

Multimedia Design and Critique Field Examination  
Department of English, University of Waterloo  
Doctor of Philosophy Program  
May 2006

This exam will be on the reading list for Multimedia Design and Critique, and a supplementary list composed by the candidate in consultation with the chair of the examining committee. That list will have at least 10 and no more than 20 texts on it, which can be drawn upon for any answer to the questions on the exam. The supplementary list must be prepared and submitted to the examining committee for approval no less than three months before the sitting of the exam.

The exam structure is as follows.

There are three sections. In each section, candidates will have a choice of questions, and will answer one. Sections A and B will offer three choices; Section C will offer two.

Part A: Theory (35%)

Part B: Critique and Design (35%)

Part C: Redesign Practicum (30%)

Part C will have the student submit, eight weeks before the exam, a list of four multimodal digital object texts, in formats usable by committee members and archived in a way that guarantees the texts will not change in the next three months. These texts must include at least *four* of the following multimodal categories: text, images (multiple), animation, video, sound, haptics. These texts must be approved by the committee, with the final list of object texts filed with the Graduate Chair four weeks before the exam. The committee will compose two redesign questions about one or more of these texts. The student will answer one of these questions in the exam.

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**Part A: Theory**

Answer ONE of the following:

- 1) Do methods of reproduction and distribution alter the users relationship to technological artifacts? Please refer to at least THREE works from the THEORY list in your answer.
- 2) How does metaphor theory intersect with multimedia studies? Please refer to at least THREE works from the THEORY list in your answer.
- 3) People have a strong disposition to treat technological artifacts as social beings, to personify them. Discuss how this disposition is accommodated (or not) by multimedia theories. Please refer to at least THREE works from the THEORY list in your answer.

**Part B: Critique and Design**

Answer ONE of the following:

- 1) Drawing on theories of design and best practices, develop a rationale for using multimodal (as opposed to monomodal) texts for scholarship and teaching purposes. Explain the advantages obtained for both research and pedagogy as well as any drawbacks. Under “scholarship” you may include both research and dissemination, and under “teaching” you may include both classroom and online venues. Refer to at least FIVE authors from the Critique and Design list and/or your Supplemental list in your answer.
- 2) There are fundamental differences between designing for scholarly audiences and for lay audiences. Discuss these differences as they might pertain to designing multimedia environments and/or interfaces for historical materials related to Shakespeare. Draw on design principles and/or any theories of human-computer interaction you find relevant. Refer to at least FIVE authors from the Critique and Design list and/or your Supplemental list in your answer.
- 3) Develop a framework for assessing the effectiveness of the delivery of early modern literary material in multimedia form. You may cite examples from the assigned object texts. Refer to at least FIVE authors from the Critique and Design list and/or your Supplemental list in your answer.

## Part C: Redesign Practicum

Answer ONE of the following:

1) You have been contacted by the Schoenberg Center for Text and Image to consult on their ERIC website. They want to produce a similar multimedia site for Milton, but first they want a clearer sense of what works well in ERIC and what could be improved. Moreover, because a second set of tutorials in the ERIC Shakespeare site focuses on the Early Modern Text, they are interested in including another separate but integrated unit in the Milton project. Your task thus has two components: first, an assessment of the ERIC site overall with attention to its conformity to best practices of design and interactivity; second, a suggestion about a suitable second tutorial that would provide relevant added context to the Milton site but that does not duplicate the early modern book material.

2) The Rossetti Archive has been a “work-in-progress” since its inception. It is now moving towards what may be its final iteration—at least for the foreseeable future. Discuss the Archive from a “blue sky” perspective: that is, given unlimited resources for design and functionality upgrades, what further tools and features might be created that would be of **realistic** value to researchers and students of Rossetti?