Course description:

This studio class functions like a writing room, in which students brainstorm, outline, draft and revise a large-scale work of original genre fiction and make preparations to use it as the hub of a trans-media storytelling franchise.

Prerequisites:

NMC 260 New Media Futures and NMC 301 Writing for the Media Professional must have been completed with a final grade of at least C- before taking this course.

Learning outcomes:

Students who finish this class will have demonstrated an ability to:

- Synthesize, on very short notice, a detailed plan for a large-scale original work of fiction on a subject unrelated to anything they have previously considered. (Outcome evaluated through Assignment #2)
- Write a complete genre-fiction novelette or novella. (Outcome evaluated through Assignment #3)
• Prepare a complete novelette or novella for publication in at least one media channel. 
  (Outcome evaluated through Assignment #5)
• Prepare a working plan for exploitation of a storytelling franchise through at least three 
  different media channels. (Outcome evaluated through Assignment #5)
• Create their own fully-owned intellectual-property storyworlds for use in future creative 
  storytelling endeavors of all types and in all media. (Outcome evaluated through 
  Assignment #1)

Introduction:

Just ten years ago, book publishing was known as a dying business, dominated by a tiny 
handful of mammoth companies that only bet on sure-thing mega-writers like Nora Roberts, 
Tom Clancy, and Stephen King. Young, un-platformed writers who wanted to write a novel were 
free to do so, and many did; but no one ever got to see them.

Today, just a few years later, it's a whole new world. That same writer today finds her/himself 
looking at a smorgasbord of options for doing something with the work, including ...

• Publish it, chapter by chapter, on WattPad as a serial;
• Publish it, episode by episode, via Kindle Direct Publishing as a “season”;
• Create an ePub using Sigil (a free open-source program) or export it directly from 
  Scrivener, upload it to Kindle Direct Publishing, and offer it for sale as an e-book;
• Record an audiobook version and upload it for sale on Audible.com;
• Use InDesign to lay out a book and publish it in paperback or hardcover through 
  IngramSpark for your local indie bookstore to sell;
• Use Scrivener or even Microsoft Word to publish your book through CreateSpace for 
  Amazon.com to sell as a print-on-demand paperback.

And new tools and opportunities are coming on line all the time. Can you tell a story on 
Periscope? Are Twitter novels still a thing? What about a YouTube channel, with you sitting in a 
comfy chair telling your story to the camera? Or perhaps a newsreader feed, via RSS? What 
about adapting it to teleplay and creating a web TV show -- shot live-action with friends or with 
machinima (a la Rooster Teeth)? Should you consider an interactive storytelling system, like 
Inklewriter, to make an iPad app like Device 6? What are the possibilities of VR systems like 
Oculus Rift? Could you perhaps market it through a 99-cent app on the iOS app store? What 
about Google’s Play Store? Can you actually make money doing this?
In this class sequence, we'll begin our exploration of those opportunities and actively participate in one or two -- in the most direct way possible: By creating, each of us, our own short work of genre fiction, ready for publication in any form we like after the class ends. It will be your own fully-owned piece of intellectual property (IP), which you can do whatever you want with.

Overview:

NMC 461 Trans-Media Publishing I: Creating IP is a class of no more than 20 students, in which each participant will write and prepare for publication a genre-fiction novelette or short novella (at least 12,000 words; generally speaking, the longer they are, the better they’ll sell).

This is the first class in a two-class sequence. Although we will do some exploration of the trans-media options available to a modern publisher, the majority of that experimentation and exploration will happen in the second course in the sequence, NMC 462: Trans-Media Publishing II: Exploiting IP. Our primary goal in this course is to generate and polish the unique content that we will be using as the subject of that exploration next term -- your genre novelette or novella. (A novella is 18,000 to 40,000 words; a novel is over 40,000. A novelette is really a long short-story, at 7,000 to 18,000 words.)

Calendar:

- Week 1:
  - Activities: Brainstorming your story, developing your storyworld.
- Week 2:
  - Activities: Mapping out story beats, making sure that when you’re ready to start writing the story, all you have to do is write.
  - Assignment #1 (due Friday Week 2): Story beats & writing plan.
- Weeks 3-6:
  - Activities: Write, in class, the first (very rough) draft of the novelette or novella.
  - Assignment #2 (due Friday Week 6): Complete rough draft.
- Weeks 7-8:
  - Activities: Rewriting (generating the second draft), ensuring that drafts are suitable to share with others.
  - Assignment #3: (due Friday Week 8): Complete second draft
- Week 9: Beta-reading other students’ second drafts.
○ Assignment #4 (due Friday Week 9): Two beta-reading reports on classmate drafts.

● Week 10:
  ○ Incorporating beta-reading feedback.

● Finals Week:
  ○ During Final Exam time we will be conducting a quick orientation/overview of the programs and tools that are available for bringing our stories to the public -- the tools you’ll be working with next term, if you move on to NMC 462.
  ○ At Final Exam time students will hand in Assignment #5: Preliminary Publication/Exploitation Plan.

How we’ll create our stories:

Our stories will start out as part of a shared genre-fiction “incubator” storyworld; you will be free to leave your story in that world, or use it as a springboard to a complete fictional universe of your own. To develop stories in that incubator world, we will be using a semi-random story generating tool called “The Plot Genie,” which was developed by a Hollywood writer named Wycliffe Hill in 1931 to help pulp writers and screenwriters rapidly prototype plot ideas and flesh them out. This will require a great deal of imagination, and the prompts will have to be stretched a great deal, because when The Plot Genie was made, the term “science fiction” wasn’t even in use yet.

