ComposingDigital Media

|| **ENGCMP 0610**   **Spring 2015, T 6-8:30**   **435 CL**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION.   This is a fast-paced class designed to offer a **hands-on** introduction to *theories, tools,* and *practices* relevant to **digital** story making.

Each of you will produce an individual website from scratch (using CSS3 and HTML5). You'll compose technical tutorials and other texts intended for online sharing, and you'll conjure up creative works that partake of both experimental and documentary modes. You will also contribute to a collaborative, place-based storytelling project.

These projects will be grounded to class-wide theoretical conversations about participatory and non-linear narratives. We'll examine some of the ways technology shapes **possibility**. We'll pay heed to the social lives of software, hardware, user practices, and artistic artifacts. We'll talk about audience, credibility, responsibility, mythical objects, world-building, type, color, animation, maps, word-image relations, designing for emotional impact, reuse, adaptation, social and locative media – and who knows what else.

W CREDIT.

As a writing intensive class meant to help you work on the mechanics of revision, this class entails serious public engagement with the processes of creation and re-creation. You'll be expected to share your work and comment on the work of others – both in class and outside of class. Workshops and discussions will take up a significant portion of our in-class time. I hope there will be a lot of respectful disagreements and a lot of thoughtful observations about how others have chosen to put things together. **We'll have to see how it goes.**

Cosmic Butterfly
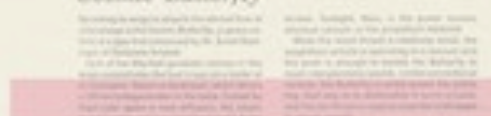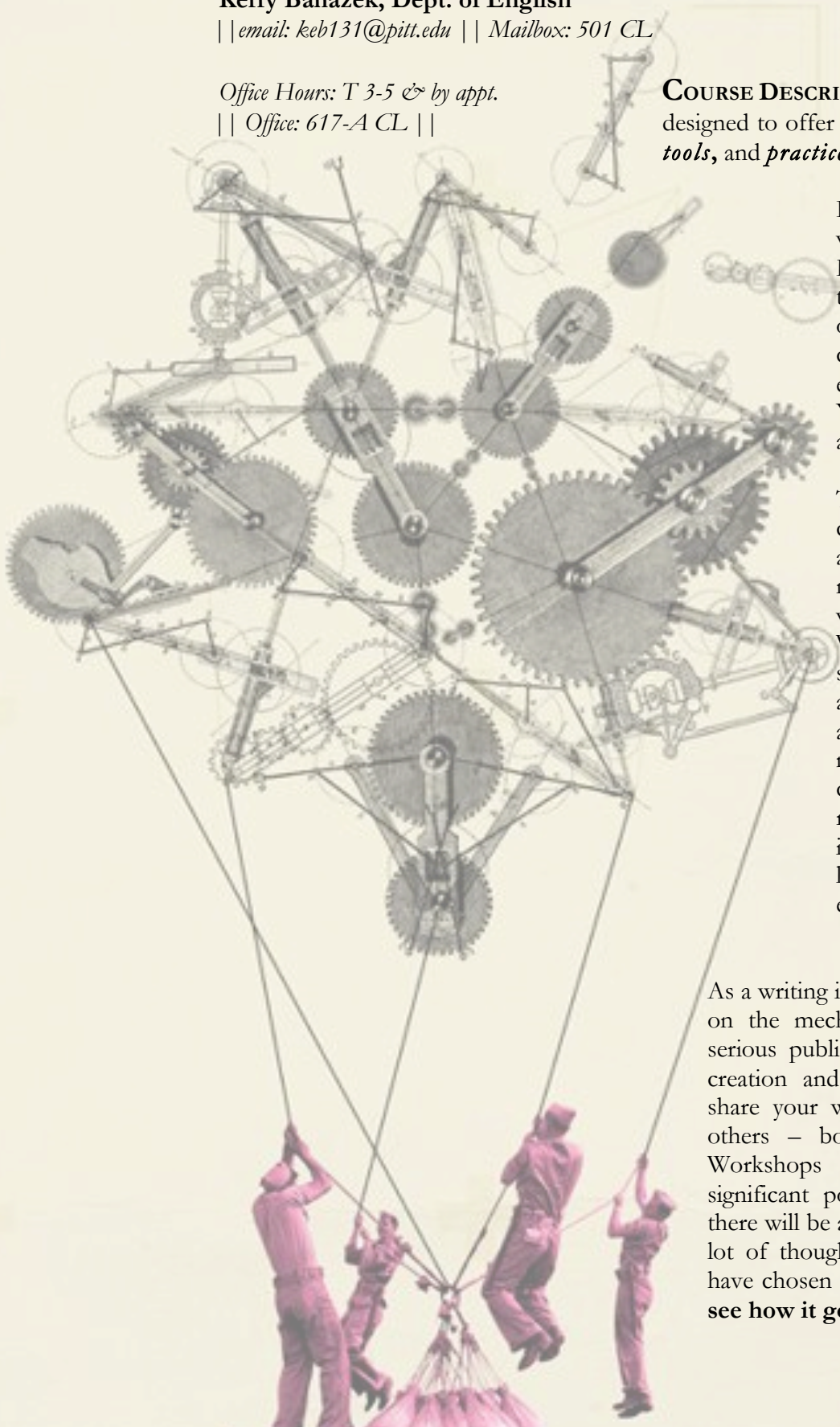
CLASS WEBSITE (CHECK HERE FOR UPDATES AND LINKS). *http://www.kebanazek.com/cdm2015*

