

# INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Instructor: Andy Deck

M,W 4:30 - 7:20pm, Sept. 9th-Dec. 18th, 2009

Class homepage: <http://artcontext.net/edu/hartford/interactive>

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## Course Description:

This course offers both an overview of contemporary practices and technologies involved in interactive media, and a hands-on introduction to producing it yourself. You will explore ways to combine text, images, sound, and video in digital formats. Your studies will culminate in a self-selected project that will be evaluated on its technical and artistic merits in group critique. Lectures and research into the historical evolution of networked media, interfaces, and interactivity, as well as related social consequences, will complement your technical and experimental work in this course, and will help us to understand the role of technology in 21st century culture.

The Processing language will be used to introduce general principles of interactive content development. Processing is ideally suited to visual learners and people with little or no graphics programming experience. It also serves as an excellent foundation for subsequent work with technologies like Flash's Actionscript. Processing is useful for handling everything from font design to video collage, interactivity, and even device control. In just a few months it's difficult to master a new language, but you may be surprised at how much you can do with Processing in this course.

The technical lectures for the class will start with the basics of programming, such as types of variables, logical flow and functions. This knowledge will then be applied to making images that leverage code and algorithms. Later lectures will address best practices for software design, user interface design, object oriented programming, and application development.

As this class takes place in an art curriculum, it is expected that you apply programming in Processing to imaginative and artistic ends. The textbook introduces the work of a variety of contemporary artists who are using computers in their work. Some class time will be devoted to examining these and other artists who produce interactive media today.

This course explores the relationship between media, specifically interactive media, and human perception and behavior. Interactive media shapes these relationships. We are pioneers: artists, composers, experimentalists. Our challenge is to separate ourselves from what we already know – what is common and accepted – and to imagine great alternatives. The evolution of technology over the past century has been staggering, yet even with the maturation of tools and techniques, there are still countless avenues of form and expression in new media yet to be explored.

## Required Text:

Processing by Casey Reas and Ben Fry

The MIT Press

ISBN-0-262-18262-9

## Class Objectives:

- practice and develop skills in working with interactive media
- learn general graphics programming concepts
- learn about artists, issues, and history relevant to this field of creativity

Grading will be based on the following:

- Class participation (5%)

Attendance is mandatory. Repeated absences or lateness will result in grade reduction and/or failure.

- 1st assignment (10%)

Use processing to produce an image. Adapt code examples from the book to generate an image from a series of coded instructions. We will look at each of them at the beginning of class on the 14th.

- 2nd assignment (15%)

Use processing to produce a dynamic image that leverages reusable function(s) and the random number generator. Your interpretation could incorporate mouse input. We will look at each of them at the beginning of class on Sept. 23rd.

- 3rd assignment (30%)

This assignment has three parts. For part one, make a graphical representation of an interface using the medium of your choice (Photoshop, Illustrator, pencils, pens, etc.). We will discuss the concept of interface in class, and we will find relevant readings to complement our work, such as Stephen Johnson's book, titled *Interface*. You are expected to conceive of an interface that can be produced with Processing. Secondly, you will produce a flow chart of the logic behind the design. This can be thought of as information architecture. You are expected to produce the blue print of your interface concept. The final step is implementation. You will build the interface using Processing. You may elect to approach this final part as a proof of concept presentation rather than implementing all the details.

- 4th assignment (20%)

Research an artist who has made some interactive media art that you like. Compare two or three of this artist's works with comparable non-interactive works by other artists who use(d) more traditional media. 10 pages. This essay will be judged on the quality of your research, the originality of your analysis, and the clarity of your arguments and writing.

- 5th assignment (20%)

This final project is mostly open ended. You are encouraged to engage ideas and technical skills that you have developed during this course. Your work will be evaluated in an open final critique.