HUMA 4301.783/SOCI 4389.783
Virtual Reality
Syllabus

Fall, 2020

Basic Information

Dr. Thomas Hohstadt, Instructor
Email: hohstadt_t@utpb.edu or tom.hohstadt@gmail.com

Virtual Office Hours : 2:00 - 3:00 P.M. on MWF (Help can be requested at any time, either through Dr. Hohstadt or through support: 1=866-437-0867).

Office Phone: 432-552-3286

About the Lecturer:

Dr. Thomas Hohstadt is a symphony conductor and a futurist. A pioneer in the field of virtual reality, he has shifted the focus from VR as a technology to VR as a language and art form. He was the first to add virtual reality to the curriculum of The University of Texas of the Permian Basin. He received the "Award of Merit" from *The Society for New Communications Research* for his co-authorship of *Voices of the Virtual World*.

As a futurist, he was nominated as one of the authors for the Rand Corporation's top "50 Books for Thinking about the Future Human Condition." Hohstadt is the author of seven books and over eighty articles, many of them about the future of the arts. Recently, he co-authored "The Age of Virtual Reality" for *The American Communication Journal*.

A Fulbright scholar, he has earned four advanced degrees from the Eastman School of Music and the Vienna *Akademie für Musik*. A twenty-eight-year conducting career includes positions with the Eastman School of Music; the Honolulu, Amarillo, and Midland-Odessa Symphonies; and guest appearances in eight nations.

Hohstadt has also been recognized for his achievements in the humanities. He participated in the founding of the Texas Committee for the Humanities, directed their seminars, and consulted and reviewed grant proposals for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Presently, he is a Senior Lecturer at UTPB.

For more information about Dr. Hohstadt, visit his Instructor Page (Links to an external site.) on the UTPB website.

Academic assistants may be used within this course. The academic assistant is responsible to the instructor and will be assigned specific tasks.

Location of course: This course is a Web Course and is conducted within Canvas

This course is a Web Course and is conducted within Canvas. You can access Technical Support on button left of the course menu or the 24/7 Help Desk at 1-866-437-0867.

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Communication Plan

The instructor will answer messages within a day—usually within a few hours. Grades are posted once a week on Monday mornings. The best method of contact is by email: hohstadt_t@utpb.edu or tom.hohstadt@gmail.com

Course Description

Purpose:

This course will provide the knowledge and skills necessary to participate constructively and creatively in today's increasingly "virtual" world.

Introduction:

Though the "Age of Virtual Reality" is in its infancy, yet today's students already live in a virtual world. Through their video games, iPods, iPhones, online social networking, and movies, they are migrating precipitously toward "virtual space." It's an imperative for them to understand this moment in history. Through provoked "discoveries," engaging artistic journeys, and creative dialogues with the "language" of virtual reality, students explore both its pre-digital history and it is sobering—yet inspiring—future.

This popular subject is designed to reach participants in all fields of study and in all socioeconomic groups. (3 credits)

Measurable Learning Outcomes:

This course offers a new veracity, a new authenticity, and a new credibility for the virtual experience. By the end of the course, students will

- learn to test, discern, and ground the "evidence" of their experience.
- discover where civilization is moving as a whole by confronting the "reality" of virtual reality, where it came from, and where it is going.
- engage the skills necessary to participate constructively and creatively in an increasingly "virtual" world—a world that demands their participation.

General Topics:

- VR and this moment in history
- The definition of VR
- VR beyond technology
- Historic origins
- Immigrating to a virtual world

- The language of VR
- The role of emotions, feelings, and senses
- VR as an art form
- "Reality" versus "illusion"
- Ethics and Mental Health
- Future trends

Target Audience:

This is an interdisciplinary course for those interested in the future of a virtual world.

Prerequisites:

None

Required for any specific major/minor?

This course is required for anyone that is classified as a Humanities major.

Course Catalog Description:

A seminar examining virtual reality from aesthetic, philosophical, and psychological experiences.

Materials

Required Materials:

The text book, *The Age of Virtual Reality* (Links to an external site.)*,* was written by the instructor and is provided freely within the course. It was completed and published by Damah Media during the summer of 2011. The ISBN is 978-0-967294-3-8. At the beginning of each week, students will watch the opening remarks video and then read the required text as outlined below the video.

