

Instructor Name: Kelly Martin

Course meeting times & locations: M,W,F | Period 5 (11:45 AM - 12:35 PM)
WEIL 408A; W | Period 9 - 11 (4:05 PM - 7:05 PM) WEIL 408A

Office Location and Hours: TBA

Course website: Canvas

Instructor Email: kellygmartin@ufl.edu

Course Description: In this course, we will examine videogames as texts, as visual systems that operate according to certain rules and principles. Learning to read videogames as texts comprises only part of our goal, however. The videogames central to this course are *metagames*, games that bring attention to themselves *as games*. To lay the groundwork for our analysis of metagames, we will begin the course by thinking about videogames as examples of visual rhetoric unique from other types of media. How can metagames prompt us to consider their form, historical contexts, and invent new theories of gaming?

This course is writing intensive: as a composition class, this course features weekly responses to readings, which will cover topics including but not limited to theories of play, digital rhetoric, and multimodality. In particular, we will focus on critical texts by major game studies scholars such as Ian Bogost, Jesper Juul, Alexander Galloway, Astrid Ensslin, Patrick LeMieux, and Stephanie Boluk. Weekly responses must be analytical in nature. Our major writing assignments include research-based close readings of metagames from the course. In these close readings, you will present an interpretive argument of a game in relation to its narrative structure *and* gameplay, paying particular attention to how the game brings attention to itself (and how/why it does so). In our final project, you will create a blueprint/conceptual map of your own metagame using Twine.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts:

Textbook: *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, 3rd Edition, by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein

Games you will be required to download/access: *Garry's Mod* (2004), *Braid* (2008), *DLC Quest* (2011), *Game Dev Tycoon* (2012), *The Stanley Parable Demo* (2013), *The Stanley Parable* (2013), *Undertale* (2015), *The Magic Circle* (2015), *The Beginner's Guide* (2015), *Ennuigi* (2015), *OneShot* (2016), *Calendula* (2016), *Doki Doki Literature Club**** (2017)

*** CONTENT WARNING: This game may be disturbing for those who suffer from anxiety and depression or have recently experienced a loss.

Gaming Policies:

- You must create a free Steam account and have access to a computer capable of playing the required games. All of the games for the course are low spec, but if you cannot run a game for whatever reason, you may need to pair up with someone with a different computer. Playing games with a partner is an experience unto itself!
- Although this is no substitute for playing the games themselves, if you find yourself stuck and unable to complete a game, you are permitted to search online for a walkthrough (e.g., Let's Play on YouTube). Most of these games are fairly short and user friendly, however.



Assignments:

Discussion Board Posts (10* 300 words each=3000 words): Most weeks I will post a question to the discussion board that requires you to analyze an aspect of one or more of the games from the course in relation to the week's readings. Think of these discussion boards as practice for the short essays: I expect to see mostly analysis and critical observations of the material, not general reflections on your experience playing the games. We will, of course, discuss your experiences playing, but save those comments for class! I will provide a full rubric on Canvas.

Essays (2*750 words each, 1*1500 words=3000 words): In these essays, you will develop an original argument about a game from the course by critically engaging with our theme: metagaming. You can consider these essays from multiple vantage points: How does the game bring attention to itself, *and why* does it do so—what is the effect? What kind of commentary on gaming—as an experience, culture, practice, etc.—does the game provide? In what ways do narrative structure and gameplay coalesce in your chosen game? How does the game implicate the player as part of its meta-textuality? You will need to engage closely not only with your chosen game but also the readings from the course, which will provide you with the theoretical background to begin addressing some of these questions. I will provide a full rubric on Canvas.

Twine Project: In the final project, you will create your own metagame using a software program called Twine, which allows users to create text-based adventure games (think of choose-your-own-adventure stories). To use this program, you do not need an extensive background in coding: from those

whose only “coding” experiences were editing the HTML on their Myspace page (me) to those who can read the coding language from *The Matrix*, Twine accommodates a large spectrum of users. This project enables you to think critically about the formal structure of a metagame, forcing you to think both as player and creator. In addition to creating your own metagame, you will write a short reflective essay (**1000 words**) where you will explain your creative choices. I will provide a full rubric on Canvas—and plenty of software instruction.

