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The Reactor Room: An Immersive Chernobyl Exhibition

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Chernobyl: Nuclear Narratives & the Environment Installation Project Guidelines

Assignment Description and Goals

As part of our efforts to understand the vast ramifications of the Chernobyl disaster and its legacies, students will contribute to an installation of a mock nuclear reactor control room modeled on the Chernobyl plant. Within this space, we'll construct a control board with mounted iPads that audience members can control using joysticks. Students will generate the materials for these stations.

Through this exhibit, students will explore the possibilities of curation using both digital and analog materials, merging the two to great effect. In essence, we will consider how we might present the course material to a public audience in a manner that is both widely accessible and academically rigorous. The digital humanities, as embodied in this project, present exciting tools for doing so. These tools will require students to not only interact and study texts in ways that may be unfamiliar to them, but then to be able to convey that information in a meaningful, useful way. For example, a student might elect to analyze the sound design of various Chernobyl-related artifacts (*Stalker*, *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.*, *Innocent Saturday*, etc.) and afterward produce the audio that will play when someone enters the installation. Alternatively, someone may choose to build a StoryMap to trace how these narratives radiate(!) outward from Pripyat, conceptualizing them in both time and space much differently than one might in a traditional paper. Alternatively, students can produce visualizations or computational analyses of the kinds of language used in these texts, perhaps as a comparative project. For those who know Ukrainian (or Russian, or German, or...), they can generate hyperlinked, annotated translations. What exactly students do will be up to them (in consultation with me, of course), but it *will* require them to engage with these kinds of digital media to reconsider how they can tell stories and share research. In short, this exercise will require students to approach the history and development of the Chernobyl Text in a novel way.

Content produced for the installation will also be hosted on a website that can remain active after the exhibit is over. This project will become a timely, fruitful resource to expand the public's understanding of this cultural phenomenon.

Requirements

- Use one text from the syllabus
- Use at least one text from the course bibliography that we are *not* reading as a class
- Written report and digital component (see below). The format of your contribution can vary (StoryMap, a study of sound design in films/video games/VR related to Chernobyl, a comparison of Chernobyl radiation maps and narratives, etc.). However, you must produce an accompanying document that contains an argument/interpretation of some sort, analysis, evidence, and a conclusion.
 - In some cases, this writing will be incorporated directly into the digital tool, while in others it will be featured alongside it. Again, this depends on your interests and your chosen medium.

Menu of Digital Tools & Platforms (select one)

- [StoryMap](#) is a free tool to help you tell stories on the web that highlight the locations of a series of events.
- [ArcGIS StoryMaps](#), a flexible, easy-to-use builder, weaves content together (videos, photos, and more) into a compelling and interactive narrative that's easy to publish and share.
- [Storyline](#) is an open-source tool that enables anyone to build an annotated, interactive line chart.
- [Timeline](#) is an open-source tool that enables anyone to build visually rich, interactive timelines.
- [Soundcite](#) is a simple-to-use tool that lets you add inline audio to your story. The audio is not isolated; it plays right under the text.
- [RAW Graphs](#) is an open source data visualization framework built with the goal of making the visual representation of complex data easy for everyone.
- [Hypothes.is](#) enables sentence-level note taking or critique on top of news, blogs, scientific articles, books, terms of service, ballot initiatives, legislation and more.
- If you'd like to use a different tool or platform, please write me an email or set up a meeting.

Staff from the Libraries and the Language and Media Centers will introduce you to these platforms and will be available to support your work as needed. I will be glad to help as well!

Audience and Genre

Our installation will be hosted in McCabe's Cratsley Lounge (second floor) from April 20 through the end of May, and its contents will be made publicly available online. Therefore, your audience may be... anyone! Write to an audience that is curious about the subject (Chernobyl). Aim for clarity and simplicity in your writing. Make it engaging and lively and develop your own voice as an author. Again, the goals are 1. widely accessible and 2. academically rigorous.

Identifying Potential Secondary Sources

To locate potential secondary sources for your contribution, you should use the RUSS043 Library Research Guide created by Pam Harris, our terrific subject librarian. A link is available on our Moodle page. Look for critical articles or book chapters that analyze your selected texts. You should *not* use reviews or, in most cases, non-academic sources. Please see me if you have any questions or if you would like to run your potential sources by me before starting.

We have taken the liberty of placing quite a few extra sources on our Moodle page.

Timeline

Friday, March 6, 9 p.m. (Moodle)

Project Proposal (20 pts.)

Submit your project proposal. It should include your selected texts, your chosen digital tool/platform, and a brief abstract of what you intend to accomplish. Given the logistics of putting together an installation that will be available to the broader Swarthmore community, the timing will require that at least some of you read ahead and select texts that will be covered later in the semester. I appreciate your flexibility.

Thursday, March 26, 4-5:30 p.m. EST (Zoom)

Installation Open Lab

Having technical difficulties putting together your installation project? Need some other kind of assistance? Drop by on Zoom: <https://swarthmore.zoom.us/j/643553840>.

Tuesday, April 14, 4-5:30 EST (Zoom)

Installation Open Lab

Having technical difficulties putting together your installation project? Need some other kind of assistance? Drop by on Zoom: <https://swarthmore.zoom.us/j/643553840>.

Sunday, April 26, 2 p.m. EST (Moodle)

Polished Draft Project Materials (60 pts.)

Please post a polished draft of your installation materials and email them to your WA and peer reviewer. This submission must include both the digital content and your writing. It should address both the syllabus-based text and the non-syllabus-based text. Upload all documents as Word files (or at least files that I can easily modify and comment on, *not* PDFs). As necessary, provide a link to your digital project.

Friday, May 1, 11:59 p.m. your time (Moodle + email)

Peer Review Session (20 pts.)

Please complete the peer review handout, post it in the corresponding folder on Moodle for me, and email it to your partner.

Thursday, May 7, 8 p.m. EST (Moodle)

Final Versions of Project Materials (80 pts.)

By this point, you will have received feedback for all your materials (digital project + writing) from me, your WA, and your peer reviewer. Post your **REVISED** content to Moodle.

Grade

25% of total course grade

Additional Resources

If you have questions about *any* part of this assignment, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. I'm happy to speak with you by email, by phone, or in person. Purdue's Online Writing Lab features *great* resources on various elements of writing: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>.