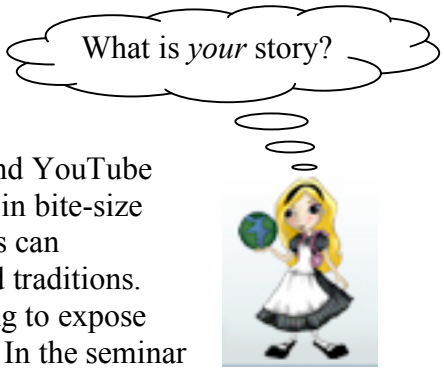
storytelling through computer animation

Mark LeBlanc SC-103 508.286.3970
mleblanc@wheatoncollege.edu Hours: MW 11:30-12:20 or appt.
http://cs.wheatoncollege.edu/mleblanc

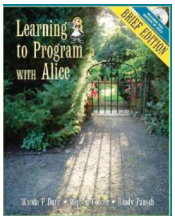
Meeting Times: Monday, Wednesday 12:30 – 1:50pm
Room 118 or csLab, Science Center



Summary
Today's technologically-rich world of cell phones, Facebook, and YouTube keeps us connected like never before. Yet, our "sharing" comes in bite-size exchanges – rarely is there time to tell *your* story. Telling stories can communicate, recreate and preserve our cultures, memories, and traditions. This course is a combination of seminar and hands-on computing to expose you to new modes of and practice with telling your own stories. In the seminar portion, the readings, your writing, and discussions will focus on graphic novels as a successful storytelling genre. In the lab, you will use a gallery of computer-animated 3D characters and virtual worlds to spark story ideas. You will learn to program social interactions between characters as a means to the end of storytelling using the programming language Alice. The software Comic Life will facilitate the construction of your tales.

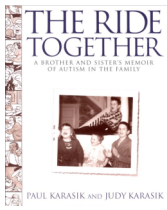
Books

Dann, W., Cooper, S., Pausch, R. (2006). Learning to Program with Alice. Prentice Hall.



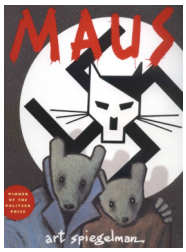
Eisner, Will (1978). A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories. DC Comics.

Karasik, Paul and Karasik, Judy (2004). The Ride Together: A Brother and Sister's Memoir of Autism in the Family. Washington Square Press.



Satrapi, Marjane (2004, 2005). Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood. *and* Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return. Pantheon.

Spiegelman, Art (1986). Maus I and II. Pantheon Books.



I recommend that you also buy a 3-ring binder.

Goals of this First Year Seminar:
This seminar is an opportunity for you to foster a new identity, that is, the identity of you as a scholar. The semester of work associated with this course includes reading, study, writing, discussion, oral presentations, and computing.

Our goals include:
(0) sharpening your skills in evaluating the graphic novel genre as a medium for storytelling
(1) increasing your confidence in asking and responding to difficult questions
(2) achieving new successes when expressing yourself in a group and or larger audience
(3) raising your confidence in writing and sharing your own stories and those of others
(4) heightening your skills in marshalling evidence, including full and complete referencing
(5) reaching a new level of computing competency.

Working on these goals is to practice the stuff of scholarship: confident presentations, digging for information, creative and professional writing, an ability to solve hard problems with computing, including writing software when what you want is not out there. Learn to do these well, practice, start over, study again, take them with you. In sports, it takes patience and hard work to make a powerful move. Likewise in scholarship, it will take patience and hard work for you to "make a powerful move."

Your Grade:

Things to do	Grading Percents	Frequency/Due
Participate in class discussions	10%	*always …*
Attend three (3) campus talks/performances/exhibits	5%	1) Karasik Lecture: Sept 24, 4-5pm 2) Johnson Lecture: Oct 2, 5:30-6:30 3) <*your choice*>
Labs	10%	in lab as needed
Alice Programming Assignments	25% overall	
a1: Intro to Alice	5%	Wed, Sept 17
a2: Interacting Characters	5%	Wed, Oct 08
a3: Conditionals and loops	5%	Mon, Oct 27
a4: Events	10%	Mon, Nov 03
3 Writing Assignments	20% overall	
w1: Timeline version 1 (v1)	5%	Wed, Sept 10
w2: Timeline version 2 (v2)	5%	Mon, Sept 29
w3: Persepolis review	10%	Mon, Nov 17
Your story	30% overall	
v1 Design	5%	Wed, Nov 05
v2 Demo/Presentation	5%	Wed, Nov 12
Final In-class Presentation	5%	Dec 01 or 03
Final Story Submission	15%	Wed, Dec 03

Late Submissions:
Due is due. Always turn in whatever you have on time. Something turned in on time is much better than not having it accepted because it is late. Late is not an option. (Good, glad we can all agree with this.)