Recommended Materials:

(preferred books are marked with an asterisk)

- Astrid Ensslin (Editor) & Eben Muse (Editor), *Creating Second Lives: Community, Identity and Spatiality as Constructions of the Virtual* (London: Routledge Publishers, 2011)
- Derrick de Kerckhove, *The Skin of Culture* (Toronto: Somerville House Publishing, 1995)
- Edward Castronova, *Exodus to the Virtual World: How Online Fun Is Changing Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 2008)
- *Ethan Gilsdorf, *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks: An Epic Quest for Reality Among Role Players, Online Gamers, and Other Dwellers of Imaginary Realms* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2009)
- Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive, and Social Dimensions of Life into a Science of Sustainability* (New York: Doubleday, 2002)
- George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its   Challenge to Western Thought* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999)
- James A. Herrick, *Scientific Mythologies: How Science and Science Fiction Forge New Religious Beliefs*, (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2008)
- *Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson, *Infinite Reality: Avatars, Eternal Life, New Worlds, and the Dawn of the Virtual Revolution* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011)

- *Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003)
- Michael Heim, *Virtual Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- Michael Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993)
- *Mychilo S. Cline, *Power, Madness, and Immortality: The Future of Virtual Reality* (S. I.: University Village Press, 2005)
- Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004)
- *Peter Otto, *Multiplying Worlds: Romanticism, Modernity, and the Emergence of Virtual Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011
- *Philip Zhai, *Get Real: A Philosophical Adventure in Virtual Reality* (Oxford, England: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998)
- Randall Packer & Ken Jordan, *Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality*, Expanded Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002)
- *Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (NewYork: Viking, 1999)
- Steven Johnson, *Interface Culture: How New Technology Transforms the Way We Create and Communicate* (New York: Basic Books, 1997)

All of the above publications are available through retail outlets or through inter-library loan.

Computer Skills and Software Requirements

Students will need to create word processing documents, save files, submit files.

If desired, Students, Faculty and Staff at UTPB can use cloud versions of MS Office 365 through use of their UTPB email address. For more information refer to: http://www.utpb.edu/services/ird/information-on-computer-accounts-e-mail. (Links to an external site.)

To obtain software licensing and media for selected Microsoft titles at very low cost through a software agreement: http://www.utpb.edu/services/ird/information-for-students/software-distribution/microsoft-select .

Online Student Authentication

UTPB requires that each student who registers for an online course is the same student who participates in, completes, and receives credit for the course. UTPB's Distance Education Policy requires faculty members to employ at least two methods of verification to ensure student identities.

At the beginning of the course, you will find a "Student Authentication" assignment. In addition to your login username and password, this authentication is achieved with **two** pictures:

1. A clear image of yourself, that is
2. in color
3. well lit with no shadows on your face or ID that obscures your image
4. taken on the day you submit the photo (to reflect your current appearance)
5. taken in full-face view, directly facing the camera
6. and with a neutral facial expression and with both eyes open.
7. A photo identification. It can be a UTPB ID or a government issued ID (driver's license, passport, etc.). High school students may use their school district ID. Cover the ID number (with tape, for example) so only your name and picture are showing.

Important Dates

Course Activities

(Description of each of the following activities and expectations; how many activities TX Admin Code Section 4.227)

Readings:

- Assigned readings from the text book
- Assigned readings and viewingsfrom other web sites

Exams/Quizzes:

In each of the 7 weeks, there will be a quiz over the reading material covered during the week. Each quiz will be worth 50 points. There will be 7 quizzes (total 350 points). All quizzes will consist of true/false, multiple choice or matching type of questions.

In addition to the quizzes there will be a final exam. It will be over the materials covered during weeks 1 through 7. The final exam will consist of true/false, multiple choice or matching type of questions. It will be worth 135 points.

Note: *Even though the final exam only covers the first 7 weeks, you are still expected to complete all reading and assignments for Week 8.*

Assignments:

The students will submit 10 assignments during the 8-week semester with 440 points. The assignments will be completed on an online form and will emphasize reflective creativity on the related subjects.

