

# BECA 670 WRITING FOR ELECTRONIC MEDIA

## Spring 2008 Syllabus

Instructor: Marie Drennan

Time: Thurs. 2:10-4:55 in CA 200

Office Hours: M 4-5; T/Th. 5-6 in HUM 247

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Phone: 338-1626 (but e-mail is best!)

Class Blog: <http://beca670.blogspot.com>

### Course Objectives

Script writer's role in the creation of interactive electronic media. Differences between conventional screen narrative and interactive story telling and information presentation. Focus on community building and the "ecosystem" of new media: blogging/citizen journalism, wiki, collaborative and interactive-fiction writing, and social media; discussion of digital rights management, online privacy, bloggers' rights and free-speech issues. Class will collaborate on an online BECA community and resource guide.

### Technology

All work will be turned in online. We will spend class time learning to use Blogger, wiki applications, and some basic HTML. No video/audio production is required, but you will have opportunities to incorporate audio, video and other materials into your projects if you choose. *Please note: I cannot provide or authorize access to cameras or other equipment.* Feel free to bring your own laptop to class if you like. Everyone will need access to their SFSU webspace, so please know your username and password and resolve any log-on issues by March 6 class. If you don't use your SFSU e-mail address, make sure it forwards to whatever e-mail account you check frequently.

### Evaluation and Grading

- Written work will receive a letter grade reflecting the degree to which: the piece satisfies the purpose and function of the assignment; the writer's idea has been fully executed (did everything make it onto the page?); and the content is written clearly and in media-appropriate style as discussed in class. Grades for written work will be averaged for a final semester grade.
- Grades will be adjusted for writing mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.). Work that contains "dealbreaker" errors listed on the BECA 370 Writing Mechanics Guide will receive a reduced, possibly failing, overall grade.
- After the first instance, each unexcused absence will lower your final semester grade by a half-letter (A to A-); two lates (including after breaks or leaving early) count as an unexcused absence.

### Proofreading and Writing Mechanics

While online writing is generally less formal than academic writing, your work in this class should reflect the abilities of a college student in an advanced writing course. Help is available; please be proactive! See me during office hours; visit the BECA Writing Lab (hours and location posted in BECA office); for ongoing help, work with a Learning Assistance Center tutor (HSS 348; <http://www.sfsu.edu/~lac/>).

## **Attendance**

It is *extremely* important that you're here for daily presentations of online communities and discussions of the tools and applications we'll be using all semester. If you miss a class, **it is your job to:**

- Find out what you missed. Check the Class Blog and contact classmates to get thoroughly filled in.
- E-mail me or come to my office hours if you have questions.
- Turn in your work on time whether you are physically present in class or not.
- Bring documentation of excused absence if applicable (see Bulletin for university policy). Please note that work conflicts, production schedules, and non-emergency appointments are *not* excused absences.

## **Classroom Policies**

No food or drinks are allowed in the computer rooms. Also please turn off and put away phones, PDAs, mp3 players and other distracting gadgets. Please refrain from surfing, checking e-mail, etc. while we're using the computers in class.

## **Obscenity and Offensive Content**

Some material viewed in class contains obscenity, violence, and other potentially offensive language and imagery. Rather than impose censorship, I choose to let the class content reflect our contemporary media culture so that students are aware and can participate as they choose.

## **Plagiarism**

Any instance of claiming another writer's work as your own will result in a grade of F for that assignment with no opportunity for rewrite. See SFSU Bulletin for university policy.

**Required Text:** None; all readings available online (links/downloads provided on Class Blog)

## **Disability Statement:**

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2724) or by email ([dprc@sfsu.edu](mailto:dprc@sfsu.edu)). (<http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc/facultyfaq.html#1>).

## BECA670 Class Schedule

**\*PLEASE NOTE: Because this course works best if we build in a lot of flexibility, this schedule is approximate and will definitely be subject to changes as the semester progresses. Please use the Class Blog as your primary source of class information, including weekly homework assignments; it will always be up to date and accurate.**

- Jan. 24** Introduction, overview of syllabus. What are "new media" and "social media"? How have democratization and decentralization changed the media landscape? How do we use new and social media (what are its functions and purposes)? How do we produce or participate in it? How can online tools be used to build community? Introduce variety of online communities and examine components, with view toward building a BECA online community over the course of the semester. Introduce Technorati and Google Reader; set up accounts.
- Jan. 31** **Blogging:** Three student presentations of online communities. Introduce Blogger, set up prototype blogs. Practice creating links and embedding images, audio and video.
- Feb. 7** **NO CLASS MEETING — However:** I will be checking work online. I will also create a "blogroll" sidebar on the Class Blog with links to all of your individual blogs.
- Feb. 14** **Blogging in Community:** Three student presentations of online communities. Introduce Feedburner, syndicate blogs. Discuss statistics, publicizing, and creating blog communities. Introduce webrings and blog carnivals.
- Feb. 21** **Collaborative Writing: Wiki** Three student presentations of online communities. Introduce wiki projects, components and markup language.
- Feb. 28** **Collaborative Writing: Wiki** Three student presentations of online communities with special attention to use of wiki.
- Mar. 6** **Collaborative/Interactive Writing: Interactive Fiction** Three student presentations of online communities with special attention to use of wiki. Introduce variety of IF projects (wiki and non-wiki based). Basic HTML for web-page creation; FTP uploading.
- Mar. 13** **Collaborative/Interactive Writing: Interactive Fiction** Three student presentations of online communities special attention to use of IF (wiki or non-wiki-based). More HTML.

**Mar. 20 Collaborative/Interactive Writing: Interactive Fiction** Three student presentations of online communities special attention to use of IF (wiki or non-wiki-based). Discussion of community-building platforms we've seen so far, advantages and disadvantages of each; class will choose a platform for creating online BECA community and brainstorm ideas for components, content, organization and structure.

**Mar. 27 NO CLASS — SPRING RECESS**

**Apr. 3 Building the BECA Community Online:** For the rest of the semester, we'll be writing content for the online community. Assignments (individual and group work) will be decided as the project grows. Guest speakers will discuss practical issues of search engine optimization, digital rights management, and "fancy" tech goodies we can use, as well as important larger issues of online privacy, bloggers' rights and freedom of speech. We will also hold at least one class in a virtual-world setting.

**Apr. 17 Building the BECA Community Online**

**Apr. 24 Building the BECA Community Online**

**May 1 Building the BECA Community Online**

**May 8 Building the BECA Community Online**

**May 15 Building the BECA Community Online** Evaluations. Farewell and good luck!