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ENG4936: Narrative Games
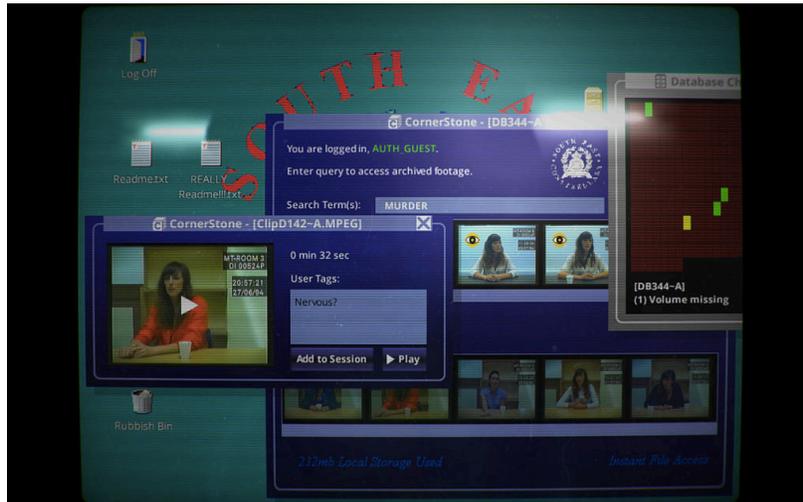
Sam Barlow (author), "Screenshot from Her Story *Press Kit" (2016)*

In recent years, a wide range of narrative video games, or video games that focus on bringing together interactivity and storytelling, have exploded onto the 'indie' video game scene. This course will study the possibilities that these narrative video games offer to scholars, players, and creators alike. We will analyze the formal elements of narrative video games through the perspective of narratologists (scholars of narrative theory) and ludologists (scholars of gameplay) to consider the methods narrative video games use to represent lived experiences. We will also take into consideration the social and cultural impact of narrative video games. As a genre and media form that explores narrative possibilities, such games have been embraced by women, POC, and LGBTQ+ game-makers commonly underrepresented in the mainstream gaming and game-making industry. These makers seem particularly interested in tackling narratives and subjects forgotten, ignored, or missing in more mainstream media. As we play these games, we will inevitably engage with and discuss challenging subjects such as: ableism, animal cruelty, body dysmorphia, cancer, child abuse, death, homophobia, mental illness, pedophilia, racism, self-harm, sex and sexuality, sexism, sexual violence, suicide, transphobia, and violence.

"Narrative Games" is an Honors course that runs as half-seminar, half-workshop. During the first half of our semester, we will focus on seminar-style discussion and debate. As we come to define a concept of the "narrative games" people create and play, our discussions will be guided by the following 3 central questions:

- What kind of language for narrative games do we need to build in order to describe this genre and media form?
- What are the possibilities—for creating narratives, engaging discourses, etc.—that are opened up in "narrative games"?

- What are the limitations of "narrative games" and why are these limitations significant?

During the second half of our semester, we will increasingly engage a more workshop-style approach to learning. Our workshop-sessions are meant to help you think about and develop technical capabilities: you will learn how to create a narrative game (using Twine), screen-capture, and edit video. We will begin to focus on composing our own "narrative games" while thinking through the possibilities of a more playful way of narrating our arguments and analyses, thoughts and ideas.

Primary Materials

Please note that this is an upper-level English course; therefore, the amount of reading, playing, and writing you will need complete over the course of the semester will be substantial. Students can expect an average of 50 pages of theoretical reading, anywhere between 15 minutes to 4 hours of game play, and short writing assignments every week. You can also check the website https://howlongtobeat.com/ to see how long it typically takes to finish a game. Be especially mindful about your schedule in the second half of the semester—you will need to spend significant time in the latter part of the fall playing the game for your final project, screen-recording your game sessions, researching, and editing videos alongside our regular work for class. You are welcome to contact me via email (raeyan@ufl.edu) or meet with me in office hours if you need help managing your time effectively.

Students must:
- Own computers/laptops that have the specifications needed to run video games, capture video, and edit video without issue
- Install **Steam** application/software and create a Steam account (https://store.steampowered.com/)
- Install **Twine 2.3.1** (https://twinery.org/) to your desktop
- Install opensource software **Open Broadcaster Software** (https://obsproject.com/download).
- For video-editing software:
  - Use what is most handy on your OS (e.g. iMovie or Adobe Premier Pro); however, if you do not have video-editing software pre-installed, you will need to plan to go to Library West or Marston Library computer labs and use the video-editing software available on their computers.

Total costs if you buy all the games can reach up to $141 before tax. You can cut costs by (1) splitting games with classmates by playing together or (2) watching Let's Play Youtube videos. I have included some suggested Let's Play videos that were chosen because they lack obtrusive player input; you may certainly search for your own Let's Plays that cover more material or have different play-throughs.[1] While you should endeavor to play (and finish!) each of the games assigned, watching the Let's Play Youtube videos can be a viable option when time is limited.

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[1] Please be aware that if you search for your own Let's Play videos, some circles of Let's Play makers may use derogatory sexist or even racist language.