NOTE: Everyone will go through the process of generating a story synopsis with The Plot Genie, but you will not be forced to use that synopsis for your story. If you already have an idea for a novelette that you’d like to write instead of your Plot Genie story, you may do so, provided it meets a few basic requirements, but you must get my approval first. I recommend talking to me about it as early as possible.

The project:

Your grade in this class is based on five elements, each of equal weight. Extra credit, at the rate of up to five percentage points each, can be earned by doing additional beta-readings for Assignment 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asmt. #</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>% of grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


A warning about the Plot Genie:

The Plot Genie is a prompt-generating tool from the golden age of pulp fiction, which will be helping us to generate fresh, original stories in this class. However, The Plot Genie, for all its wonderful qualities, is an artifact of another era — an era of blatant sexism and casual, endemic racism, an era in which “social Darwinism” had not yet been fully discredited. It is important to bear in mind, when using this 85-year-old cultural artifact, that occasionally it will generate results that have to be heavily modified or discarded for reasons practical, ethical or both.

Attendance:

This is a studio class. That means the class periods are twice as long as normal and there is no homework required (but there is an expectation that you will do up to four hours of reading per week). You will be expected to come to class and work. If you find that you work better alone or in a quiet space in the library or something like that, contact me after the end of Week 2 and we’ll make a special arrangement. If you are forced to miss class, you must initiate contact with me via text message or e-mail at least one hour before class to get the absence excused. Students get one unexcused absence; after that, each one drops the final grade by one full letter. Students get two unexcused late arrivals (more than 10 minutes late); after that, every one drops the final grade by one-half letter grade.
Stuff you have to spend money on:

Although there aren’t many books, this class is relatively expensive to participate in. Your total capital outlay is going to come to around $90 this term, not including the laptop or tablet you’ll need to buy or borrow if you’ve not got one and the ISBN numbers you’ll possibly want to have. Don’t sell your books at the end of the term, as we will be using them again next term.

A word about the books: None of them are “optional” unless they’re so marked. You are paying hundreds of dollars for this class, and devoting three months of your life to it. Don’t make the mistake of sabotaging your success to save $5.99.

Software:

**SCRIVENER:** Your biggest single expense will be to purchase Scrivener, a word-processing-type program designed especially for book authors. You have to do your writing in Scrivener because of certain capabilities it has (particularly its capability to export clean files in other formats, such as e-book and interactive PDF), which we will be taking advantage of in this class. Scrivener costs $40 but comes with a 30-day trial period, so you don’t need to buy it immediately.

Hardware:

**LAPTOP:** You will need to have access to a laptop, as we will be doing most of our writing and editing in class. The SMS laptops from the library will work for this, but are not an optimal solution because they don’t let you install stuff on them (e.g. Scrivener and Sigil). Cheap Chromebooks also will work, but are not optimal because they cannot run Scrivener.

**DICE:** For rolling Plot Genie characters, situations and other parameters, you will need a set of Dungeons & Dragons-type gaming dice. More specifically, you will need a d4, d6, d10 and d20. I will provide loaner dice if you want me to, but you probably will want your own set. I recommend the really big ones they have at Matt’s Cavalcade of Comics here in Corvallis. You can get them in black and orange if you like … I did. You’ll see a lot of mine on the document camera this term.
Books:

Hill, Wycliffe. **The Plot Genie.** $17.98 on Amazon; do NOT get the e-book version of this. You will need to have this book right away, on the second day of class.

Platt, Sean & al. **Write, Publish, Repeat.** Total cost in the $20 range. **DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK UNTIL THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS.** There is a special procedure I want you to follow in purchasing this title to demonstrate the synergies of the Amazon multi-media platform. You’ll be buying it through Amazon, in class.

Optional expenses:

**ISBN numbers:** These are one of the great swindles of the book publishing world. A company called Bowker will literally sell you a 14-digit number, without which you can do very little with your finished novel. They will sell you one number for $100; 10 numbers for $300; or 100 numbers for $600. I recommend buying 10, because you will need one each for the paperback, hardcover and e-book editions (audiobooks don’t require ISBNs) and if you decide you like this racket, it’ll be nice to have some extras to use on future projects. Amazon will supply you with a free ISBN if you want them to, but these come with strings attached which, while not too burdensome, are best avoided if you can afford to do so.

**Website:** We’ll be talking about these in class. Options range from free up to $10 or $15 a month. If you want to do this seriously, you should budget about $10 a month for this.

Accessibility:

**Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities:** Accommodations for students with disabilities are determined and approved by Disability Access Services (DAS). If you, as a student, believe you are eligible for accommodations but have not obtained approval please contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098 or at [http://ds.oregonstate.edu](http://ds.oregonstate.edu). DAS notifies students and faculty members of approved academic accommodations and coordinates implementation of those accommodations. While not required, students and faculty members are encouraged to discuss details of the implementation of individual accommodations.
Diversity:

The School of Arts and Communication strives to create an affirming climate for all students including underrepresented and marginalized individuals and groups. Diversity encompasses differences in age, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, physical or mental ability, religion, socioeconomic background, veteran status, sexual orientation, and marginalized groups. We believe diversity is the synergy, connection, acceptance, and mutual learning fostered by the interaction of different human characteristics.

Religious holidays:

Oregon State University strives to respect all religious practices. If you have religious holidays that are in conflict with any of the requirements of this class, please see me immediately so that we can make alternative arrangements.

Expectations for Student Conduct:

For details of expectations for student conduct in this and other classes, including official policies when cheating is suspected, please see http://studentlife.oregonstate.edu/code.