Discussion Topics:

Students will participate in six discussion topics. Each discussion topic will be worth 50 points (total 300 points). Here are the five topics:

- First impressions and concerns.
- Examples of online VR that each student has discovered.
- Examples of VR in everyday life.
- Possibility that VR may redefine or even change reality.
- Recommended precautions in the VR experience.
- Closing thoughts regarding what you have learned.

Discussion Board Participation Requirement:

The Discussion Board will be used primarily for discussing course content and related issues. For each graded discussion question, you must first respond to the question directly and, second, you must read the other students posts and reply to at least two other students responses. **(A total of 3 posts.)** You must ensure that your responses to the questions are meaningful, reflective, refer to personal experience, and support your course readings. Avoid postings that are limited to "I agree" or "great idea," etc. If you agree (or disagree) with a

posting, then say why you agree by supporting your statement from the readings or by bringing in a related example or experience.

You are responsible for reading all of the messages that are posted in the online discussion. Not reading messages is the equivalent of "sleeping in class." Use a person's name in the body of your message when you reply to their message. It helps to keep all of us oriented. It also helps us maintain a clearer sense of who is speaking and who is being spoken to. As we begin to associate names with the qualities of expressions and ideas, we come to know each other better. Change the subject line when you introduce a new topic. The value of this tip will become apparent as the number of messages grows.

Course Assessment

Distribution of Grade Points

Course Activity	Points
Student Authentication	40
Introductions	45
Getting to Know You	45
Syllabus Quiz	40
Quizzes (7) (50 points each)	350
Assignments 1, 3, & 5 = 30 points each; Other assignments: 50 points each	440
Discussion Participation (6) (50 points each)	300
Final Exam	140
TOTAL	**1400**

Grading scale:

Points	Letter Grade
1380 to 1400	A+
1360 to 1379	A
1330 to 1359	A-
1310 to 1329	B+
1290 to 1309	B
1260 to 1289	B-
1210 to 1259	C+
1160 to 1209	C
1120 to 1159	C-
980 to 1119	D
979 and below	F

Policies and Procedure

1. Course Content Structure:
   The course is divided into seven weeks or units. You should watch the instructor's video first, then read the assigned textbook section, followed by the textbook quiz. After that, complete the assignments. Finally, participate in the discussions. In each case, carefully follow the instructions.

2. Grading and Feedback:
   All the course activities will be graded based on the points for each activity. Sunday night at the end of each week is the due date. You can check your grades by going to the GradeBook. If there is any discrepancy in the grade, you must contact the instructor immediately. He will provide individual feedback or a general feedback in the performance of the course activity.

5. Course Incomplete/Withdrawal/Grade Appeal:
   All students are required to complete the course within the semester they are signed up. Incomplete grades for the course are rarely given and will only be granted if the student has completed at least 75% of the course with a grade of 'C' or better and provides a valid, documented excuse for not being able to complete the course on time and has contacted prior to the scheduled last class to request an extension. The student will sign a contract that includes the incomplete course activities and the new due dates.
   For grade appeal process go to http://www.utpb.edu/campus-life/dean-of-students/grievances (Links to an external site.).

6. Submission of Course Assessment Activities:
   All the course assessment activities will be submitted via Assignment Tool. Keep in mind the following standards/practices for submission of assignments: All course assessment activity files that will be submitted to the instructor should be in MS Word, Be sure to put your name at the top of each page header, Always keep a copy of all the work you submit so that you won't need to re-do it if it should get lost in cyberspace.

7. Make-Up/Late Submission Policy:
   All course activities must be submitted before or on set due dates and times. If the student is unable to abide by the due dates and times, it is her/his responsibility to contact the instructor immediately. NOTE: The due dates and times for the activities will adhere to the Central Time Zone.

6. Netiquette:
   Anything you type in the discussion area is public - which means that every student in this class (including your instructor) will see what you write. Please pay attention to the language you use and adhere to the following guidelines:

   1. Do not post anything too personal;
   2. Do not use language that is inappropriate for a classroom setting or prejudicial in regard to gender, race, or ethnicity;
   3. Do not use all caps in the message box unless you are emphasizing (it is considered shouting)
   4. Be courteous and respectful to other people on the list
   5. Do not overuse acronyms like you would use in text messaging. Some of the list participants may not be familiar with acronyms.
   6. If the posting is going to be long, use line breaks and paragraphs
   7. Fill in a meaningful Subject Line
   8. Write your full name at the end of the posting
   9. Be careful with sarcasm and subtle humor; one person's joke is another person's insult.