Grading Distribution:

Discussion Board posts: 50 points each = 500 points

2 Short Essays: 100 each = 200 points

1 Long Essay: 200 points

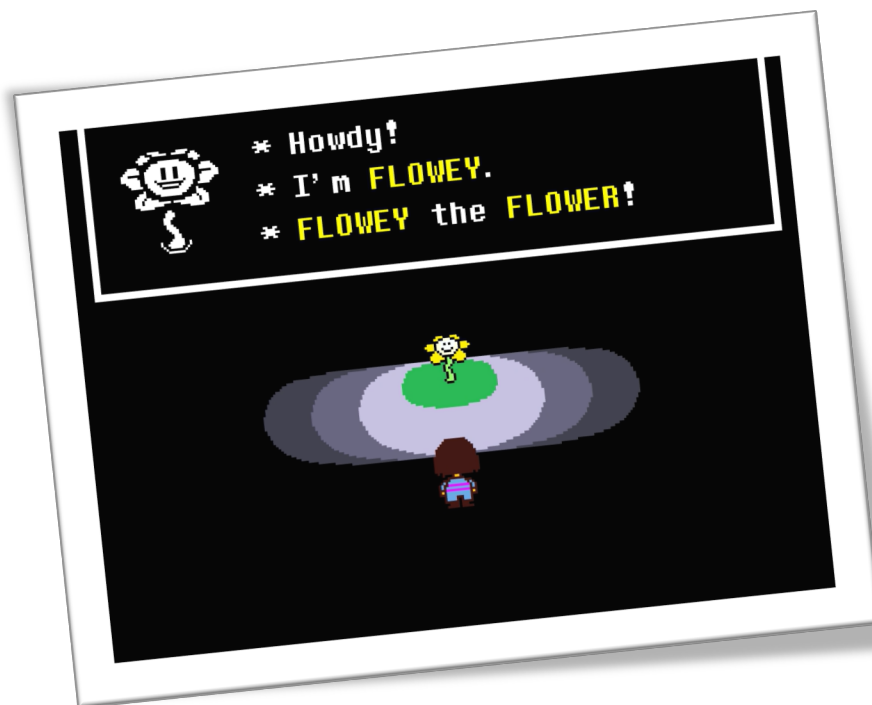
Creative Project: 100 points

Total: 1000 points, 6000 words

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* Attendance is required in both lecture **AND the screenings**. After three unexcused absences—including the screenings—I will lower your course grade by half a letter. **You will automatically fail the course if you accrue six unexcused absences.** I also expect on-time attendance—three tardies is the equivalent of one unexcused absence.
3. *Paper Format & Submission:* All papers should be in MLA format. You will submit papers on Canvas.
4. *Late Papers/Assignments:* I do not accept late work without prior notice. If you think you may be late on an assignment, notify me as soon as possible so we can work out an agreement.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
7. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
8. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. *Grade Appeals.* In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
10. *Course Evaluations.* Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
11. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

12. I expect respectful discussion both online and in the classroom. In addition, I also want to foster a communal environment: I will often require you to play the course games with your peers, so please be accommodating/respectful of others' schedules and materials.
13. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty:
<http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>
14. *Policy on environmental sustainability*. Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)



Schedule

The schedule is subject to change. NOTE: This class also meets on Wednesday afternoons for “screenings.” We will use screenings for writing workshops, software instruction, small group activities, supplementary materials, and—most importantly—gaming!

WEEK	DATE	DUE	TOPICS	READ/PLAY	SCREENING ACTIVITIES
Week 1	W: 8/22		Introductions and syllabus		Discussion board workshop <i>Run Lola Run</i> (1998 film)
	F: 8/24		Videogames as texts <i>Run Lola Run</i> discussion	Read: browse <i>Game Studies</i> online journal	
Week 2	M:8/27		What is a metagame?	Read: intro from <i>Metagaming</i> (Canvas)	
	W: 8/29		Writing about videogames	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch.1	Academic tone workshop <i>The Beginner's Guide</i>
	F: 8/31		<i>The Beginner's Guide</i> discussion	Play: <i>The Beginner's Guide</i>	
Week 3	M: 9/3 HOLIDAY				
	W: 9/5	DBP#1	The politics of metagaming Situating your academic arguments	Read: "Politics" chapter from <i>Persuasive Games</i> (Canvas) and <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch.2	Thesis statement workshop <i>The Stanley Parable Demo</i> and <i>Ennuigi</i>
	F: 9/7		<i>The Stanley Parable Demo</i> and <i>Ennuigi</i>	Play: <i>The Stanley Parable Demo</i> and <i>Ennuigi</i>	