GRADING BREAKDOWN.

Participation, including In-class Writing, Example Posts and Comments on the Blog – 25 points
Presentations and Design Tutorials on the Blog – 25 points

First Collection of Design Experiments, including five Mythical Collages – 25 points
Second Collection of Experiments, including Website Soft Launch/Design Plan – 30 points

Audio Project Portfolios – 25 points
Kinetic Typography Project Portfolios – 20 points

Final Review of Group Storytelling Projects – 25 points
Final Website Projects, including Presentations, Revisions, and Reflections – 25 points

Total available points: 200

As long as the original was submitted on time, **you may choose to re-submit one project during the term for re-grading**---you must email me within two days of receiving feedback to request a resubmission; I will give you a new due date. This policy is meant to encourage experimentation.

Final grades will be assigned based on the following scale (given your final point total divided by 2):

A	*= 92 – 100 points*	All projects exceed expectations,
A-	*= 90 – 92 points*	they are carefully edited and take risks that work.
B+	*= 88 – 89 points*	
B	*= 83 – 87 points*	All projects meet or exceed expectation,
B-	*= 80 – 82 points*	they take risks that may not always work out.
C+	*= 78 – 79 points*	
C	*= 73 – 77 points*	All projects meet basic expectations, some work
C-	*= 70 – 72 points*	may fail to take risks or need more careful editing.
D	*= 60 – 69 points*	
F	*= below 60 points*	Expectations not met. Work is incomplete or careless.

PARTICIPATION. In short, participation means sharing your knowledge and insights in whatever form is appropriate. Those of you who are quieter will be glad to note that listening and reading are just as important as speaking and writing in relation to this portion of your grade. Everyone should note that--- in the context of this course---participation includes coming to class and conferences prepared and on time, taking part in class discussions, draft workshops, and other activities. It includes asking questions. It also includes doing the required reading and composing/drafting for each class and doing it well.

COURSE TEXTS. The majority of our readings will be made available to you online. We will be using the following two books in their entirety, so I encourage you to purchase them:

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities.* Trans. William Weaver. NY: Harcourt, 1978.
Oliu, Brian. *So You Know It's Me.* Charleston, IL: Tiny Hardcore Books, 2011.

Each of you should have a **flash drive** and a **blank** (or gridded; 5x7 or larger) sketching **notebook** that is dedicated solely to this class.

ADOBE SOFTWARE is available on a variety of lab computers. However, **you are encouraged to purchase a subscription to the Creative Cloud.** This will give you working flexibility outside class/TA hours. In addition to the free audio editing software Audacity, we will use Photoshop, Dreamweaver, and After Effects in class. You may find you want access to their other audio and video editing software for final projects.