      NOTE: If you do not adhere to the guidelines for any posting, you will lose the points that would have

been granted, and the instructor reserves the right to remove your posting and to deny you any further posting privileges.

Refer to this link for additional help on netiquette: http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html

7. Cheating/Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty:
"Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to the appropriation of, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, other expression and media, and presenting that material as one's own academic work being offered for credit.

NOTE: Students found plagiarizing or cheating will receive a zero on the course activity which could cause failure in the class and/or suspension or dismissal from the college.

8. Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students with Disabilities: The University of Texas of the Permian Basin in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities. Any student with a disability who is requesting an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter from the ADA Officer for Students. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored.
Adapted from UTSA ADA syllabus statement.
ADA Officer for Students: Mr. Paul Leverington
Address: Mesa Building 4243 /4901 E. University, Odessa, TX 79762
Voice Telephone: 432-552-4696
Email: ada@utpb.edu
For the accessibility and privacy statements of external tools used within courses, go to Accessibility and Privacy Statements at https://www.utpb.edu/online/reach/ADA_Privacy .

9. Attendance and Class Participation:
Regular and active participation is an essential, unmistakably important aspect of this online course. The expectation of the instructor is that students will log on a minimum of three times every seven days. It is critical that you read all of the assignment materials as well as all of the public discussion materials. Your full participation on a weekly basis is not only a requirement; it is also an essential aspect of the online course process. All students are expected to do the work assigned, notify the instructor when emergencies arise, and make up assignments.

10. Tracking:
The learning management systems used to deliver this course have a tracking feature. This feature quantifies how often and when students are active in the course and also provides information if the student has accessed different pages of the course.

11. Absenteeism:
All the course activities have set dates to be completed and submitted. If you are ill for a prolonged time and cannot complete the activities, you must contact the instructor and update the situation. You are expected to log into the course regularly. If the instructor is going to be out because of ill health, attending a conference, etc. you will be notified through email.

Technical Requirements

Please visit the following page: http://www.utpb.edu/online/reach/technical-requirements You will find:
1. Requirements
2. Plug In Helper
3. Set up Information
4. Links to 24/7 Help Desk

Preparation for Computer Emergencies

Computer Crash
Not having a working computer or a crashed computer during the semester will NOT be considered as an acceptable reason for not completing course activities at a scheduled time. NOTE: Identify a second computer before the semester begins, that you can use when/if your personal computer crashes.

Server problems
When the Canvas server needs downtime for maintenance, the Canvas Administrator will post an announcement in your course informing the time and the date. If the server experiences unforeseen problems your course instructor will send an email.

Complete Loss of Contact
If you lose contact with me completely (i.e. you cannot contact me via Canvas or email), you need to call me at my office, and explain the reason you cannot contact me and leave me a way to contact you.

Lost/Corrupt/Disappeared files
You must keep/save a copy of every project/assignment on an external disk or personal computer. In the event of any kind of failure (e.g., server crash or virus infection, student's own computer crashes, loss of files in cyberspace, etc) or any contradictions/problems, I may/will request you to resubmit the files. In other words, if you submit a document to me, and I either do not receive it (lost in cyberspace) or it is corrupted when I open it, it is incumbent upon you to resend it to me, corrected, with little or no "downtime" in regard to the timeline for submission.

Student Support Services

SERVICE	CONTACT
ADA Accommodation/Support	Testing Services & Academic Accommodations Department (432) 552-2630 http://www.utpb.edu/academics/undergraduate-success/TSAAD
Admissions & Registration & Transcripts	(432) 552-2605 http://www.utpb.edu/admissions
Advising	UTPB E-Advisor at http://cas.utpb.edu/academic-advising-center/e-advisor/
Bookstore	(432) 552-0220 http://www.bkstr.com/texas-permianbasinstore/home
Financial Aid and Scholarship	(432) 552-2620 http://www.utpb.edu/campus-life/financial-aid

