SCHOOL OF ART
BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS

SESSION 1 2001
STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

LANGUAGES OF DIGITAL MEDIA
SART1600

LAURA JORDAN

CLASS CODE:	10684	10289	10288	8782	8781,	
DAY & TIME:	Mon 7-8 (tut)	Wed 9-10 (lec)	10-11	11-12	12-1	(tuts)
LOCATION:	F106	E101	B107	B107	B107	

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Digital media create and communicate experience in ways which are both specific to the media and embedded in broader cultural, historical and political contexts. Digital media practice employs technical problem-solving skills and logical thought to generate content which is conceptually and aesthetically resolved and culturally meaningful. In this subject, the analogy between digital media language and spoken and written language highlights the semantics and structures of computer languages. Distinguished from 'everyday' languages by their use of formal logics and mathematics, computer programmming languages are based on logical, abstract and systematic thought. Also explored are other aspects of digital media which are central to 'reading' screen images and text: these include concepts of navigation and non-linear organisation, issues of keystroke function, game structure, resolution and frame rate. This subject deals with the development of computer programming languages and the broader contexts within which those languages are deployed to make culturally meaningful communication.

COURSE CONTENT:

Advice to Students regarding workplace safety and hazardous substances

Students should be aware of the requirement to avoid eyestrain, back, neck and repetitive strain injury (rsi) through correct posture, chair positioning and taking a break at least once every hour. Students using, or planning to use, unorthodox materials in their class work are required to complete a Risk Assessment Sheet. This form must be signed by the lecturer and lodged with the Technical Assistant. Unorthodox materials are considered to be materials, solvents, chemicals and paints not covered by standard practice or tuition within the area.

COURSE AIMS/OBJECTIVES:

To show an understanding of both the histories and developments surrounding digital media and how to communicate effectively in this environment. To have basic knowledge of language structures (syntax etc.) and types of language.

ASSESSMENT:

To qualify for a passing grade all students must complete all set work, which is to be submitted on time. Where absences in excess of three (3) classes occur, students may be given a fail grade (UF).

Students must be punctual and participate in all class activities. The student should be expected to show evidence of the achievement of the course's objectives.

One formal evaluation of Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory will be made mid-session and students will be informed by their class lecturer of this determination.

COURSE SCHEDULE *(over weekly break-up)*

Week 1 INTRODUCTION
What is a language? What are the languages of digital media?
Natural vs markup languages
What is a 'natural' language?
Spoken language and the language of music.
Looking at syntax.
Looking at sets and Venn diagrams. Pythagoras.
What is a 'markup' language?

Week 2 HISTORY OF COMPUTING PT1
Excursion to the Powerhouse Museum to see the "Universal Machine" show.

Week 3 HISTORY OF COMPUTING PT2
Looking at the pioneers of computer invention.
Charles Babbage.
Alan Kay.
Doug Engelbart etc.

Week 4 BEGINNINGS OF A NEW LANGUAGE
Why we got to wanting a programming language.
Analogue vs digital.
Looking at the history of programming:
Ada Lovelace.
Amazing Grace.

Week 5 HISTORY OF MODERN COMPUTER LANGUAGES
From BASIC to UNIX to current languages.
Example language: JAVA, JAVASCRIPT and/or ACTIONSCRIPT
-Looking at it's structure and syntax.
ASSESSMENT DUE

Week 6 ARTIFICIAL LIFE AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
From Turing to the present.
Artists that have used principals of AL and AI in their work.

Week 7 WHAT ABOUT COMMUNICATION?
IN CLASS ASSESSMENT
Looking at examples of work (written, digitally based, visual etc) that are good / bad / alternative or in some way unique in their method of communicating.

Week 8 NETWORKS AND PROTOCOLS
What are they?
Where does the idea come from?
What do they mean for us?
The history of the internet.
Markup languages
How do markup languages work?
Looking at HTML and it's integration with JAVASCRIPT.
What is XML, DHTML, ASP, SQL and other web languages.

Week 9 HYPERTEXT
Non-linear language systems.
The history of hypertext.
Looking at Vanevar Bush, Ted Nelson.
William Burroughs.
The advent of cinema.

Week 10 STRATEGIES AGAINST ARCHITECTURE
Why is the concept of navigation so important?
What is usability?
What impact does user-driven experience have on us as storytellers / deliverers of information / designers / artists?
What traditional writing tools can we use?
How do we develop digital media to make sense to the user?
Why is it different to more traditional ways of storytelling?
What options are out there?

Week 11 LANGUAGE IS A VIRUS
The impact of language on cuture. How are we effected by the language around us?
How has digital media effected other languages?

Week 12 OTHER EXPERIMENTS IN MEANING
Looking at what the user-driven interactive structures can offer.
Different ways that the language of understanding of digital media has been approached.

Week 13 COMMUNITIES
The communities of the electronic age.
ESSAYS DUE
FEEDBACK

Week 14 CREATIVELY SPEAKING
Looking at artists and designers who use digital media in interesting ways.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT TASKS:

Assessment 1:

30% In-class assessment Due week 7
To bring in one example of work (written, digitally based, visual etc) that is good / bad / alternative or in some way unique in their method of communicating. To be able to explain this example in terms of why it was chosen and what can be learnt from it. Discussion.

60% Essay Due week 13
2000 word essay on subject to be confirmed week 3.

10% Class Participation and Involvement in group activities Continual