LATE/MISSING WORK. The highest grade you are eligible to receive on any given assignment drops a full letter grade for each day the assignment is late. If you expect to have trouble meeting a deadline, talk to me before the assignment is due. **Deadlines are not negotiable after you have missed them.**

ATTENDANCE. Attendance is mandatory. This policy is not all about you. Because this is a small, discussion- and workshop-based class your classmates' experiences are directly impacted by whether or not you show up prepared. Come to class on time, ready to ask questions and take part in conversation. **If you arrive significantly after class has begun or if you arrive without drafting materials on a workshop day or if you're clearly texting/socializing online during class, you will be counted as absent.**

If you do miss a class, you must arrange for the day's assignments to be submitted on time. **Because this class only meets once a week, having more than ONE absence is grounds for automatic failure.** That said, I understand that we're all human beings with lives that go on outside the classroom, and I'm a pretty reasonable person---if you expect to get into trouble with this policy, once again, please talk to me **before** there's an issue, not after.

COMMUNICATION: OFFICE HOURS/EMAIL. Office hours provide us with an opportunity to talk one on one. Mine are Tuesdays 3-5pm; my office is 617-A (this is on the left side of the main 617 suite). You may drop in during this time at any point in the semester to ask questions or to talk about your progress in the course. I weirdly enjoy talking about what you think of readings, assignments, and the way class is running, and I am always happy to offer individualized tech support or advice on projects. However, initiating these types of conversations is your responsibility---not mine.

I am also available by appointment, in case my office hours aren't compatible with your schedule, and I am happy to answer questions via email. You can assume that I will check my email at least once a day most weekdays, but you should not assume that I will always be able to reply instantly (especially if your message reaches my inbox at 2AM the night before an assignment is due).

TECHNOLOGY ETIQUETTE. I expect that you'll shut off your phone's ringer and that you won't text during class---this is part of you having respect for your classmates (which is a thing I care about a lot). When we're in the lab, I expect that you'll **only** be logged onto a computer if our work together necessitates it. When we're elsewhere, the same goes for your laptop. In my experience, your active, conversational engagement in class is worth a lot more than taking down the perfect set of notes.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows: "plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source." We'll talk about how to handle other people's creations responsibly, but it is important to note now that images don't often come "from Google" and that changing a few words or lines in a quotation does not constitute avoiding plagiarism. All instances of plagiarism will result in an automatic 0 on the assignment and a report to the Dean.

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ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE/RESOURCES

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TA HOURS. Once this semester gets going, the English department will hire a student with significant media production experience as a TA/lab monitor. He/she will keep our studio space open for you during non-class hours and be available to help you troubleshoot. I'll let you know about the details.

THE WRITING CENTER. Located in 317-B Student Center, 4024 O'Hara St., the Writing Center is a resource that allows you to work on your writing with an experienced writing consultant. While WC consultants are not necessarily familiar with the media production tools we're using or all of the modes that we're composing in, you will produce bits of text as part of many projects, and those need to be well composed. Consultants can provide fresh eyes, help thinking about the structure of stories or persuasive moves, and invention help. They can work with you on a one-time basis, or they can work with you throughout the term. Their services are free, but you should call ahead (412-624-6556) or make an appointment online at www.writingcenter.pitt.edu/

OTHER SERVICES. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both me (your instructor) and the **Office of Disability Resources and Services** (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, 412-228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Pitt offers free personal and academic counseling at the **University Counseling Center** (412-648-7930). Specialized counseling services are available to victims of sexual assault; you can contact the **sexual assault services** coordinator via the main UCC phone line during weekday business hours or at 412-648-7856 (after 5 pm, Monday-Friday or on weekends). In a crisis situation, university police can also connect you with an on-call counselor affiliated with the UCC.

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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE / MAJOR DUE DATES
(subject to change – please check the class website regularly for updated schedule)

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WEEK 1 — INTRODUCTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS/COMBINATIONS AND LINES OF SIGHT
JANUARY 6 – In-class examples of collage work. A gentle introduction to Photoshop. Tech skills survey.

WEEK 2 — COLORS AND COLLECTIONS/CIRCULATIONS AND RE-CREATIONS
    Everyone Posts – One collage and a description of an obscure feeling (paired with a color and a font) to the blog by 5pm Monday Jan. 12
JANUARY 13 – TALK ABOUT ACTS OF DESCRIBING, COLLECTING, RE-TELLING. IN-CLASS TRANSLATIONS.
    Teach Yourself – One Photoshop trick and be ready to teach it to others (make some notes).
    Create – A second, more polished collage. A folder full of assets for sharing and later use; include at least five original (unedited) photographs taken near Pittsburgh.
    Read – Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, sections 1-5.
    Come with – Notebook sketches of three cities.
    Select two cities – re-read them and annotate closely in whatever style you like/normally use.
        Then: **chose a word/concept to highlight** in Calvino (Tinker Creek Style) and create relevant **visual annotations for three cities**.
    Check out – Some Adobe PS tutorials/resources:
        http://helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/tools.html
        http://tv.adobe.com/show/learn-photoshop-cs6/