Primary Works

- Molleindustria, *Every Day the Same Dream* (2009), free online**
    - http://www.molleindustria.org/everydaythesamedream/everydaythesamedream.html
- Dontnod Entertainment, *Life is Strange, Episodes 1 & 2* (2015)
    - Episode 1 is free on Steam and you can choose to watch a Let's Play of Episode 2, you can also choose to buy the whole game (5 episodes) for $19.99 https://store.steampowered.com/app/319630/Life_is_Strange__Episode_1/
    - Youtube Let's Play:
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC8TqVEGXsY
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvikTXGrC9Y
- Irrational Games, *Bioshock: Infinite* (2013), $29.99 on Steam
    - https://store.steampowered.com/app/8870/BioShock_Infinite/
    - Youtube Let's Play:
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elvGT8_ZiWo
    - Youtube All Cutscenes:
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elvGT8_ZiWo
- Galactic Cafe, *The Stanley Parable* (2013), $14.99 on Steam
    - https://store.steampowered.com/app/221910/The_Stanley_Parable/
    - Youtube Let's Play:
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIxwtqtM2FU
- Lucas Pope, *Papers, Please* (2013), $9.99 on Steam
    - https://store.steampowered.com/app/239030/Papers_Please/
    - Youtube Let's Play:
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmqkpRaSg2g
- Upper One Games, *Never Alone / Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* (2014), $14.99 on Steam
    - https://store.steampowered.com/app/295790/Never_Alone_Kisima_Ingitchuna/
    - Youtube Let's Play:
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tdqd7vrpIUI
- Sam Barlow, *Her Story* (2015), $5.99 on Steam
    - https://store.steampowered.com/app/368370/Her_Story/
    - Youtube Let's Play:
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFLsj1IfAB0
- Variable State, *Virginia* (2016), $9.99 on Steam
    - https://store.steampowered.com/app/374030/Virginia/
    - Youtube Let's Play:
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Opuhjw36vo0
- Zoe Quinn, Patrick Lindsey, and Isaac Schankler, *Depression Quest* (2013), free online**
    - http://www.depressionquest.com/dqfinal.html
- The Fullbright Company, *Gone Home* (2013), $14.99 on Steam
    - https://store.steampowered.com/app/232430/Gone_Home/
    - Youtube Let's Play:
        - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SS5eQmRgBlY
- Anna Anthropy, *Dys4ia* (2012), free online**
    - https://freegames.org/dys4ia/
- Numinous Games, *That Dragon, Cancer* (2016), $9.99 on Steam

- o https://store.steampowered.com/app/419460/That_Dragon_Cancer/
  - o Youtube Let's Play:
    - ▪ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e30a1DpKWvg
- − Malika Zouhali-Worrall and David Osit (directors), *Thank You for Playing* (2016), $2.99 to rent on Amazon
  - o https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B01D5HMLBU/ref=atv_dl_rdr
- − Aaron A. Reed, *Blue Lacuna* (2009), free online
  - o https://blue-lacuna.textories.com/
- − Twine Games
  - o Anna Anthropy, *Queers in Love at the End of the World*
    - ▪ https://w.itch.io/end-of-the-world
  - o Kris Ligman, *You are Jeff Bezos*
    - ▪ https://direkris.itch.io/you-are-jeff-bezos
  - o Kaitlin Tremblay, *Halfway, To The Lamppost*
    - ▪ https://kait_zilla.itch.io/halfway-to-the-lamppost
  - o Matthew S. Burns, *The Writer Will Do Something*
    - ▪ https://matthewseiji.itch.io/twwds
  - o AthenaParadigm, *Kindness*
    - ▪ https://athenaparadigm.itch.io/kindness
- − Mediatonic, *Hatoful Boyfriend* (2014), $9.99 on Steam
  - o https://store.steampowered.com/app/310080/Hatoful_Boyfriend/
  - o Youtube Let's Play:
    - ▪ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oy9ymHAidnE&list=PLvFk3QopsJR Ac-KHzor-tupYjomviPDwo
- − Team Salvato, *Doki Doki Literature Club* (2017), free on Steam**
  - o https://store.steampowered.com/app/698780/Doki_Doki_Literature_Club/
  - o Youtube Let's Play:
    - ▪ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msc1n57t-L8
- − Bennett Foddy, *Getting Over It with Bennett Foddy*
  - o watch Let's Play only
    - ▪ Note: a key aspect of *Getting Over It with Bennett Foddy* involves the reactions to game, search for a popular Youtuber who conducted a Let's Play of the game and note how they react in addition to the components of the game

In addition to texts, please buy and bring to class 1 pack of index cards.

Your other readings for this course will be supplied to you as either a link or a PDF in Canvas Course Reserves and/or Canvas Files.

For practical and detailed guidance about writing game analysis, you can read Clara Fernández-Vara's *Introduction to Game Analysis*, which is available through library Course Reserves as an ebook, as well as the Guide to Writing Synthesis Papers available in Canvas > Files.