UTPB Library	(432) 552-2370 The J. Conrad Dunagan Library Online at http://library.utpb.edu/
Student Services	http://www.utpb.edu/campus-life/studentactivities/student-senate/committees/student-affairs
Technical Support	Canvas 1-866-437-0867 https://guides.instructure.com/ More informationhttp://www.utpb.edu/online/reach/technical-requirements
Tutoring & Learning Resources	If you are taking courses through UTPB the following links provide services: Smarthinking Online Tutoring (provides tutoring services), SmarterMeasure (measures learner readiness for online course). Student Success Center: http://www.utpb.edu/academics/undergraduate-success/success-center

End-of-Course Evaluation & Instructor Evaluation

Every student must complete an end-of-course evaluation/survey provided by UTPB. During the last few weeks of class, you will receive an announcement through email notifying you that the Course/Instructor Survey is available. You may follow the link in the email to complete the survey using the same credentials to access your courses here. When entering the emailed Survey link you will see a list of surveys for you to complete.

The survey is anonymous and you responses are confidential. Your feedback is critical to us and to your instructor as we strive to improve our offerings, and our support of you, the students.

Disclaimer & Rights

Information contained in this syllabus was to the best knowledge of the instructor considered correct and complete when distributed for use in the beginning of the semester. However, the instructor reserves the right, acting within the policies and procedures of UTPB to make changes in the course content or instructional techniques without notice or obligation. The students will be informed about the changes, if any.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Students with disabilities that are admitted to The University of Texas of the Permian Basin may request reasonable accommodations and classroom modifications as addressed under Section 504/ADA regulations. Students needing assistance because of a disability must contact the Programs Assisting Student Study (PASS) Office, 552-2630, no later than 30 days prior to the start of the semester.

Schedule

WEEKS	Topic	DUE DATE
Week One *Introduction*	***Start Here:*** • Submit Student Authentication • Submit "Getting to know you" (Student Information Sheet)	All assignments for this week are due **by 11:59 PM on Sunday**

	• Read Syllabus • Complete Syllabus Quiz *Week One:* • View the Lecture Video for Week 1 • Read Chapter 1 in the textbook. • Complete Week 1 Quiz • Discussion Topic 1	
Week Two *Definition of VR: Part One*	• View the Lecture Video for Week 2 • Read Chapter 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the textbook. • Complete Week 2 Quiz • Complete Assignment 1 • Complete Assignment 2 (Journal)	All assignments for this week are due **by 11:59 PM on Sunday**
Week Three *Definition of VR: Part Two*	• View the Lecture Video for Week 3 • Read Chapter 6, 7, and 8 in the textbook. • Complete Week 3 Quiz • Complete Assignment 3 • Complete Assignment 4 (Journal)	All assignments for this week are due **by 11:59 PM on Sunday**
Week Four *The Role of Emotions, Feelings & Senses*	• View the Lecture Video for Week 4 • Class participates in an online "virtual reality" experience. • Read Chapter 9 the textbook. • Complete Week 4 Quiz • Complete Assignment 5 • Complete Assignment 6 (Journal) • Discussion Topic 2	All assignments for this week are due **by 11:59 PM on Sunday**
Week Five *VR as an Art Form*	• View the Lecture Video for Week 5 • Class participates in an online "virtual reality" experience. • Read Chapter 10 in the textbook. • Complete Week 5 Quiz • Complete Assignment 7 (Journal) • Discussion Topic 3	All assignments for this week are due **by 11:59 PM on Sunday**
Week Six *Reality Versus Illusion*	• View the Lecture Video for Week 6 • Class participates in an online "virtual reality" experience. • Read Chapter 11 in the textbook. • Complete Week 6 Quiz • Complete Assignment 8 (Journal) • Discussion Topic 4	All assignments for this week are due **by 11:59 PM on Sunday**
Week Seven	• View the Lecture Video for Week 7 • Class participates in an online	All assignments for this week are due **by 11:59 PM on Sunday**

Ethics and Mental Health	"virtual reality" experience. • Read Chapter 12 in the textbook. • Complete Week 7 Quiz • Complete Assignment 9 (Journal) • Discussion Topic 5	
Week Eight *Summary and Final Exam*	• View the Lecture Video for Week 8 • Read Chapter 13 in the textbook. • Complete Assignment 10 (Journal) • Discussion Topic 6 • **Final Exam** • Course Evaluation	All assignments for this week are due **by 11:59 PM on Sunday**