What Color is It? – http://whatcolourisit.scn9a.org
100 free fonts for 2014 – http://www.awwwards.com/the-100-greatest-free-fonts-for-2014.html
This article on visual annotations – http://numerocinqmagazine.com/2013/03/08/a-visual-approach-to-syntactical-and-image-patterns-in-annie-dillards-pilgrim-at-tinker-creek-essay-images-anna-maria-johnson/

WEEK 3 — DESIGN AND WORLD-MAKING
Group A Posts – A tutorial that walks us through a Photoshop trick. Due <u>5pm Sunday.</u>
Group B Responds – By trying out a trick/adapting a tutorial to your own aesthetics, posting the results, and providing notes on any necessary troubleshooting you did. Due <u>5pm Tuesday.</u>
JANUARY 20 – CASE STUDIES: CALVINO CONT'D/DESIGN AND PORTFOLIO WEB SITES
Read – The rest of Calvino (sections 6-9). Come ready to talk about how the two main characters are developed and two favorite individual sentences. **Create** at least one new city sketch **and digitize** it (scan or photograph before class). **Extend** your visual annotations (mark up at least two new passages – cities or italic sections) **and digitize** three to five marked pages.
Explore – The website for the Invisible Cities Opera – http://www.invisiblecitiesopera.com
Watch – Trailer for the series Marco Polo – http://www.ign.com/articles/2014/11/17/marco-polo-watch-the-full-trailer-for-the-new-netflix-series
Come with – A picture of an interesting sign (or piece of graffiti) that you've encountered in or near Pittsburgh. A Calvino-esque description that takes an aspect of your Pittsburgh as its basis.

[First Suite of Ten Mythical Objects and/or Design Experiments]
Due for grading (with debrief) by end-of-day Friday

WEEK 4 — GETTING STARTED WITH MARKUP/FORMATION OF STORYTELLING GROUPS
Group B Posts – One example of a personal(ish) portfolio website with an unusual but compelling design OR an online story that makes a world AND a 400-500 word description of the components/features that make this website "work." Due <u>5pm Sunday (January 18)</u>.
Group A Responds – By commenting in a thoughtful way on two posts. Due <u>5pm Tuesday</u>.
JANUARY 27 – CASE STUDIES: WHERE YOU ARE (VISUAL EDS) & BUILDING STORIES (CHRIS WARE)
Read – Oliu *So You Know It's Me*
Choose – one city's Craigslist to explore in detail. Read the missed connections, but also check out what's for sale, what rental agreements look like there, etc. Spend at least an hour exploring and take notes (and/or screenshots) as you go.
Learn – One odd story that's part of our local history.
Check out – (If time is limited, focus on exploring the first three.)
    Mr. Plimpton's Revenge (Dinty Moore) - http://dintywmoore.com/essays/
    Welcome to Pine Point (Simons and Shoebridge) - http://pinepoint.nfb.ca/#/pinepoint
    @A_single_bear on Twitter and as very basic choose-your-own adventure - http://asinglebear.wordpress.com/2014/07/07/you-are-a-bear/
    Bear 71 - http://bear71.nfb.ca/#/bear71
    Ground Zero - http://chooseyourstory.com/story/ground-zero
    Lost (Carrie Hall) - http://carriehall.org/lost/
    Vanishing Point (Ander Monson) - http://otherelectricities.com/vp/index.html

WEEK 5 — IN-CLASS GROUP STORY BUILDING/MORE HANDS-ON WEB DESIGN
FEBRUARY 3 – INDIVIDUAL WEBSITE WORKSHOP AND GROUP BRAINSTORMING TIME
Read – excerpt from *New Narratives: Stories and Storytelling in the Digital Age* (p. 19-61)
Come having – filled out and neatened up the index.html file you created last class. Chose/write some textual content for your site. Makes sure it is at hand during class.

Sketch – at least two potential website layouts. As makes sense to you, try to note things like relative widths (percentages), maximum or minimum widths (if these apply), whether you want things to float, etc. List different pages you'll want have. Note existing inspirational sites.