Assignments

I. Meditations for Class Discussions (10 meditations, 250-400 words each)

As a seminar-style class, it is necessary for you to come to class prepared for discussion. To help you formulate ideas to bring forward during our class discussions and be accountable to your work, you are assigned the task of writing meditations about your games and posting 10 out of 22 possible meditations to our Canvas Discussion boards about the games, videos, and/or reading materials we cover in class. *These meditations should focus on defining and thinking about 1 or 2 key elements from the games, videos, and/or readings that we are covering for the day's session and speaking to what angered, confused, excited or shocked you about these ideas.* They can be written in a style or tone that is less formal than a standard paper, or even the presentations, but they do need to be thoughtful, precise in their use of definitions, and relevant to our studies in this class (and thus neither editorial nor autobiographical). Think about the characters, themes, procedural rhetoric, *mise en scène*, music, and other unique game elements. For example, you could write a meditation about the way the music shapes the narrative of *Bioshock: Infinite* or you could write a meditation on Ian Bogost's concept of "procedural rhetoric" as you think about a game like *Depression Quest*. Ideally, these meditations will serve as the seeds for your presentations and synthesis papers.

Meditations for a specific day's readings, games, and/or videos should be submitted by the appropriate day and time as noted in the Course Schedule. You will receive a full 10 points for producing a rich, detailed meditation of 250-400 words. You will receive half credit, 5 points, for composing an entry that is unclear (through lack of precision in terms or focus in subject) or for submitting a meditation between 250 words and 125 words. Zero points will be given if your post is less than 125 words or you do not make your post by the due date. Meditations are the only assignment you cannot turn in late, after the due date, for credit. You may, of course, submit more than 10 meditations to receive additional feedback on your ideas; note that your grade for the assignment in Canvas will be based on the 10 top-scoring meditations.

> Due: as appropriate on days when Meditations are due (see Course Schedule and Canvas Assignments)
> Deliverable: 10 posts of 250-400 words to appropriate Canvas discussions on due dates assigned

II. Game Analysis Presentations (2 per semester, 5 minutes each)

During the first week of class, you will sign up to give 2 game analysis presentations on 2 different games. The game analysis presentations should be an expansion on the kind of work you produce in your meditations. The presentation must consist of a 5-minute oral and visual presentation where you make 1 clear, original argument about 1 specific element of the game. You should use semiotic, narratological, genre-based, contextual, visual, and/or procedural approaches to analyzing the game and carefully prepare a presentation where you outline the terms, contexts, and evidence that support your argument using visualizations. Visualizations include PowerPoint, video clips, handouts, or any other form of visual presentation. You may also bring a script or pages of notes to aid your oral presentation. In preparation for your presentations, you should play your games as early as possible and get in contact with the others in class who will be presenting on the same game that week to make sure you do not overlap in topic. A Guide to Presentations with information about best presentation practices is available to

you via Canvas Files. You are welcome to email or schedule an office hour visit to plan or ask questions about your presentation.

If you would like, you may choose to work with the other presenters presenting on your day and produce a single 15-minute presentation where all 3 presenters participate equally to make arguments about the game for that week. In a group presentation, all participants must be willing to accept the same grade for every aspect of the presentation excluding the Delivery category. If this is your choice, you must email your instructor within a minimum 48-hour window before the delivery day so she can approve the choice and so you can ask any questions or concerns your group may have.

> Due: on days you selected, twice during the semester
> Deliverable: a 5-minute formal oral and visual presentation in front of the class, presentation and script (if you use one) must be posted on Canvas Discussions

III. Synthesis Papers (complete 2 papers, 4-5 pages each)

For each synthesis paper you write this semester, you must form an argumentative, original thesis that brings together—i.e. synthesizes—ideas from 2 different games and/or readings we have covered thus far in class. That is, you can make a synthesized argument about 2 games; you can synthesize an argument that combines a reading and a game; or you can synthesize ideas from 2 different readings. Building off the practices familiar to you from our class discussions, written meditations, and presentations, you should make arguments about games using semiotic, narrative, genre, contextual, visual, and/or procedural approaches. You may use ideas or games from your meditations or presentations as a jumping off point to write your synthesis papers, as long as you improve, expand, and/or revise your ideas and writing, refraining from any self-plagiarizing. You may **not** write both synthesis papers on the same games (i.e. you cannot write 2 synthesis papers on *Papers, Please*). Use MLA formatting for your citation and your Works Cited section. Works Cited does not count toward your page count.

You will need to submit a complete draft of your work for peer review by the specified dates. We will peer-review the draft during class session the next day, and then you will have until Sunday at 11:59pm that same week to submit a final version of your work.

> Draft Synthesis Paper 1 Due: Sunday, September 15, 11:59pm.
> Final Close-Reading Paper 1 Due: Sunday, September 22, 11:59pm.
> Draft Deliverable: Word document, 12 pt. font, Times New Roman or Cambria, 4-5 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, to appropriate Discussions thread in Canvas
> Final Deliverable: Word document, 12 pt. font, Times New Roman or Cambria, 4-5 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, to Assignments in Canvas

> Draft Synthesis Paper 2 Due: Sunday, October 13, 11:59pm
> Final Close-Reading Paper 2 Due: Sunday, October 20, 11:59pm.
> Draft Deliverable: Word document, 12 pt. font, Times New Roman or Cambria, 4-5 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, to appropriate Discussions thread in Canvas
> Final Deliverable: Word document, 12 pt. font, Times New Roman or Cambria, 4-5 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, to Assignments in Canvas

III. Twine Essay (minimum 10 passages)
This is a creative assignment and an opportunity for you to compose in a more experimental style and state what game and topic(s) you would like to discuss in your final project. The assignment is straightforward: create a Twine game that meditates on the significance of the game you want to study for your video essay and relevant topics/subjects of interest from narratology or ludology by using the ergodic elements of Twine to help a player explore your thoughts about your game and interests.

