



Class:
Office Hours:
Office:

Instructor: Dr. Jake Bohrod
Email:

S A M P L E COURSE DESCRIPTION AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is an advanced, critical examination of the history, development, aesthetics, and power of video games, including their relationship to other media texts. At this stage it is next to undeniable that the video game is deserving of critical attention, given its growing cultural ubiquity since the 1970s and the sheer volume of capital its industry commands, but there remains limited agreement on to what extent the proliferation of the video game has displaced common conceptions of media form and its effect on society. This class develops in its students the critical tools necessary for addressing this concern – where does video game end and society begin? The first part of the course will contextualize the development of video games and establish a critical games vocabulary, with special attention paid to the theory and representational politics of the game. In the second part of class we will build on and apply that vocabulary to the intersectional issues most raised by video games, including identity, labor, war, history, and audiences.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the key theoretical concepts of game studies
- Formally present original analysis and synthesis of readings in front of a group
- Construct arguments about the meaning of video games
- Author a basic interactive narrative with the aid of simple game design software
- Contextualize the role and function of games in society today

REQUIRED READINGS

All readings will be on BrightSpace.

Instructions to Access Brightspace: Go to <https://brightspace.lmu.edu> → Enter your username and password → Click on your course title → If you have trouble logging in Brightspace, contact ITS Help Desk.

REQUIRED GAMES

Each student will need to purchase or otherwise access the following games. These games are widely available on several platforms, including Steam.

- *Fortnite* (2017)
- *Disco Elysium* (2019)
- *1979 Revolution: Black Friday* (2016)
- *Pokémon GO* (2016)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This class is an advanced, critical introduction to the analysis of video games. No previous experience with video games is necessary, but a tolerance of critical thinking is required.

There are a variety of ways to earn credit, bring your own tastes to class, and develop your own critical voice – written exercises, class discussion, presentations, and an interactive narrative design project.

Your weekly attendance and active **participation** is central to the success of the class, as is your thoughtful engagement with the course readings. Much of class will consist of a thorough discussion of the readings and their relationship with that week's topic; therefore, it is paramount you complete the readings before class on Thursday, and come to class with your questions and comments. We are exploring a variety of theoretical methods to analyze games, and sometimes readings will be paired because they offer opposing viewpoints – keep an open mind as you read, and be sure to share with me or the class any additional articles or books that you find applicable.

Each student will give two (2) formal **presentations** throughout the course. These presentations will be delivered in teams of 2-4 people. Your team will be responsible for presenting on the readings and topic for that week. For your presentation, your team will need to use and submit via BrightSpace a visual aid of some kind (i.e. Powerpoint). Each presenter will have a minimum 10 minutes and a maximum of 15 minutes to speak. The workload should be evenly distributed throughout your group. Give examples from games you know of, games you've played, or games we're playing in the class, and offer a degree of synthesis.

You will complete a **video game analysis** midway through the semester. Using what we've learned from the first half of class, each student will analyze a video game of their choosing (that we have

not or will not play in class). The paper will be four (4) pages and must cite a minimum two (2) articles from class, weeks 2-7. Times New Roman, 12pt font, 1-inch margins, submitted on BrightSpace.

As a final project, students will be authoring and designing their own **interactive narrative**. A more detailed prompt and discussion of this assignment will come later in the semester.

Grading breakdown:	Participation	=	20%
	Video Game Analysis	=	20%
	Team Presentations (2)	=	30% (15% each)
	Interactive Narrative Design	=	30%
	+ Presentation		

TOTAL GRADE BREAKDOWN:

A	Exceeds Expectations	100%-90%
B	Meets Expectations	89%-80%
C	Satisfactory	79%-70%
D	Poor	69%-60%
F	Failure	59%-

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Email is the preferred method of communication. I will communicate with the class and individual students using campus email, so it is essential that you regularly check your email account or the preferred email address to which you forward. Please allow up to 48 hours for me to respond before you follow up.

