**RA 2: Topic for Winter 2015/16 and Summer 2016**

**Narrative Futures, Future Narratives: The Story Is Your Choice**

“To live is to choose,” the former U.N. secretary general Kofi Annan once stated. When it comes to life in the literary world, one could traditionally choose *which* story to read. The diegetic world, however, was not in the hands of the reader. Today, the story is different. ‘To read is to choose,’ one could summarize the phenomenon. Since the advent of the media revolution in the 20th century and the increasing importance of new media, the meaning of choice-making has changed dramatically. Today, the reader can choose among a variety of old and new media formats, among old and innovative genres. Even more revolutionary, the reader is not just a reader anymore. He/she has the choice to become an active participant in the writing and reading of narratives. Due to the technical possibilities at hand, the reader can turn into a protagonist, the protagonist can become a writer of the story, the story can have multiple outcomes that ultimately impact – a variety of narrative futures. Some key terms surrounding the research conducted on these novel forms of narration are choice-making theories, mathematical modeling, cognitive narratology, multi- and intermedia storytelling, multi-linear narratives, playable stories and storyplaying, interactivity, audiovisuality, and digitial identity.

These key terms are meant to serve as departure points for our overarching research topic in the upcoming semester(s). Based on our previous work on New Media Narration, we would now like to go one step further and focus on narrating futures as well as the future of narration and storytelling based on choice-making as a common connector among various innovative storytelling formats. This allows place the various actors involved in the narrative process in the foreground of our investigations while at the same time exploring multiple media channels and narrative material. This opens up the border between, fictional and non-fictional storytelling and also enables us to bring in non-traditional theoretical approaches to narratology from fields like computer-science, media studies, didactics, sociology, political science, and biology. Based on this truly interdisciplinary combination of different media, genres, and theories, we will explore the range of possible future(s) in narratology. The following questions serve as starting points for our own writing of narrative futures:

* What characterizes novel definitions of “narrative”? Which key characteristics are prevalent, which ones have been lost?
* How does agency work when it comes to playable stories and narrative games?
* Are pictures and sounds slowly but surely replacing words in audiovisual narratives?
* Which choice-making theories are suitable for the study of narrative when it comes to exploring the degree to which readers now also act as writers of stories?
* Do narrative futures take the ‘death of the author’ for granted or will there always be multiple authors to one story?
* What does it say about identity in times of Web 3.0 if stories are forever in flux, always subjected to the individual choices of different agents?
* Which abstract role does interactive storytelling play in various social systems which are not part of literature and culture (e.g. in economics, health, politics)?

**Topic Suggestions and Readings for the Sessions Winter (2015/16)**

1. Theory: *Narrating Futures*, Vol. 1 (Bode/Dietrich)
2. Hypertext Books: *Luminous Airplanes* (La Farge), *Nightfilm* (Pessl)
3. Experimental Choices-Making Books: *How to Be Both* (Smith)
4. Children’s Storyplay
5. Gaming