Preliminary Web Course Description
*Please note: This is a preliminary web course description only. The department reserves the right to change without notice any information in this description. The final, binding course outline will be distributed in the first class of the semester.

School of English and Theatre Studies

Course Code: ENGL*4310	Course Title: Special Studies in English	Date of Offering: W20

Course Instructor: Dr. Susan Brown	Course Format: Seminar

Brief Course Synopsis:
Writing with a Digital Difference
Even if we don't think of it that way, contemporary writing is almost always already digital. Few texts have not been through a computer at some stage; most texts destined for print move through multiple computational processes before they get there. The foundational technologies of the Web are deeply indebted to the publishing industry. We are witnessing the biggest shift in writing since the invention of the printing press. This course aims to take stock of that shift both as it affects creative writing and writing in the academy.

Current writing increasingly grapples with its own status in an ever-more digital world, regardless of whether it is printed in the end (or, more often, alongside being digitally distributed at the same time as an e-book) or published only digitally. The line between different genres and modes of writing is increasingly blurring, as personal devices inscribe not only intentional communications but also locations and biostatistics. **Does it make a difference, then, to write digitally? This course will reflect on that question, considering a range of print and digital texts in doing so, experimenting with writing digitally, and playing with some digital tools for analyzing writing.** The focus for primary material will be recent Canadian writing, in both print and digital form, that reflects on its place in a digital world.

The course will begin with the question of what writing is within a brief history of inscription technologies. We will consider the materiality of digital writing and what it means to consider writing as a form of information technology. The questions we ask will circulate not only around the difference the digital makes but how the digital matters with respect to difference. How do differences of subject position or culture circulate digitally? How does one write in a digital world that in many ways replicates and amplifies the historical effects of misogyny, imperialism, racism, heterosexism, and social inequality? How have marginalized groups appropriated digital writing and representation to assert or critique identity, through high literature, popular e-lit, experimental e-lit, or social media? What does it mean that we are always inscribing and performing our selves digitally? What is an archive and what is memory in a context in which objects are both stubbornly persistent and evanescent, and digital writing can be constantly rewritten or edited? What are the implications of writing with or for machines?

In the process of exploring these questions, we will reflect on what writing is, on the difference that (the digital) medium makes to the maintenance of and resistance to injustice, as well as on the relationship of different forms of textuality to literary studies, a field that has defined itself historically as deeply antithetical to technology. This course therefore aims to be gentle to the technologically wary. No computational expertise is needed or assumed, but intellectual curiosity and a willingness to experiment will help make it a rewarding experience.

Methods of Evaluation and Weight (provisional):
20%   Regular informal online posts responding to weekly assigned reading and general participation (approximately 200 words/week)
20%   A "lightning" in-class review of an assigned text or digital object, followed by a close written analysis of it (750 words)
20%   A seminar in which you present on a particular question and text(s) and lead class discussion
40%   A major project which involves some form of engagement with non-standard digital writing or analysis (approximately 4500 words; may vary depending on the nature of the project)

Texts and/or Resources Required (provisional)
Joey Comeau, *Malagash*. ECW Press, 2017. Print.

Jordan Abel, *Injun.* Talonbooks, 2016. Print.

Julie McIsaac, *We Like Feelings. We Are Serious*. Coach House, 2018. Print.

Zoë Quinn. *Depression Quest.* 2013.

Pry or *Tendar* (depending on operating system). Tender Claws, 2015 and 2018.

Another video game to be determined (e.g. *Never Alone, Florence, Celeste,*)

Adam Hammond, *Literature in the Digital Age* (2016). Print.

Other online readings, both primary and secondary.

This course counts towards the following distribution requirement(s) for students who registered at the University prior to the Fall of 2018:   20th/21st century, Canadian Literature

Other information about the course (optional):

*Students who registered at the University of Guelph after Fall 2018 must fulfill the "new" major and minor requirements. Students who registered at the University of Guelph prior to Fall 2018 must fulfill the requirements of the Calendar in effect when they first enrolled unless they have filed a Schedule of Studies Change Request to change to the 2018-2019 calendar. For more information, please consult the major and minor checklists at https://www.uoguelph.ca/arts/sets/undergraduate/english/current-student-information.