Honor Code Revisited:
It goes without saying that all submitted work will be the student's own, in keeping with the Wheaton Honor Code, unless the assignment has assigned groups. For labs, you may get "help" from fellow classmates, but remember that all completed work must be your own. Use discretion; don't ask your colleague for "the" answer. However, I do encourage you to discuss the problem in general, such as the type of statements or functions one might use. For programming assignments, your answers and software must be your own from beginning to end. Here is an analogy. Almost no one would ever "use/steal" a line or two from another person's poem. Consider it the same with your programs. Don't "borrow/use" lines or sections of code from another classmate. Your program is (like) your poem; everyone's program should be unique. Be wise. If a colleague is asking you for too much help, be honest and remind them your program is just that, *your* program.

Tips for working on your own ....
(0) It is expected that you spend at least 2-3 hours on reading, study, and preparation for every 90 minutes of lecture and discussion.
(1) It is expected that you spend at least 4-8 hours per week on your current programming assignment. WARNING: Programmers typically underestimate the time it takes to complete a software project; 4-8 hours per week on your programming assignment may be one of those "underestimations."

In classroom "LABS"
(0) The computer work in class (labs) are a critical part of the course. In a way, it is your time to "hack", solve unique problems, and show that you can work hard on the problem at hand. Your labs will prepare you to work on your next programming project. You must be in lab to get credit for the session. If you happen to miss a lab, you are strongly encouraged to do it on your own time, but please do not ask for credit.
(1) In order to best grasp the material presented in the lab, I strongly suggest that you completely redo any labs that you find difficult. (Read that last sentence again, unless of course you've already reread it once.)

HELP

Please don't wait too long before you see me;
a quick chat in my office can often clear things up.
I'm here often ...

Day Timah

Wed Aug 27

"hello FYS"
review of syllabus and Bb site
Part I: A historical timeline of "comics" -- Hieroglyphics to …

2do: Read (two items):

(i) Eisner's A Contract with God *(read all 4 short stories by next Wed)*

(ii) Weiner, Stephen, "The Graphic Novel: Comics Take Themselves Seriously." In Faster than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel, pp. 17-20. New York: NBM, 2003. Reproduced in Contemporary Literary Criticism-Select.

Mon Sept 01
Labor Day – no class

Wed Sept 03

Discuss Eisner's A Contract with God
Part II: A historical timeline of "comics"

2do: w1 -- Research an item, author, or section on the historical timeline of comics; version #1 (v1) of a 2-4 page paper due Wed, Sept 10

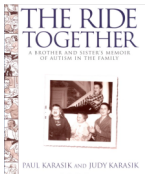
Mon Sept 08

Lab: "20+ things you need to know how to do in MS Word"
Due: w1 will be due on Wed Sept 10

Wed Sept 10

Reference Librarian (and graphic novel guru) Mason Brown discusses and demos online library tools for literary criticism of graphic novels and shares some of his "favs" from his personal collection

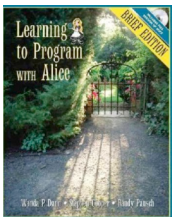
w1 Due: version #1 of your timeline paper



2do: Begin reading Paul and Judy Karasik's The Ride Together *(read Part One and Two by Mon Sept 15)*

Mon Sept 15

Lab: Introduction to "Alice"



2do: Install Alice on your own computer.
2do: Read Alice text: Foreward, Preface, and Ch1 p1-16.
2do: Complete a1: #4 or #5 p17 – Due Wed Sept 17.

2do: Finish Paul and Judy Karasik's The Ride Together *(for Wed discussion)*
2do: Come to Wed class with at least two questions about the reading you'd like to ask Paul.
These should be typed in.

Optional event: 3:30pm, A102 Science Center
Wheaton computer science alum Ken Aspeslagh '00 and co-founder of the company ecamm network (http://ecamm.com) will lead a hands-on workshop on programming for the Mac and iPhone using Apple's Xcode programming environment and the Objective-C language.

Wed Sept 17

Discussion: Paul and Judy Karasik's The Ride Together

Due: Alice a1: #4 or #5, p17.
Due: Questions to ask Paul.

2do: Begin w2-research for version #2 of your timeline paper using new literary criticism resources Mason showed us -- w2 due on Mon Sept 29.

2do: Read Alice p16-25 -- Storyboarding

2do: Refine a set of questions to ask Paul in preparation of his visit Sept 24th (due Mon, Sept 22)

2do: Read "Paul Karasik", in *Contemporary Authors Online*. (A profile of the author's life and works) -- Also see links to other interviews on Bb webpage (see Websites button).

