DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to the emerging field of game studies with specific emphasis on humanistic approaches to the study of digital games and their philosophical implications. In addition to studying a range of critical and theoretical approaches to digital games, the course will pay particular attention to the gendered and racialized dimensions of games and game play.

This course is also an experiment: a collaborative effort among faculty members, librarians, and students to provide an overview of a new and emerging field of study. We hope that you will provide feedback over the course of the quarter and be patient with us and with one another as we pick our way through the interdisciplinary field of game studies.
CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

definitions (3 @ 10% ea): Select a concept that’s central to a specific reading (algorithm, ludology, narratology, ideology, cultural capital). Write a 2 paragraph (single-spaced) definition of the concept that pays careful attention to what the text itself has to say. The purpose of these definitions is to really grapple with the meanings of the readings, so cite the text and engage with it. Other assignments will allow you to apply the concepts to examples of games and gaming, but for this one, you will focus on the text. Definitions must be posted on the course website by noon on the day they’re due. Sign-up for these will take place on the first day of class. You are responsible for keeping track of how many definitions you have signed up for – late definitions will not be accepted.

collaborative analysis (15%): In groups of 2-3, write a 3-page analysis of an assigned reading (sign-up will take place during the first class). An analysis should: a) summarize and synthesize the reading’s argument; b) provide an illustration of the assigned reading using facebook’s Frontierville that critically responds to the reading. We strongly recommend that you begin playing Frontierville at the beginning of the quarter, since it will serve as a common text for the duration of the course.

final analysis presentation (5%): You will also be expected to give a brief (5 minute) presentation on the topic of your final analysis by or before Week Five. Presentations will be old school (no powerpoints or other visual aids).

draft of final analysis (20%): a 2-page abstract for your final analysis.

final analysis (8-10 pp. u/g; 15-20 pp. grad) (30%): The analysis will apply one (or more, for those of you who are ambitious) critical theory to a game you will select at the beginning of the quarter. The definitions and collaborative analytics are designed to help you focus over the course of the quarter and generate a sufficiently narrow and original analysis. You might wish to focus on race and representation in the game you’ve selected; you may want to focus on some aspect of fan culture; you may want to consider the political economy of the genre of the game you’ve selected. We are also encouraging students to work on clustered topics (MMOs, fps games, cell phone games), so that you can share citations and play experience with one another.
NB: Should you at any point have an alternative suggestion for an assignment that grows more directly out of your own research interests, just let us know by email and we can discuss options.

LAB ASSIGNMENTS:

draft bibliography (40%): Without a good bibliography, you’ll spend a lot of time spinning your research wheels, wondering, “Where did I read that!?”. This draft should be comprehensive, building on resources you use for writing your definitions, collaborative analytic piece, and what you anticipate you’ll need for your final analysis. You are strongly encouraged to use Endnote, Zotero, or Mendeley as you build your bibliography. It must be formatted using The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed. This assignment is weighted heavily to encourage you to start your research early. Credit will be given primarily for content (the breadth, depth, and creativity of your research). For this draft, we are less concerned with proper formatting.

final bibliography (20%): Essentially your draft bibliography with the addition of any resources you’ve discovered since its submission. This will include the works cited in your final analysis. Full credit will be earned only through extreme attention to detail regarding the formatting requirements of The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed.

in-lab questions (20%): These will be completed in-class during the first 5 minutes of every lab. The questions will use a short-answer format to gauge engagement with assigned lab readings and will help tie together the readings with the games we will be playing in each lab.

play logs (20%): We expect that you will maintain a play log for the duration of class, detailing how much time you spend playing specific games outside of class. You’ll fill out play logs via a web form on the course website (http://ufolio.uoregon.edu/gamestudies/playlog/). The log will consist of the date and duration of play sessions, as well as the name(s) of the game(s) played.

NB: You will be assigned a separate grade for the class and the lab. Questions about grades for the class should be directed to Carol. Questions about grades for the lab should be directed to Annie and David.
TIME LINE

1. Week One:
   - Sign up for definitions
   - Sign up for collaborative analysis
   - Schedule a meeting with Carol, David, and Annie to discuss possible focus for final analysis and select game you’ll be playing
   - Begin maintaining play log

2. Week Two:
   - Continue maintaining play log
   - Workshop final analysis ideas
   - Definitions due

3. Week Three:
   - Continue maintaining play log
   - Workshop final analysis ideas
   - Definitions due

4. Week Four:
   - Continue maintaining play log
   - All workshops of final analysis ideas completed
   - Definitions due