			discussion		
Week 4	M: 9/10		Beyond games as art	Read: Excerpts from <i>How to Do Things with Videogames</i> (Canvas)	
	W: 9/12		Effective quoting	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 3	Peer review of short essay #1 <i>The Stanley Parable</i>
	F: 9/14	SHORT ESSAY #1	<i>The Stanley Parable</i> discussion	Play: <i>The Stanley Parable</i>	
Week 5	M: 9/17		Experimental gaming	Read: intro from <i>Literary Gaming</i> (Canvas)	
	W: 9/19	DBP #2	The academic conversation	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 4	Writing with style workshop <i>Undertale</i>
	F: 9/21		<i>Undertale</i> discussion	Play: <i>Undertale</i>	
Week 6	M: 9/24		(meta)textuality	Read: “Shapeshifting Stories: Reading Video Game Stories Through Paratexts” chapter from <i>Video Games and Storytelling</i> (Canvas)	
	W: 9/26	DBP #3	Who’s driving your paper?	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 5	<i>Braid</i>
	F: 9/28		<i>Braid</i> discussion	Play: <i>Braid</i>	

Week 7	M: 10/1		Differing opinions	Read: “Video games can never be art” (Canvas)	
	W: 10/3	DBP #4	The naysayer	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 6	Counterarguments workshop <i>The Magic Circle</i>
	F: 10/5		<i>The Magic Circle</i> discussion	Play: <i>The Magic Circle</i>	
Week 8	M: 10/8		The player and (virtual) reality	Read: “Rules and Fiction” chapter from <i>Half-Real</i> (Canvas)	
	W: 10/10		The stakes—so what?	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 7	Peer review of short essay #2 <i>DLC Quest</i>
	F: 10/12	SHORT ESSAY #2	<i>DLC Quest</i> discussion	Play: <i>DLC Quest</i>	
Week 9	M: 10/15		VR and AR	Read: “Metafiction and the Perils of Ubiquitous Mediation” chapter from <i>Mixed Realism</i> (Canvas)	
	W: 10/17	DBP #5	The larger context	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 8	Audience awareness workshop <i>Calendula</i>
	F: 10/19		<i>Calendula</i> discussion <i>Doki Doki Literature Club</i>	Play: <i>Calendula</i>	

			content discussion		
Week 10	M: 10/22		Metagaming as allegory	Read: "Agony (on The Cave)" from <i>Gamer Theory</i> (Canvas)	
	W: 10/24	DBP #6	Academic voice	<i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch.9	<i>Doki Doki Literature Club</i>
	F: 10/26		<i>Doki Doki Literature Club</i> discussion	Play: <i>Doki Doki Literature Club</i>	
Week 11	M: 10/29		Metagaming and materiality	Read: "The New Cyber-City" chapter from <i>Digital Play</i> (Canvas)	
	W: 10/31	DBP #7	Meta-commentary in academic writing	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 10	Paragraph workshop <i>OneShot</i>
	F: 11/2 HOLIDAY				
Week 12	M: 11/5		Intro to Twine Ludo-narratology	Read: "The Aesthetic Approach" chapter from <i>Aesthetic Theory and the Video Game</i> (Canvas)	
	W: 11/7		Revising an academic essay	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 11	Peer review of long essay
	F: 11/9	LONG ESSAY	<i>OneShot</i> discussion	Play: <i>OneShot</i>	
Week	M: 11/12				

13	HOLIDAY				
	W: 11/14	DBP #8	Creative criticism	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 14	Twine workshop 1 <i>Garry's Mod</i>
	F: 11/16		<i>Garry's Mod</i> discussion	Play: <i>Garry's Mod</i>	
Week 14	M: 11/19	DBP #9	Counter-gaming	Read: "Counter-gaming" chapter from <i>Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture</i>	
	W: 11/21 HOLIDAY				
	F: 11/23 HOLIDAY				
Week 15	M: 11/26		Twine workshop 2		
	W: 11/28	DBP #10	Academic formulas	Read: <i>They Say/I Say</i> Ch. 15	Twine workshop 3 <i>Game Dev Tycoon</i>
	F: 11/30		<i>Game Dev Tycoon</i> discussion	Play: <i>Game Dev Tycoon</i>	
Week 16	M: 12/3		Twine presentations		
	W: 12/5		Twine presentations		Twine presentations

TWINE PROJECT DUE 12/10



Grading Scale

A 4.0 930-1000	A- 3.67 900-929	B+ 3.33 870-899
B 3.0 830-869	B- 2.67 800-829	C+ 2.33 770-799
C 2.0 730-769	C- 1.67 700-729	D+ 1.33 670-699
D 1.0 630-669	D- 0.67 600-629	E 0.00 0-599