Select – a color scheme (put the hexcodes in your notebook) and one, two, or three fonts you want to feature on your website. Download the font files into your assets folder. Choose/make some media you want to feature on your website; you should have at least one custom graphic (for example, a logo or banner) edited/created in Photoshop or Illustrator. Put these files in your assets folder too.

Check out – At least one feature from http://studio.html5rocks.com/
      As useful, Dreamweaver tutorials – http://tv.adobe.com/show/learn-dreamweaver-cs5
      and the W3 schools on HTML/CSS – http://www.w3schools.com/

Start Thinking – About some local people worth interviewing re: a question that plagues you.

WEEK 6 — SOUND, SILENCE, STORYTELLING FOR THE EAR.
    Group B Posts – A tutorial that walks us through a web design trick. Due 5pm Sunday.
    Group A Responds – By trying out a trick/adapting a tutorial to your own aesthetics, posting the results, and providing notes on any necessary troubleshooting you did. Due 5pm Tuesday.
FEBRUARY 10 – BEGIN TALKING ABOUT AUDIO COLLECTIONS, GROUP PROJECT STUDIO TIME
    Listen to – Sonic IDs on Transom - http://transom.org/2013/sonic-ids/
      (video) http://transom.org/2014/this-is-radio-glynn-washington/
      Making Radiolab - http://www.radiolab.org/story/91746-making-radio-lab/
    Collect – Three sonic IDs of your own.
    Check out – http://www.mayalin.com/ and http://savethesounds.info/
      Audacity resources (packet to be distributed in class) and links from
        http://www.jtoolkit.com/wp/audio-resources/
      Interview resources: http://www.soundportraits.org/education/how_to_record/
        http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/%7Esponder/j641/Interview.htm
      Writing for The Ear: John Bresland - http://bresland.com/brevity
        http://courses.washington.edu/c300/2006s/resources_writing_for_the_ear.html

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[Soft Launch of Individual Website (with at least three pages, thoughtful style)]
Due for grading (with debrief) by end-of-day Friday

WEEK 7 — ARRANGING AND MANIPULATING DIGITAL AUDIO. IMAGINING AUDIENCES.
FEBRUARY 17 – PRESENTATIONS AND PLACE/SOUND.
    Listen to – *Radiolab* "An Ice Cold Case" – http://www.radiolab.org/story/ice-cold-case/
      plus "The Iceman Speaks" – http://www.radiolab.org/story/iceman-speaks/
      and an episode of *This American Life,* either "Hot in My Backyard"
      (http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/495/hot-in-my-backyard) or
      "Running After Antelope" (http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/
      80/running-after-antelope)
    Watch – Ira Glass on Storytelling (4 parts) – http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loxJ3FtCJJA
    Collect – A recording of yourself reading something scripted (approx. 3-5 minutes) and some
      relevant soundscape bits.
    Check out – Sound libraries (i.e. http://www.pdsounds.org/ and https://www.freesound.org/)
    Continue – Collecting local sounds that might be useful to you or your classmates.
    Come with – *Raw audio files in usable/sharable format.* Headphones. An object that can be used to make a weird noise.
    Have – A time/place commitment from someone willing to be interviewed.

WEEK 8 — AUDIO EDITING STUDIO TIME
  Group A Posts – A tutorial that introduces a sound design tool/trick/tip. Due <u>5pm Sunday.</u>
  Group B Responds – By trying something out, posting the results and notes on any necessary troubleshooting. Due <u>5pm Tuesday.</u>
FEBRUARY 24 – IN-CLASS STUDIO TIME SPLIT BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AUDIO AND GROUP WORK
  Listen to – http://www.onthemedia.org/story/129437-pulling-back-the-curtain/
    this sonic topography – https://soundcloud.com/bldgblog/radar-echoes-on-titan
    and these related clips – http://www.esa.int/Our_Activities/Space_Science/Cassini-Huygens/ Sounds_of_an_alien_world
  Collect – A recording of One "formal" interview (approx. 5 to 10 minutes)
  Come with – *<u>Raw audio files in usable/sharable format.</u>* Headphones.

[Soft Launch of Group Website and Group Blog Post Detailing Future Plans/Dreams]
  Due for grading by end-of-day Friday

WEEK 9 — REQUIRED INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES
MARCH 3 –PRESENTATIONS AND PRELIMINARY PLANNING FOR FINAL PROJECTS
  Come with – A complete rough cut of your audio experiment, uploaded to Soundcloud and ready to share with the full class.
  For Your Conference: Come with – All your work on a flash drive, including a suite of five to ten compositions converted to standard file types and organized in a gallery or folder that makes viewing them easy. Plus a two-page, typed reflection on the class thus far and your goals going forward.