You **must** discuss at least 2 secondary sources in your Twine Essay that you plan to use in your final project. These secondary sources may be one of the readings/videos from class or you may choose to conduct some basic independent research on credible, reliable resources (**NO** webpages unless academic or made by credible researchers). Since this is a creative project, you will be assessed on meeting essential composition standards (directness in stating topic, precision with use of terms, clarity of style, thoroughness of research) alongside technicalities of composition, including the use of a minimum of 10 passages and the completion of a 250 to 300-word reflection on your Twine composition. Include MLA in-text sources and a Works Cited Twine passage. Works Cited does not count toward your passage count.

In your reflection, you should speak to what you found interesting or challenging about composing in Twine versus a more traditional platform as well as what central ideas you hope your audience will understand from playing your Twine game.

> Draft of Twine Essay Due: Thursday, November 14, 11:59pm.
> Final Twine Essay Due: Sunday, November 17, 11:59pm.
> Draft Deliverable: Twine file, live Twine game of at least 10 passages via http://www.philome.la/, and reflection uploaded to appropriate Discussions thread in Canvas
> Final Deliverable: Twine file, live Twine game of at least 10 passages via http://www.philome.la/, and reflection uploaded to Assignments in Canvas

IV. Final Project: Video Essay (7-10 minutes)
Your final project will be a video essay with an interpretive argument about a game of your choice to be posted publicly to Youtube for a broad audience of expert gamers, general game enthusiasts, and even, perhaps, random strangers. The only limitation on choice is that it cannot be a game that you have already written about in a synthesis paper.

If you would like to pick a game outside of the ones we have chosen for class, you can look at options from (1) Games for Change (http://www.gamesforchange.org/games/) or (2) Steam, but must do so in consultation with your instructor. The earlier you discuss your outside choice, the better, so make sure to schedule an office hour meeting about your decision early on. This project will require you to conduct additional research and find a minimum of 4 credible secondary sources we have covered in class, or which you research independently, to provide richer discussion and more precise terms about the subjects of your interest. Be critical in your assessment of secondary sources – you want to pick resources that show thoughtful research, analysis, and deliberation.

Your video essay should:
- focus on a single game of your choice (not one you have written about in a synthesis paper)
- make an original argument about how we should understand and interpret the game
- supply sufficient summary and contextual information about the game necessary for audience comprehension
- practice semiotic, narrative, genre, contextual, visual, and/or procedural approaches we have discussed in class to analyze the game
- provide ample evidence to support your original argument
- include synthesized and signposted arguments, both verbal and visual, from at least 4 reliable and credible secondary sources
- engage text, speech, images, and video as a multimodal essay
- show off your skills as a savvy speaker and/or video editor
- use quality audio and images
- properly cite works used (including music, images, etc.) in-video through verbal and visual signposting and a separate Works Cited in MLA format in video and description box of Youtube video

A part of your final project's final deliverable should include a 250-300 word meditation on the project. You should speak to what you found interesting or challenging about composing in video versus a more traditional platform as well as what central ideas you hope your audience will understand from watching your video.

Draft of Final Project Due: Tuesday, December 4, 11:59pm
Final of Final Project Due: Monday, December 9, 11:59pm
Draft Deliverable: link to public 7-10 minute video essay on Youtube with MLA citations in descriptions, Youtube link uploaded to appropriate Discussions thread in Canvas
Final Deliverable: 250 to 300-word meditation on project and link to public 7-10 minute video essay on Youtube with MLA citations in descriptions uploaded to Assignments in Canvas

Peer-Reviewing

As the Assignments section of the syllabus shows, students are expected to produce full drafts for peer-review sessions. These workshops serve three primary intellectual purposes:

1. **Engagement in regular scholarly practice of collegial peer-review.** Scholars in the field usually work in writing and/or accountability groups to ensure that work toward an intellectual project is produced in a timely manner and is reviewed for contextual and analytical rigor before final publication. This kind of practice allows you the opportunity to support your peers and helps you yourself to stay accountable in your own writing practices.

2. **Opportunity for reflection on materials covered during semester.** Not only will you be learning from your peers' work in their papers, but you will be practicing your own

close-reading and analysis skills as you review their papers. You want to offer your peers ideas about how they can expand their readings given your understanding of the texts, challenge their arguments with your own interpretations, and do your best to reframe ideas that may not make sense as they are currently stated into terms that anyone could understand.

3. **Familiarization with expectations of the compositional genre and method of assessment.** By using the rubric for the assignment to practice assessing someone else's writing, you will gain clarity about how you yourself will be assessed. Often, it is much easier to tell someone else how they can do better and then apply those same lessons to your own work than to think and revise entirely on your own.

At an even more practical level, the break in our regular reading schedule that peer-reviewing days provide gives you time to focus on your assignment project work. This break may be a good time to catch up on games and readings you fell behind on, schedule time to meet with your professor in office hours to discuss your work, and/or possibly get ahead.