OFFICE HOURS

Use the Google doc to schedule a meeting during my office hours. My office hours are a time set aside for you. Students are highly encouraged to make use of this time and come chat with me about course concepts, assignments, questions you may have or media you are interested in. If the times are inconvenient, I am happy to arrange appointments for another time. Just email me with a few available times.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 01/12/23	Topic: Introduction to Course Homework: Play <i>Fortnite</i>
Week 2 01/19/23	Topic: Critical Video Game Studies + Analyzing Video Games Reading: Steyerl, “On Games, or, Can Art Workers Think?” Ebert, “Why Video Games Can Never Be Art” In class: <i>Coup</i> Homework: Play <i>Fortnite</i>
Week 3 01/26/23	Topic: Play Reading: Huizinga, “Nature and Significance of Play” Mia Consalvo, “There Is No Magic Circle” In class: <i>We’re All Going to the World’s Fair</i> (Schoeberl, 2022) Homework: Play <i>Disco Elysium</i>
Week 4 02/02/23	Topic: (Digital) Formalism Reading: Bogost, “Procedural Rhetoric” Costikyan, “I Have No Words & I Must Design” In class: Team Presentation 1 <i>Baba Is You</i> Homework: Play <i>Disco Elysium</i>
Week 5 02/09/23	Topic: Ludology + Interactive Narrative Reading: Ryan, “From Narrative Games to Playable Stories” Montfort, “The Pleasure of the Text Adventure” In class: Team Presentation 2 <i>Adventure</i> Homework: Play <i>Disco Elysium</i>

<p>Week 6 02/16/23</p>	<p>Topic: Gaming + Identity Reading: Jenkins, "Video Games as Gendered Play Spaces" Shaw, "Do You Identify as a Gamer?" In class: Team Presentation 3 TBD</p> <hr/> <p>Homework: "Finish" <i>Disco Elysium</i></p>
<p>Week 7 02/23/23</p>	<p>Topic: Gaming + Agency Reading: Murray, "Agency" from <i>Hamlet on the Holodeck</i> Pelletier, "Reconfiguring Interactivity" In class: Team Presentation 4 <i>eXistenZ</i> (Cronenberg, 1999)</p> <hr/> <p>Homework: Videogame Analysis</p>
<p>Week 8 03/02/23</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SPRING BREAK</p>
<p>Week 9 03/09/23</p>	<p>Topic: Interactive Authoring DUE: Videogame Analysis</p> <hr/> <p>Homework: Play <i>1979 Revolution: Black Friday</i></p>
<p>Week 10 03/16/23</p>	<p>Topic: Interactive Industry + Work Reading: de Peuter, "Contested Formation of Digital Game Labor" Freedman, "The Mechanics of Play: Situating Game Development" In class: Team Presentation 5 <i>Game Dev Story</i></p> <hr/> <p>Homework: Play <i>1979 Revolution: Black Friday</i></p>
<p>Week 11 03/23/23</p>	<p>Topic: Gaming + Military Reading: Dyer-Witherford + de Peuter, "Banal War: <i>FSW</i>" Der Derian, "War as Game" In class: Team Presentation 6 <i>Serious Games</i> (Farocki, 2009)</p> <hr/> <p>Homework: Finish <i>1979 Revolution: Black Friday</i></p>

<p>Week 12 03/30/23</p>	<p>Topic: Gaming + History Reading: Lauro, “Make History Yours” Chapman, “Digital Games as Historical Reenactment” In class: Team Presentation 7 <i>The Cat and the Coup</i></p> <hr/> <p>Homework: Play <i>Pokémon GO</i></p>
<p>Week 13 04/06/23</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HOLIDAY BREAK</p>
<p>Week 14 04/13/23</p>	<p>Topic: Social Gaming, Twitch, Fandom Reading: Fuchs, “Renewal of the Audience Labor / Commodity Debate” Brown & Moberly, “Twitch and Participatory Cultures” In class: Team Presentation 8 <i>Among Us</i></p> <hr/> <p>Homework: Play <i>Pokémon GO</i></p>
<p>Week 15 04/20/23</p>	<p>Topic: Extended Gaming Reading: TBD In class: <i>Black Mirror: Bandersnatch</i> (Slade, 2018)</p> <hr/> <p>Homework: Finish final project</p>
<p>Week 16 04/27/23</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Final presentations</p>
<p>Final 05/04/23</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FINAL - Interactive Narrative Design</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DUE: by 5pm</p>