[Second Suite of Ten Mythical Objects and/or Design Experiments]
  Due for grading (with debrief) by end-of-day Friday

SPRING BREAK — MARCH 9-13
  Everyone Posts – A detailed behind-the-scenes look at something for your group's storytelling project. Include technical details (hows) and discuss choices you're making (whys). You may collaborate on this post with one other person from your group. Due <u>5pm Sunday, March 8.</u>
  Everyone Responds – With care to one post about another group's project. Due <u>5pm Sunday, March 15.</u>

[Audio Project Portfolios]
  Due for grading (with debrief) by end-of-day Friday

WEEK 10 — POETICS OF SPACE: WORDS AS MOVING IMAGES.
MARCH 17 – INTRODUCTION TO KINETIC TYPOGRAPHY AND VERY BASIC ANIMATION
  Read – Selection of contemporary poems (to be distributed).
  Come with – Pictures of pages from any three books that you know well or find intriguing.
  Watch – Some kinetic typography work based on Ken Nordine's *Colors*, including:
    Green – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIrCizE_678
    Green (again) – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhscsg5UQHk
    Blue – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxgZ64O6StQ
    Beige – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aXrZQBAk3I
  Six of the examples linked from *Inspiration! 12 Awesome Typography Videos* –
    http://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/typography-video-roundup/
  ** and this tutorial – http://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/kinetic-typography-tutorial/

After watching this tutorial – choose or create a minute of audio that you want to create an animation for during our in-class studio time. You may want to create a Photoshop or Illustrator file with individual words/phrases laid out in separate layers to work from.

You may also want to watch some tutorials in this series before, after, or during class –
http://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/adobe-after-effects-fundamentals-lesson-1/
http://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/adobe-after-effects-fundamentals-lesson-4/

WEEK 11 — WORDS AND MOVEMENT, CONTINUED.
Group A Posts – A tutorial that walks us through an After Effects trick. Due <u>5pm Sunday.</u>
Group B Responds – By trying out a trick/adapting a tutorial to your own aesthetics, posting the results, and providing notes on any necessary troubleshooting you did. Due <u>5pm Tuesday.</u>
MARCH 24 – CONTINUE WORKING WITH POETICS AND KINETIC TYPOPGRAPHY. OPEN STUDIO TIME.
Check out – (as useful to you) https://helpx.adobe.com/after-effects/tutorials.html
Read – Selection of contemporary poems (to be distributed).
Come – Having finished/polished your at least one minute of your AE project from last class. With a well developed plan for either (1) how to extend that project or (2) a second small animation project.

WEEK 12 — RETURN TO INVISIBLE CITIES AND ALTERNATE HISTORIES.
Group B Posts – A tutorial for a design/software trick of your choice. Due <u>5pm Sunday.</u>
Group A Responds – By trying out a trick/adapting a tutorial to your own aesthetics, posting the results, and providing notes on any necessary troubleshooting you did. Due <u>5pm Tuesday.</u>
MARCH 31 – PRESENTATIONS AND IN-CLASS EXPERIMENTS – DETAILS TBA
Come with – A complete rough cut of a Kinetic Type project, uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo and ready to share with the full class.

[Kinetic Typography Project Portfolios]
Due for grading (with debrief) by end-of-day Friday

WEEK 13 — CATCH UP. REFLECT TOGETHER. WORKSHOP FINAL PROJECT PLANS.
Everyone Posts – A detailed behind-the-scenes look at something you created this term. Either as an individual or as part of your group project. Include technical details (hows) and discuss choices you made (whys). Due <u>5pm Sunday.</u>
APRIL 7 – DETAILS TBA.

WEEK 14 — FINAL PRESENTATIONS/LAST QUESTIONS.
APRIL 14 – ADD A LITTLE LAST-MINUTE WONDER TO YOUR ALREADY COMPLEX STORIES.

WEEK 15 — NO CLASS — FINALS WEEK.

[Group Storytelling Projects]
Due for grading by end-of-day Wednesday, April 15.

[Individual Final Projects and Final Reflections]
Due for grading by end-of-day Wednesday, April 22.