

# FILM 140: Digital Game Cultures

## CONTACT

Prof. Jacob Gaboury  
Dwinelle 188

Office Hours: Monday 3-5pm  
Office Location: 6223 Dwinelle

**Lecture:** Mon/Wed 12:30-2:00

**Game Lab:** Mon 6:00-9:00

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class offers a broad introduction to the phenomenon of video games, focusing primarily on Western U.S. histories and cultural practices. We will investigate the relationship between play and games, learn how to analyze and practice basic game design principals, examine current events around issues of race, gender and inclusivity in the contemporary game scene, study cultural practices as diverse as modding, cheating, and gold farming, and come to better understand the stakes of growing practices in e-sports and global game economies. In short, this course will transform the simple everyday pleasures of games into something new, complex, and unfamiliar.

All readings are available via the course reader, which may be purchased at Instant Copying and Laser Printing, 2138 University Ave.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course has been designed to help you learn how to:

- Apply concepts and tools drawn from game studies in order to understand the links between technology, the arts, and humanities.
- Categorize and evaluate games based on genre, design, and context, employing vocabulary native to media studies, game studies and game design.
- Describe the relationships between play, electronic games, and broader cultural, social and economic forces.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **1\_Introductions**

**08/22**

LECTURE:

Introduction and Syllabus Presentation

### **2\_GAME**

**08/27**

LECTURE:

What is a Game?

LAB:

Playing, Watching, and Reading Games

**08/29**

READING:

McGonigal, Jane. "Reality is Broken" and "What Exactly is a Game?" in *Reality is broken: Why games make us better and how they can change the world*. Penguin, 2011.

Salen, Katie, Katie Salen Tekinbaş, and Eric Zimmerman. "Defining Games," "Defining Digital Games," and "Defining Play" in *Rules of play: Game design fundamentals*. MIT press, 2004.

### **3\_GAMER**

**09/03**

**NO CLASS**

Labor Day

**09/05**

READING:

Rossignol, Jim. "How Games Make Gamers" in *This gaming life: Travels in three cities*. University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Nooney, Laine. "A pedestal, a table, a love letter: Archaeologies of gender in videogame history." *Game Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013).

Shaw, Adrienne. "On not becoming gamers: Moving beyond the constructed audience." *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 2 (2013).

BRING:

Personal Game History

## **4\_DEBATE**

**09/10**

LECTURE:

Narratology vs. Ludology

SCREENING:

*Gamer*. Written and Directed by Nevelandine and Taylor (2009)

**09/12**

READING:

Juul, Jesper. "Games telling stories." *Game studies* 1, no. 1 (2001).

Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Computer Games as Narrative" in *Avatars of story*. U of Minnesota Press, 2006.

ACTIVITY:

Class Debate

## **5\_HISTORY**

**09/17**

LECTURE:

Arcades, Consoles, and Microcomputing

VISIT:

Museum of Art and Digital Entertainment  
3400 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94611

**09/19**

READING:

Kocurek, Carly. "Coin-Drop Capitalism: Economic Lessons from the Video Game Arcade." in *Before the crash: Early video game history*. Mark Wolf, ed. Wayne State University Press, 2012.

Newman, Michael Z. "'Don't Watch TV Tonight. Play It!' Early Video Games and Television" in *Atari age: The emergence of video games in America*. MIT Press, 2017.

## **6\_PREHISTORY**

**09/24**

LECTURE:

Games Before Games

SCREENING:

“When Games Went Click: The Story of Tennis for Two” The Vldar Company (2013)

**09/26**

READING:

Lenoir, Tim, and Henry Lowood. "Theaters of war: The military-entertainment complex." *Collection-Laboratory Theater: Scenes of knowledge in the 17th century* 1 (2005).

## **7\_PLATFORM**

**10/01**

LECTURE:

Hardware, Software, Code

LAB:

Hardware Analysis

**10/03**

READING:

Bogost, Ian, and Nick Montfort. "Platform studies: Frequently asked questions." In *Proceedings of the Digital Arts and Culture Conference*. 2009.

Rentschler, Kyle. "Values in Game Hardware" in *Values at play in digital games*. Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum eds. MIT Press, 2014.

Jones, Steven E., and George K. Thiruvathukal. "Core Controller: The Wii Remote" in *Codename revolution: the Nintendo Wii platform*. MIT Press, 2012.

## **8\_MIDTERM**

**10/08**

**NO CLASS**

“Screen Images Reloaded” Workshop Presentation. Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts. Lucerne, Switzerland.

**10/10**

**IN CLASS MIDTERM**

**9\_DESIGN**

**10/15**

LECTURE:

Game Design Fundamentals

READING:

Salen, Katie, Katie Salen Tekinbaş, and Eric Zimmerman. "Design,"  
"Systems," and "Interactivity" in *Rules of play: Game design  
fundamentals*. MIT press, 2004.

LAB:

Game Jam

**10/17**

**NO CLASS**

Panel Presentation

Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present – New Orleans, LA

**10\_DIFFERENCE**

**03/22**

LECTURE:

Game Cultures

LAB:

Mobile, Casual, and Feminized Games

**10/24**

READING:

Shaw, Adrienne. "From *Custer's Revenge* and *Mario* to *Fable* and *Fallout*:  
Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Digital Games" in *Gaming at the edge:  
Sexuality and gender at the margins of gamer culture*. Univ Of  
Minnesota Press, 2015.