Attendance

You may miss up to 3 courses without penalty to your final grade or need for explanation. More than 3 absences will result in successive penalties to your final grade that will result in 30 points taken off your general participation and final paper assignments per day missed. **If you miss 7 or more days of class, you will automatically fail the course**. The only exemptions to this policy are those absences involving university-sponsored events, military duty, court-mandated responsibilities, and religious holidays. Other exceptions may be made at the instructor's discretion for extenuating circumstances and will require that you provide a notice in advance of the absence along with necessary formal documentation from the Dean of Students or a medical provider. The official UF Attendance Policy can be found here. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class period. If you arrive after that point, you will be considered tardy. Tardiness leads to deductions in participation over the course of the semester.

Course Policies

All students must do the following to receive participation credit for this course:

1) **Abide by the UF Student Honor Code**. The Honor Code requires students to neither give nor receive unauthorized aid in completing all assignments. Violations include cheating, plagiarism, bribery, and misrepresentation. Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. Examples of plagiarism include presenting information from other resources as your own or citing phony sources or quotations to include in your assignments. Information on how to avoid plagiarism can be found on the Writing Studio's website here. Assignments containing plagiarized materials will receive a zero. The Honor Code defines plagiarism violations as follows:

> *Plagiarism. A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:*
> > *1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.*

2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

2) **Behave respectfully toward your classmates and instructor**. UF students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. This means that you will likely encounter ideas that may differ from your own. Relish this by showing respect. Disrespectful behavior in class will result in dismissal from the class period and will be counted as an absence. Your professor should be addressed appropriately by her formal title as either Professor or Doctor Yan and communications with her should be professional.

3) **Abide by UF's policy regarding sexual discrimination and sexual harassment**. UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from gender discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. Full information about UF policies regarding harassment can be found [here](#).

4) **Notify the instructor of any need for specific accommodations at the beginning of the semester or as soon as necessity arises**. The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565 or [website](#)), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor. Students should also be in contact with the Dean of Students through U Matter, We Care (umatter@ufl.edu) regarding general accommodation needs across courses. I will need emails from these resources on campus directly from the original source to provide accommodations for absences or extensions. I do not provide retroactive accommodations after documentation has been submitted; early written notification of accommodational needs is recommended. If you have a serious family and/or medical emergency you should be timely about contacting both (1) the Dean of Students via U Matter, We Care and (2) Disability Resource Center so that all of your faculty are well-prepared to accommodate your needs.

5) **Participate positively in class discussion and in-class activities**. Finish all assigned readings by the date in Course Schedules and, if you are turning in meditations, all meditations the night before our class meetings (by 11:59pm). You should prepare to positively engage in class discussion using your meditations and aim to participate at least once every other class. If you tend to be quieter in class, you might consider volunteering to read passages aloud, reflect on a classmate's idea, or offer a suggestion for a topic the class could discuss.

6) **Maintain good communication.** Keep up-to-date with Announcements in our Canvas site and emails addressed to you directly through your school email account or Canvas inbox. Ensure that you reach out and communicate with your instructor via her email (raeyan@ufl.edu) in case of emergency or any concern about the ability to meet goals or requirements in class as soon as possible. Your instructor will endeavor to email or message

you back with you within a 24 to 48-hour time span, please attempt to adhere to the same standard for replying to your instructor's direct messages.

7) **Complete submission of all assignments by their stated deadlines and in specified format**. Late assignments will receive a 10% grade deduction per 24 hours the assignment is late after the deadline. If an assignment is over 5 days late (including weekends) you will receive a 0 on the assignment. Incomplete assignments, including meditations, will receive credit appropriate to effort expended. Generally, you should use 12-point font in either Times New Roman or Cambria, double-spaced for paper assignments. Materials should be submitted via Canvas. As a student, you are responsible for ensuring that you submit the complete, correct version of your assignment on time. Double-check your submissions after you have put them on Canvas to ensure you have uploaded the appropriate files.

8) **Silence electronic devices and refrain from checking non-class related sites or materials during class.** Working on non-class related material or consistent distraction will result in your being marked absent and asked to leave the class.

9) **Save instructor comments and feedback for yourself.** It is *your responsibility* to collect and save copies of your assignments with instructor comments and feedback. This is especially important if you believe you will need a letter of recommendation, as you will need to give samples of your writing with the grades and comments that I gave you for these assignments before I will write you a letter.

10) **Complete online faculty evaluations** at the end of the course. These evaluations are conducted online here.

Grading

Your **final grade for the course** is calculated out of 1,000 points as follows:

Points toward Final Grade	Assignment
100 points	Participation
100 points	Meditations for Class Discussions (10 meditations x 10 points)
200 points	Game Analysis Presentations (2 presentations x 100 points)
200 points	Synthesis Papers (2 papers x 100 points)
100 points	Twine Essay
300 points	Final Project Video Essay

The grading scale is as follows:

A = 4.00	930-1000	B- = 2.67	800-829	D+ = 1.33	670-699
A- = 3.67	900-929	C+ = 2.33	770-799	D = 1.00	630-669
B+ = 3.33	870-899	C = 2.00	730-769	D- = 0.67	600-629
B = 3.00	830-869	C- = 1.67	700-729	E = 0.00	0-599

Grading rubrics for meditations (10 meditations worth 10 points each for a total of 100 points), game analysis presentations (2 presentations worth 100 points each presentation for a total of 200 points), synthesis papers (worth 100 points each for a total of 300 points), Twine essay (100 points), and your final project (300 points) can be found on the Canvas site. Completing work for peer-review workshopping will count towards your participation in concrete ways (10 points for completion of full draft and peer reviewing during class session).

