimate potential of immersive media storytelling.

Closing Remarks 4:45 P.M.

Speakers

Jeffrey Jacobson is a specialist in how people learn with immersive media and was among the first researchers to conduct empirical studies of learning in VR. He is currently the Simulation Engineering Project Manager at SIMPeds where he prototypes new training tools, oversees the development of XR training solutions and contributes to scholarly investigations of XR for medical training and treatment. He earned a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. See: <http://enterprisevr.com>.

Ellen Fontana is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Media and Screen Studies Program at Northeastern University, where she teaches screenwriting. She has held various positions in the motion picture industry and has developed, written, and produced a wide range of feature film and television projects. She received an MFA in Dramatic Arts from the University of California, Davis.

Peter (Zak) Zakrzewski is a researcher, educator, and innovation coach who advocates applying design thinking methods to the design of media. Peter is a former creative director of the EmTech MIT emerging technology conference. His design consulting career includes 15 years of working on user experience design and branding programs. He is currently working on a book titled *Empathic Disruption* for the MIT Press, and is a Lecturer and Ph.D. candidate at Ryerson University.

Celia Pearce is an award-winning game designer, artist, curator, researcher and author, and an Associate Professor of Game Design at Northeastern University. In research circles, she is best known for her anthropological studies of online games and virtual worlds; in game industry circles, as co-founder of IndieCade. Pearce received her Ph.D. in 2006 from SMARTLab Centre, then at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. See <http://cpandfriends.com>.

David Tamés (organizer and moderator) is an Associate Teaching Professor in Art + Design at Northeastern University. He is a documentary media maker who is currently completing post-production on *Farm & Red Moon*, a feature-length documentary. He recently collaborated on *BirdBox*, a multi-participant AR/VR painting experience. He holds an MFA in Communication Design from MassArt and an MS in Media Arts and Sciences from MIT.