Massanari, Adrienne. "# Gamergate and The Fappening: How Reddit's  
algorithm, governance, and culture support toxic technocultures." *New  
Media & Society* 19, no. 3 (2017): 329-346.

## 11\_QUEER

**10/29**

LECTURE:

Glitch, Failure, and Non-Normative Play

LAB:

Queer and Alternative Games

**10/31**

READING:

Anthropy, Anna. "The Problem with Videogames" in *Rise of the videogame zinesters: How freaks, normals, amateurs, artists, dreamers, drop-outs, queers, housewives, and people like you are taking back an art form*. Seven Stories Press, 2012.

Kopas, Merrit "What is Queerness in Games, Anyway?" in *Queer game studies*. Bonnie Ruberg and Adrienne Shaw eds. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

## 12\_ART

**11/05**

LECTURE:

Games and/as Art

LAB:

Art Games and Hybrid Games

**11/07**

READING:

Sharp, John. "Game Art" and "Art Games" in *Works of game: On the aesthetics of games and art*. MIT Press, 2015.

## 13\_MONEY

**11/12**

LECTURE:

Microtransactions, Lootboxes, and Gambling

LAB:

Game Economies / Economy Games

**11/14**

READING:

Schüll, Natasha Dow. "Perfect Contingency: From Control to Compulsion" in *Addiction by design: Machine gambling in Las Vegas*. Princeton University Press, 2012.

Nieborg, David. "From premium to freemium: The political economy of the app." *Social, casual, and mobile games: The changing gaming landscape* (2016): 225-240.

Nakamura, Lisa. "Don't hate the player, hate the game: The racialization of labor in World of Warcraft." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 26, no. 2 (2009): 128-144.

**14\_BREAK**

**11/19**

**NO CLASS**

Panel Presentation

Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts – Toronto, ON

**11/21**

**NO CLASS**

Thanksgiving Break

**15\_SPORT**

**11/26**

LECTURE:

Professionalization and the Future of Games

LAB:

Game Tournament

**11/28**

READING:

Taylor, T. L. "Computer Games as Professional Sport" in *Raising the Stakes: E-sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming*. Mit Press, 2012.

Watch the videos in this article:

<http://kotaku.com/5820907/the-10-best-moments-in-pro-gaming-history>

**12/12**

## **FINAL PROJECTS DUE**

### **ASSESSMENT**

10% Engagement  
15% Exit Tickets  
15% Reading Responses  
30% Midterm  
30% Final Project

### **ENGAGEMENT**

I expect you to attend and actively engage in class. You will notice that you are being graded not simply on your attendance, but on your engagement with the class. Engagement can mean any number of things, from asking questions in class to engaging course material both in and out of class. I recognize that different students have different learning styles, and may find it challenging to speak up every day in discussion. The important thing is that you find ways to make your engagement legible to me as best you can. If you think you are struggling with this, please meet with me during office hours to discuss.

### **EXIT TICKETS**

At the end of each class, I will give you five minutes to write an exit ticket, registering your attendance in class. An exit ticket is a 3"x5" notecard on which you write:

1. Your name
2. One of the following:
  - a. An issue we did not address that you would like addressed
  - b. A question you have based on today's discussion
  - c. A point you still do not understand that you want clarified
  - d. A question you wanted to ask but did not

I will collect these cards at the end of class and, based on your feedback, will structure the beginning of our next lecture accordingly. You will be required to bring a 3"x5" notecard with you to each class.

If for whatever reason you cannot make class, you will be allowed two class absences per semester. Beyond these two, any absences will impact your grade. More than four absences will result in your failing the course.



## **READING RESPONSES**

Each week you will be required to produce a 250-word response to the readings, due via bCourses by 11:59pm on Tuesday night. Your response may engage the themes of the reading, compare the readings to one another, relate the readings to our weekly lecture, or provide a question to stimulate class discussion. The goal of the response is to demonstrate engagement with the text and to provide a basis for class discussion. Responses will be graded as pass/fail.

## **MIDTERM**

There will be an in-class midterm held on October 8<sup>th</sup>. The midterm will be comprised of terminology identifications, short answers, and an essay, and will cover all material from the first half of the course. There will be no in-class final.

## **FINAL PROJECT**

There will be a final project due by the end of the day on December 12 via email. Students may choose one of two options for the final project: an academic essay of 8-10 pages, or a digital game accompanied by a 5-page description, analysis, and justification. The long essay will be written in response to a prompt given to the class several weeks prior to the due date, while the Twine game will be based on our in-class game design workshop and the student's own goals and interests. Assignments sheets and further information can be found on bCourses.

## **POLICIES**

### **TECHNOLOGY**

Laptops, smartphones, and tablets will not be allowed in class. All notes should be taken by hand, and you should come prepared to each class with paper, pen, and the course reader.

### **LATE POLICY**

I may offer extensions on writing assignments only if you provide me with at least three days' notice and sufficient evidence that you are working on an idea that requires more time. This does not guarantee an extension, but rather is the base requirement for a request. Do not ask for an extension the day before an assignment is due, or if you have not started writing yet. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 a grade for each day they are late (B+ to a B, B to a B-, etc.).

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity>.

### **DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

If you have a documented physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Berkeley Disabled Students Program, 260 César E. Chávez Student Center, #4250, (510) 643-0518. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.