If you would like to talk to me about particular concerns regarding a grade on an assignment or your grade for the course, be timely and schedule an office hour appointment to meet with me one-on-one. I do not discuss grades for an assignment—excluding the final assignment—more than 2 weeks after I have issued the grade assessment. I also do not discuss particularities about grades over email as it is a violation of FERPA regulations.

Course Schedule

The schedule for this course is subject to change according to necessity. You will be updated of such changes as soon as they are made. If there is an unexpected class cancellation, you should look for my direct communications.

Most readings can be found in Course Reserves on our Canvas site. Any readings labeled "optional" are not required reading, though they will be discussed in class. Optional readings have been listed so that you may have the bibliographic information to find the original source material for citation in your papers and projects if needed.

Week 1: Starting with Narrative and Stories in *Every Day the Same Dream*
Wednesday, 8/21:
- − Syllabus
- − Read 3 pieces:
  - o Baldick, Chris. "sjuzet." *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford University Press, 2015. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198715443.001.0001/acref-9780198715443-e-1059.
  - o Baldick, Chris. "fabula." *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford University Press, 2015. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198715443.001.0001/acref-9780198715443-e-442?rskey=SwbWMT&result=1.
  - o Onega, Susana and José Angel García Landa. "Preliminaries" from the Introduction. *Narratology: An Introduction*. Longman, 1996, pp.1-3.
- − Optional Readings
  - o Shklovsky, Victor. "Art as Technique." *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Translated by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis. University of Nebraska Press, 1965, pp. 3-24. [If you read this, skim beginning and focus on pages 12-24.]
  - o Huizinga, Johan. "Nature and Significance of Play as Cultural Phenomenon." *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. 1944. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, pp. 1-27.

Friday, 8/23:
- **Finish playing *Every Day the Same Dream***
- Read 2 pieces:
    - o Genette, Gerard. Introduction. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. 1972. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Cornell University Press, 1980, pp. 25-32.
    - o Bal, Mieke. Introduction. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 1978. Translated by Christine Van Boheemen. University of Toronto Press, 1997, pp. 3-14.
- Meditation 1 Due Thursday 8/22, 11:59pm

Week 2: A Language for Gaming using *Life is Strange: Episodes 1 and 2*
Monday, 8/26:
- Read pp. 1-28 of Bogost, Ian. "Procedural Rhetoric." *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*. MIT Press, 2007, pp. 1-64.
- Meditation 2 Due Sunday 8/25, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 8/28:
- **Finish playing/watching *Life is Strange, Episodes 1 & 2***
- Read pp. 28-64 of Bogost, Ian. "Procedural Rhetoric." *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*. MIT Press, 2007, pp. 1-64.
- Meditation 3 Due Tuesday 8/27, 11:59pm

Friday, 8/30:
- Presentation 1 on *Life is Strange, Episodes 1 & 2*
- Presentation 2 on *Life is Strange, Episode 1 & 2*
- Presentation 3 on *Life is Strange, Episode 1 & 2*

Week 3: Understanding Procedural Rhetoric and *The Stanley Parable*
Monday, 9/2: Labor Day, No Class
Wednesday, 9/4:
- Read McLuhan, Marshall. *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. Graphics by Quentin Fiore. Coordinated by Jerome Agel. Bantam, 1967.
    - o https://archive.org/details/pdfy-vNiFct6b-L5ucJEa
- Meditation 4 Due Tuesday 9/3, 11:59pm

Friday, 9/6:
- **Finish playing/watching *The Stanley Parable* (at least twice)**
- Presentation 4 on *The Stanley Parable*
- Presentation 5 on *The Stanley Parable*
- Presentation 6 on *The Stanley Parable*

Week 4: Visualizing Violence in *Bioshock: Infinite*

Monday, 9/9:
- Read Corrigan, Timothy "Chapter 3: Film and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing." *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*. 8th ed., Pearson, 2012, pp. 36-81.
    - o *Note: I have included the Corrigan's Film Term Glossary in the PDF for you to use as a reference document. See pp. 174-177.*

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- Watch
  - o "15 Essential Camera Shots, Angles and Movements in Filmmaking." *Youtube*, uploaded by wolfcrow, 12 Sep 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y0ouVBcogU.
  - o "Applied Cinematic Studies – Diegetic vs Non-Diegetic Explained." *Youtube*, uploaded by Videomaker, 8 July 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jd0kQLD7JS8.
- (optional reading) "Part 1: Basic Terms", "Part 2: Mise-en-scene", "Part 3: Cinematography" from Yale Film Analysis Website, https://filmanalysis.coursepress.yale.edu/
- Meditation 5 Due Sunday 9/8, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 9/11:
- Ellison, Cara and Brendon Keogh. "The Joy of Virtual Violence." *The State of Play: Creators and Critics on Video Game Culture*. Edited by Daniel Goldberg and Linus Larrson. Seven Stories Press, 2015, pp. 141-156.
- Meditation 6 Due Tuesday 9/10, 11:59pm

Friday, 9/13:
- **Finish playing/watching at least 3 hours of *Bioshock: Infinite***
- Presentation 7 on *Bioshock: Infinite*
- Presentation 8 on *Bioshock: Infinite*
- Presentation 9 on *Bioshock: Infinite*