Mon Sept 22

Due: Two questions for Paul Karasik

Lab: Alice – Section 2.2 – Working with the "`Chap02-03-04FirstEncounter.a2w`" world

2do: Read Alice p26-38, Repeat the lab at home
Read Alice p40-42 (The *vehicle* property): Can your chicken ride a horse?

Wed Sept 24


Paul Karasik

12:30 May Room, Mary Lyon – Paul Karasik visit

Special Event
4:00 - 5:00 May Room, Mary Lyon – Paul Karasik lecture:
"The Language of Comics"

Mon Sept 29

Cecile Danehy (French) visits to discuss foreign graphic novels and her favs …

w2 Due: version 2 of your timeline paper.

Wed Oct 01

Lab: Alice – Exercises 2.2 -- #3 then #4

2do: Read Maus: A Survivor's Tale (Book 1) by Art Spiegelman for Mon, Oct 06

2do: a2 Alice – Modify today's lab. Create a world with interacting characters. Try to use as many of the features of Alice that you have learned so far.
a2 Due: Wed Oct 08.

Thur, Oct 02

5:30pm
Special Event: Norman W. Johnson Lecture Series.
Norman W. Johnson, Wheaton Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and the honoree of this lecture series, will deliver this year's address entitled "Symmetry." You can read more about Norman at his wikipedia site (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Johnson_%28mathematician%29)

Hindle Auditorium, Science Center
5:30 – 6:30pm

Mon Oct 06

Discuss Maus (Book 1)

2do: Read (two items):

(i) Spiegelman's Maus: And Here My Troubles Began (Book 2)

(ii) Wilner, Arlene Fish, "'Happy, Happy Ever After': Story and History in Art Spiegelman's Maus." Journal of Narrative Technique 27, no. 2 (spring 1997): 171-89. Reproduced in Contemporary Literary Criticism-Select.

Wed Oct 08

Discuss Maus (Book 2)

a2 Due – Alice world of interacting characters.

Mon Oct 13
Fall Break :)

Wed Oct 15

Lab: Alice – Programming for real …
- built-in functions for objects
- simple control structures

2do: Read Alice p49 – 59, bottom of 62-65
2do: Complete Exercise #1 in 3-1 on p66 for class on Mon Oct 20

Mon Oct 20

Lab: Alice – Repetition with a loop

2do: Read Alice p61-62, 68

2do: a3 due Mon Oct 27 – Complete Exercise #7 (Snowman to Stool) on p67.

Wed Oct 22

Creating Comics: Genres, themes, characters …

Lab: Introduction to Comic Life

Mon Oct 27

Due: a3 "Snowman to Stool" exercise

Creating Comics: More genres, themes, characters …

Lab: Alice – Interaction: Events and Event Handling
Lab: Working on *your* story …

2do: Read Alice p91 – 97
2do: a4 due Mon Nov 03 – Choose between Exercise #5 (Ninja Motion), #6 (Cheshire Cat), #7 (Turtle Motion Control), or create your own exercise that uses Alice events and user-defined methods for your objects

2do: Brainstorm on *your* story …

Wed Oct 29

Planning the panels, time frames, gutters …
Lab: Working on *your* story …

2do: v1 of your design, including theme, characters, panel layout due on Wed Nov 05
2do: Read (two items):

(i) Satrapi's Persepolis (Book 1) for Wed, Nov 05
and
(ii) Frames and mirrors in Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis.(Critical essay) symploke Jan 1, 2007.

Due: a4 due on Mon Nov 03

Mon Nov 03

Due: a4 Event-driven world

Due this Wed: v1 of your design of *your* story, including theme, characters, panel layout started (due Wed Nov 5)

Sharing *your* (work in progress) story ideas to the rest of the class

---

Wed Nov 05

Due: v1 of your design, including theme, characters, panel layout started

Discuss Persepolis (Book 1).

2do: Begin v2 of *your* story … (due Wed Nov 12)

2do: Read
Satrapi's Persepolis (Book 2) for Mon, Nov 10

Listen to:
Highly Acclaimed 'Persepolis' Denounced by Iran by Kim Masters, *All Things Considered,* (National Public Radio), November 8, 2007.

http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16126274

Mon Nov 10

Discuss Persepolis (Book 2).

Demo/presentation of *your* story to the rest of the class

2do: w3 -- Write a 3-4-page review of Persepolis (due Mon Nov 17)

Wed Nov 12

Due: v2 of your story – take turns presenting

Mon Nov 17

w3 Due: Your review of Persepolis.

Lab: work on *your* story …

Wed Nov 19

Lab: work on *your* story …

Mon Nov 24

Lab: work on *your* story …

Wed Nov 26

Thanksgiving Break. 

Mon Dec 01

Final presentation of *your* story

Wed Dec 03

Final presentation of *your* story

Due: Final copy of *your* story

Evaluations