

Writing Through Media: Games

ENG 1131 Section 1788

Spring 2014, MWF 5 (11:45 am -12:35 pm) and W E1-E3 (7:20 pm -10:10 pm) in WEIL 0408A

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Office Hours: MW 4 (10:40 am -11:30 am) and by appointment

Course Description

This course offers students several methodologies for studying video games as well as an introduction to English composition. The semester is divided into four units, the first of which will review the history of games and how they are employed as rhetorical and pedagogical tools. The following three thematic units—culture, technology, ecology—will each offer a unique theoretical lens through which we may interpret and write about a wide variety of video games across different genres, platforms, and modes of production. Course screening times will give students an opportunity to play the video games discussed in class, though occasionally we will watch game-related documentaries to better understand the appeal and production of the objects we engage with. Students will also participate in course discussion assignments and must complete three essays during the semester—a definition argument, a rhetorical analysis, and a game design proposal.

Student Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, students will have learned and demonstrated their ability to:

- Understand, apply, and critique theoretical concepts.
- Identify, describe, and discuss the major themes and arguments of a video game.
- Write a well-organized and developed rhetorical essay.
- Synthesize academic research and provide appropriately formatted citations.

Required Texts

- Frans Mäyrä. *An Introduction to Game Studies: Games in Culture*. SAGE Publications Inc., 2012. ISBN 978-1-4129-3446-6.
- Ian Bogost. *How to Do Things with Videogames*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-8166-7647-7.
- William Strunk Jr. & E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th Edition. Allyn & Bacon, 2000. ISBN 0-205-30902-X.

* * * All other readings and games will be provided to you by the instructor***

Assignments

Assignments must be submitted on ELS by the start of the class period on the day they are listed as due (see course reading schedule). Written work should be uploaded either as Microsoft Word documents (.doc or .docx) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf) to the appropriate assignment box. Please title your files with your last name, first initial, and the title of the assignment (see below). All assignments should be written following Modern Language Association (MLA) formatting guidelines. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner with the appropriate in-text citations and a works cited page. **Late papers will not be accepted.**

- **Definition Argument(200 points) - 1000 words**

With the approval of your instructor, choose a term relevant to game studies that you feel has a varied or contentious definition. Write an essay in which you offer a definition of this term using several of the different strategies and research sources we have discussed in class.
- **Rhetorical Analysis (200 points) - 1500 words**

Perform a rhetorical analysis of a video game from the course. Your paper should claim *how the* game makes its specific argument about its subject matter. While you should attend to the conventional elements of rhetoric, you must also address how visuals and procedures contribute to the game's argument. Provide evidence from the game to support your claims.
- **Game Design Proposal (200 points) - 2000 words**

Write an essay in which you propose a video game of your own design that addresses a specific problem. Your goal is to persuade your reader to produce this game for public release. Be sure to clearly outline the problem your game will address, how it will go about doing so, and why your approach is justified. Over the course of the essay, identify what the game will be about and what genre it belongs to, as well as what kind of text, visuals, sounds, processes, and interactions it will feature. Also discuss the types of technological apparatuses it will require, who will be its target audience and market competition, and the potential consequences of the game for the game industry and/or game culture.
- **Discussion Prompts (6 @ 50 points each) - 250 words each**

These short exercises are meant to encourage you to apply what you have learned in the course to your own personal experiences. They will also work to synthesize some of the readings we will be doing throughout the semester. On the days that the discussions are due, the class will spend time sharing what everyone has written and engaging with each other's ideas, questions, and arguments.
- **Preparation, Participation, and Engagement (100 points)**

You are responsible for attending all of our class sessions and for completing the course readings and assignments prior to the day they are listed below unless otherwise indicated by the instructor (see course attendance policy and reading schedule). During class time, you are expected to listen intently and are encouraged to respond with relevant questions and helpful comments. You should be respectful of and attentive to the ideas and readings of your peers, as well as offer your own thoughtful examinations. Discussions should be an open, engaging, and enjoyable dialogue in which the class listens and responds to one another with courtesy and care. Above all, be mindful of how you comport yourself and what you contribute to the course so that we can ensure that this class is productive for both you and your peers. **Homework assignments** and **unannounced reading quizzes** may be administered as deemed necessary by the instructor.

Note: Assignment word counts do not include footnotes, endnotes, and works cited pages

Course Policies

- *Attendance* is mandatory. You are, however, allowed up to three unexcused absences. Missing more than the allotted three class periods will result in a full letter grade drop for every subsequent absence thereafter. Upon missing six class periods, you will automatically fail the course. Absences related to court-mandated events (e.g., trial testimony, jury duty), university-sponsored organizations or events, religious holidays, family emergencies, and health issues are considered excused provided that the instructor receives official documentation regarding the absence. Additionally, tardiness will not be tolerated. For every three class periods that you arrive late, you will incur one absence that will count towards your allotted three unexcused absences.
- *Grading* for this course will be rigorous. Assignments that exhibit a disregard for spelling, grammar, formatting and citation guidelines, instructions, or a general carelessness in the writing will not receive a passing grade.

The writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the minimum requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit. To satisfy this requirement, every assignment's word count must be fulfilled. Submitted assignments short of the minimum word count will receive zero credit.