Week 5: Agency and *Papers, Please*

Monday, 9/16:
- **Draft of Synthesis Paper 1 due Sunday, 9/15, 11:59pm**
- No gaming/readings, bring laptops to class. Peer Review Workshopping.
- **Final Version of Synthesis Paper 1 due Sunday, 9/22, 11:59pm**

Wednesday, 9/18:
- Read Murray, Janet H. "Agency." *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. The Free Press, 1997, pp. 126-153.
- Meditation 7 Due Tuesday 9/17, 11:59pm

Friday, 9/20:
- **Finish playing/watching 3 hours of *Papers, Please***
- Presentation 10 on *Papers, Please*
- Presentation 11 on *Papers, Please*
- Presentation 12 on *Papers, Please*

Week 6: *Never Alone / Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* as Edutainment

Monday, 9/23:
- Read
  - o Byrd, Christopher. "Video Game Review: In 'Never Alone' Native Alaskans explore the future of oral tradition." *Washington Post,* 29 Dec 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/comic-riffs/wp/2014/12/29/never-alone-review-native-alaskans-explore-the-future-of-oral-tradition/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6df0fb916c7d

- o Starkey, Daniel. "Never Alone review: It's cold outside." *Eurogamer.net*, 20 Nov 2014, https://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2014-11-20-never-alone.
- − Meditation 8 Due Sunday 9/22, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 9/25:
- − Read Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon, Jonas Heide Smith and Susana Pajares Tosca. "Serious Games—When Entertainment is Not Enough." *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction.* Routledge, 2008, pp. 233-261.
- − Meditation 9 Due Tuesday 9/24, 11:59pm

Friday, 9/27:
- − **Finish playing/watching *Never Alone / Kisima Inŋitchuŋa***
- − Presentation 13 on *Never Alone / Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*
- − Presentation 14 on *Never Alone / Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*
- − Presentation 15 on *Never Alone / Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*

Week 7: Metagaming in *Her Story*

Monday, 9/30:
- − Read Bolu, Stephanie and Patrick Lemieux. Introduction. *Metagaming: Playing, Competing, Spectating, Cheating, Trading, Making, and Breaking Videogames.* University of Minnesota Press, 2017. http://manifold.umn.edu/metagaming
- − Meditation 10 Due Sunday 9/29, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 10/2:
- − **Finish playing/watching *Her Story***
- − Presentation 16 on *Her Story*
- − Presentation 17 on *Her Story*
- − Presentation 18 on *Her Story*

Friday, 10/4: No Class, Homecoming

Week 8: *Virginia* and the Role of Characters

Monday, 10/7:
- − Read Bogost, Ian. "Video Games Are Better Without Characters." *The Atlantic*, The Atlantic Monthly Group, 13 March 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/03/video-games-are-better-without-characters/387556/.
- − Meditation 11 Due Sunday 10/6, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 10/9:
- − **Finish playing/watching *Virginia***
- − Read Fordyce, Robbie, Timothy Neale, and Thomas Apperley. "Avatars: Addressing Racism and Racialized Address." *Woke Gaming: Digital Challenges to Oppression and Social Justice.* Edited by Kishonna L. Gray and David J. Leonard. University of Washington Press, 2018, pp. 117-125.
- − Meditation 12 Due Tuesday 10/8, 11:59pm

Friday, 10/11:
- − Presentation 19 on *Virginia*
- − Presentation 20 on *Virginia*
- − Presentation 21 on *Virginia*

Week 9: The Cultural Impacts of Gamergate and *Depression Quest*

Monday, 10/14:
- **Draft of Synthesis Paper 2 due Sunday, 10/13, 11:59pm**
- No gaming/readings, bring laptops to class. Peer Review Workshopping.
- **Final Version of Synthesis Paper 2 due Sunday, 10/20, 11:59pm**

Wednesday, 10/16:
- **Finish playing *Depression Quest***
- Read
    - Parkin, Simon. "Zoe Quinn's Depression Quest." *The New Yorker*, 9 Sep 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/zoe-quinns-depression-quest.
    - Quinn, Zoe. "A Game I Had to Make." *The State of Play: Creators and Critics on Video Game Culture*. Edited by Daniel Goldberg and Linus Larrson. Seven Stories Press, 2015, pp. 85-102.
- Meditation 13 Due Tuesday 10/15, 11:59pm

Friday, 10/18: No Class, Professional Engagement

Week 10: Representing Narratives about Gender and Sexuality in *Gone Home*

Monday, 10/21:
- Read Shaw, Adrienne. Introduction and Conclusion. *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014, pp. 1-11, 201-232.
- Meditation 14 Due Sunday 10/20, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 10/23:
- Read Pavlounis, Dimitrios. "Straightening Up the Archive: Queer Historiography, Queer Play, and the Archival Politics of *Gone Home*." *Television & New Media*, vol. 17, no. 7, Nov. 2016, pp. 579-594.
- (optional reading) Snyder, Shane. "The Impossible Relationship: Deconstructing the Private Space in *Gone Home*." *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds*, vol. 10, no. 1, March 2018, pp. 7-20.
- **Finish playing *Gone Home***
- Meditation 15 Due Tuesday 10/22, 11:59pm

Friday, 10/25:
- Presentation 22 on *Gone Home*
- Presentation 23 on *Gone Home*
- Presentation 24 on *Gone Home*

Week 11: *dys4ia* and *That Dragon, Cancer* as Empathy Games

Monday, 10/28:
- **Finish playing *Dys4ia* (https://freegames.org/dys4ia/)**
- Read Anthropy, Anna. "babycastles presents anna anthropy presents the road to empathy"/"Empathy Game." *Auntie Pixelante*, 24 June 2015, http://auntiepixelante.com/?p=2408.**

- o Anthropy has since taken this essay down, but you may access it for free via the Wayback Machine:
    https://web.archive.org/web/20160801022744/http://auntiepixelante.com/?p=2408
- − Read Bogost, Ian. "Empathy." *How to Do Things with Video Games*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011, pp. 18-23.
- − Meditation 16 Due Sunday 10/27, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 10/30:
- − **Finish playing/watching *That Dragon Cancer***
- − Watch *Thank You For Playing* (2015).
- − Meditation 17 Due Tuesday 10/29, 11:59pm

Friday, 11/1:
- − Presentation 25 on *That Dragon, Cancer*
- − Presentation 26 on *That Dragon, Cancer*
- − Presentation 27 on *That Dragon, Cancer*

Week 12: Ergodic Literature and *Blue Lacuna*
Monday, 11/4:
- − **Finish playing 2 hours of *Blue Lacuna***
- − Read Aarseth, Espen J. "Introduction: Ergodic Literature." *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 1-23.
- − Meditation 18 Due Sunday 11/3, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 11/5:
- − No additional gaming/readings, bring laptops to class. In-class Twine Essay workshop (picking topic and learning Twine).

Friday, 11/9:
- − No additional gaming/reading, bring laptops to class. Final Project screen-capturing workshop.

Week 13: Twine Games
Monday, 11/11: Veterans Day, No Class
Wednesday, 11/13:
- − **Finish playing 5 Twine games:**
    - o **Anna Anthropy, *Queers in Love at the End of the World***
        - ▪ **https://w.itch.io/end-of-the-world**
    - o **Kris Ligman, *You are Jeff Bezos***
        - ▪ **https://direkris.itch.io/you-are-jeff-bezos**
    - o **Kaitlin Tremblay, *Halfway, To The Lamppost***
        - ▪ **https://kait_zilla.itch.io/halfway-to-the-lamppost**
    - o **Matthew S. Burns, *The Writer Will Do Something***
        - ▪ **https://matthewseiji.itch.io/twwds**
    - o **Athena Sylvain, *Kindness***
        - ▪ **https://athenaparadigm.itch.io/kindness**
- − Meditation 19 Due Tuesday 11/12, 11:59pm

Friday, 11/15:
- − **DRAFT Twine Essay Thursday, 11/14, 11:59pm.**

- No gaming/reading, bring laptops to class. Twine Play Test Peer Review.
- **Final Twine Essay due Sunday, 11/17, 11:59pm.**

Week 14: Playing with Genre in *Hatoful Boyfriend* and *Doki Doki Literature Club*
Monday, 11/18:
- **Finish playing *Hatoful Boyfriend***
- Read Bogost, Ian. "Titillation." *How to Do Things with Video Games*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011, pp. 103-109.
- Meditation 20 Due Sunday 11/17, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 11/20:
- **Finish playing *Doki Doki Literature Club***
- Read Krapp, Peter. "Gaming the Glitch: Room for Error." *Noise Channels: Glitch and Error in Digital Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011, pp. 75-92.
- Meditation 21 Due Tuesday 11/19, 11:59pm

Friday, 11/22:
- Presentation 28 on *Doki Doki Literature Club* or *Hatoful Boyfriend*
- Presentation 29 on *Doki Doki Literature Club* or *Hatoful Boyfriend*
- Presentation 30 on *Doki Doki Literature Club* or *Hatoful Boyfriend*

Week 15: Workshopping Video Essays
Monday, 11/25:
- No gaming/reading, bring laptops to class. Final Project Workshopping.

Wednesday, 11/27: No Class, Thanksgiving Break
Friday, 11/29: No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Week 16: Critical Failure
Monday, 12/2:
- **Watch Let's Play of *Getting Over It with Bennett Foddy***
  - *Note: Watch Let's Play only. A key aspect of Getting Over It with Bennett Foddy involves the reactions to game, search for a popular Youtuber who completed a Let's Play of the game and note how they react in addition to the components of the game. We will discuss the different Youtuber reactions you found on your own during class.*
- Read Juul, Jesper. Introduction and "The Paradox of Failure and the Paradox of Tragedy." *The Art of Failure: An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games*. MIT Press, 2013, pp.1-45.
- Read Halberstam, Jack and Jesper Juul. "The Arts of Failure: Jack Halberstam in Conversation with Jesper Juul." Moderated by Bonnie Ruberg. *Queer Game Studies*. Edited by Bonnie Ruberg and Adrienne Shaw. University of Minnesota Press, 2017, pp. 201-210.
- Meditation 22 Due Sunday 12/1, 11:59pm

Wednesday, 12/4: Last Day of Class
- **Draft of Final Project Due: Tuesday, 12/3, 11:59pm**
- No gaming/reading. Final Project Peer-Review.

***** Final version of Final Project due Monday, December 9, at 11:59pm. *****