Grading Scale:

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

You must pass this course with a "C" or better to satisfy the CLAS requirement for Composition (C) and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit (E6). You must turn in all papers totaling a minimum of 6,000 words to receive credit for writing 6,000 words.

NOTE: a grade of "C-" will not confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition (C) requirement.

Additional Policies

- The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>
- UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from discrimination and harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies see: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/>
- All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

Course Schedule

***Note: Games to be screened may change based on students' needs and interests ***

Unit 1: An Introduction to Games and Game Studies

Week 1 (1/05):

- M** Course Overview
- W** Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman's "What is a Game?" and "What is Play?" (on Sakai)
- S** -----
- F** José P. Zagal and Amy Bruckman's "[Novices, Gamers, and Scholars](#)"
Drop/Add Ends at 11:59 pm

Week 2 (1/12):

- M** Frans Mäyrä's *An Introduction to Game Studies* - Ch. 1
Overview of Definition Paper
- W** Frans Mäyrä's *An Introduction to Game Studies* - Ch. 3
- S** Miscellaneous card and board games (Feel free to bring your own!)
- F** **Discussion 1 Due**

Week 3 (1/19):

- M** **No Class - Martin Luther King Day**
- W** Frans Mäyrä's *An Introduction to Game Studies* - Ch. 8
Mia Consalvo and Nathan Dutton's "[Game Analysis](#)"
Papers, Please
- S**
- F** **Discussion 2 Due**

Unit 2: Game and Gamer Culture

Week 4 (1/26):

- M** Frans Mäyrä's *An Introduction to Game Studies* - Ch. 2
Adrienne Shaw's "What is Video Game Culture?" (on Sakai)
- W** Frans Mäyrä's *An Introduction to Game Studies* - Ch. 4 & 5
[Pong](#), [Space Invaders](#), and [Pac-Man](#)
- S** *Donkey Kong*, *The Legend of Zelda*, and *Super Mario Bros.*
- F** **Discussion 3 Due**

Week 5 (2/02):

- M** Frans Mäyrä's *An Introduction to Game Studies* - Ch. 6
[Doom](#)

W Helen W. Kennedy's "[Lara Croft: Feminist Icon or Cyberbimbo?](#)"
S *Alice: Madness Returns*

F **Discussion 4 Due**

Week 6 (2/09):

M Frans Mäyrä's *An Introduction to Game Studies* - Ch. 7

W Melissa J. Monson's "Race-Based Fantasy Realm" (on Sakai)
S [The Raid](#) and *World of Warcraft*

F Alexis Pulos's "Confronting Heteronormativity In Online Games" (On Sakai)

Week 7 (2/16):

M Henry Jenkins's "Complete Freedom of Movement" (on Sakai)

W Mary Flanagan's "SIMple & Personal" (on Sakai)
S *The Sims*

F Excerpts from Ian Bogost's *Persuasive Games* (on Sakai)
Overview of Rhetorical Analysis

Week 8 (2/23):

M William Strunk Jr. & E. B. White's *The Elements of Style*
Writing Workshop

W Peer Review
S TBD

F **Definition Argument Due**

Unit 3: Game Technologies

Week 9 (3/02):

M **No Class-Spring Break**

W **No Class-Spring Break**

F **No Class-Spring Break**

Week 10 (3/09):

M Patrick Crogan and Helen Kennedy's "Technologies Between Games and Culture" (on Sakai)

W Andrew Hutchison's "[Making the Water Move](#)"
S *Myst*

F Graeme Kirkpatrick's "Controller, Hand, Screen" (on Sakai)

Week 11 (3/16) :

M Terry Harpold's "[Screw the Grue](#)"
[Zork](#)

W Kristine Jørgensen's "Between the Game System and the Fictional World" (On Sakai)
S *Super Meat Boy* and *Indie Game: the Movie*

F **Discussion 5 Due**

Week 12 (3/23) :

M Mary Flanagan's "Troubling 'Games for Girls'" (On Sakai)
Overview of Game Design Proposal

W Peer Review

S TBD

F **Rhetorical Analysis Due**

Unit 4: Media Ecologies

Week 13 (3/30) :

M Ian Bogost's *How to Do Things with Videogames* - Introduction and Conclusion

W Ian Bogost's *How to Do Things with Videogames* - Ch. 10 Snapshots
S *Machinarium*

F **Discussion 6 Due**

Week 14 (4/06) :

M Ian Bogost's *How to Do Things with Videogames* - Ch. 2 Empathy
[Darfur is Dvina](#)

W Ian Bogost's *How to Do Things with Videogames* - Ch. 1 Art & Ch. 12 Kitsch
[Diner Dash](#) (Play in Internet Explorer or Download)

S *Braid*

F Ian Bogost's *How to Do Things with Videogames* - Ch. 13 Relaxation & Ch. 17 Work
[FIQW](#)

Last Day to Withdraw Without Failing Grades by 11:59 pm

Week 15 (4/13)

M Writing Workshop

W Conferences

S -----

F Conferences

Week 16 (4/20)

M Peer Review

W Course Wrap-up

S TBD

Game Design Proposal Due