5. Week Five:
   - Draft of bibliography and final analysis due
   - Definitions due

6. Week Six:
   - Continue maintaining play log
   - Definitions due

7. Week Seven:
   - Final analysis abstracts due on Monday, February 14
   - Definitions due

8. Week Eight:
   - Continue maintaining play log
   - Definitions due
9. Week Nine:
   - Collaborative analysis due

10. Week Ten:
    - Final play log entry
    - Turn in final bibliography in lab
    - Last round of definitions due

11. Final analyses due on Tuesday, 3/15 by noon

READINGS

WEEK ONE

i. Histories/Contexts

Monday, January 3
   - Workshop final analysis ideas (2 graduate students)

Tuesday, January 4
   - Workshop final analysis ideas (3 graduate students)

Wednesday, January 5
   - Workshop final analysis ideas (2 undergards)

WEEK TWO

Class, Monday, January 10
“History of Video Games,”

In-class screening:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/

Workshop final analysis ideas (3 undergrads)

Definitions posted by noon on website

Lab, Tuesday, January 11


Alex Chitu, “Google Chrome and the Original Google,” Google Operating System,
http://googlesystem.blogspot.com/2009/04/google-chrome-and-original-google.html

Workshop final analysis ideas (3 undergrads)

Class, Wednesday, January 12

Lev Manovich, “What is New Media?”, The Language of New Media, MIT Press, 2001, 19-61

Workshop final analysis ideas (3 undergrads)

Definitions posted by noon on website

Recommended:


WEEK THREE

ii. Critical Theories

Class, Monday, January 17

Dr. Martin Luther King’s Birthday – no class

Lab, Tuesday, January 18


David Foster Wallace, Infinite Jest, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1996, 144-151

Workshop final analysis ideas (3 undergrads)

Recommended:

Class, Wednesday, January 19
- Walter Holland, Henry Jenkins, Kurt Squire, “Theory by Design,” The Video Game Theory Reader
- Workshop final analysis ideas (3 undergrads)

WEEK FOUR
Class, Monday, January 24
- Definitions posted by noon on website
- Workshop final analysis ideas (3 undergrads)

Lab, Tuesday, January 25
- Workshop final analysis ideas (3 undergrads)

Recommended:

Class, Wednesday, January 26
- Workshop final analysis ideas (3 undergrads)

WEEK FIVE
Class, Monday, January 31
• draft of final analysis abstract and draft bibliography due

Recommended:

Lab, Tuesday, February 1
• The Pokemon Database, “Pokemon dual-type charts,” http://pokemondb.net/type/dual

Class, Wednesday, February 2
• Gonzalo Frasca, “Ludologists Love Stories, Too: Notes from a Debate that Never Took Place” http://www.digra.org/dl/db/05163.01125
• Definitions posted by noon on website

WEEK SIX
iii. Representation, Identity, and Fandom
Class, Monday, February 5
• Pierre Bourdieu, “How Can One be a Sports Fan?” The Cultural Studies Reader, Ed. Simon During, 1993 http://books.google.com/books?id=Vv_ocJqva_kC&pg=PA427&lpg=P A427&dq=pierre+bourdieu+sports&source=bl&ots=1BpBrxBO0_&sig=H PG3Qz76KgZ50QH7nh3ZpqAnA9o&hl=en&ei=g8AQTYerKYzAsAP_rL SwCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=7&ved=0CFsQ6AEwBg #v=onepage&q=pierre%20bourdieu%20sports&f=false
• Definitions posted by noon on website

Recommended:

**Lab, Tuesday, February 6**
  Recommended:

**Class, Wednesday, February 7**
  Recommended:
  - Definitions posted by noon on website

**WEEK SEVEN**

**Class, Monday, February 14**
 Definitions posted by noon on website

Lab, Tuesday, February 15
   Super There Will Be Blood, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pg_8BiYDGCI
   Super Mario Brothers – Frustration, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=in6RZzdGki8
Recommended:

Class, Wednesday, February 16
   Definitions posted by noon on website

WEEK EIGHT

Class, Monday, February 21
   http://jezebel.com/5478367/our-avatars-our-projected-selves
   Collaborative analysis due in class
Recommended:

Lab, Tuesday, February 22
\begin{itemize}
  \item “There’s a Soldier in All of Us,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pblj3JHF-Jo
\end{itemize}

Class, Wednesday, February 23
\begin{itemize}
  \item Definitions posted by noon on website
\end{itemize}

WEEK NINE
\begin{itemize}
  \item iv. Political Economies
  \item Class, Monday, February 28
  \begin{itemize}
  \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

Lab, Tuesday, March 1
\begin{itemize}
  \item Laurie Penny, “FarmVille: They Reap What You Sow,” Comment is Free, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/nov/19/farmville-they-reap-what-you-sow
  \item Recommended:
\end{itemize}

Class, Wednesday, March 2

Recommended:

WEEK TEN
Class, Monday, March 7

Lab, Tuesday, March 8

Class, Wednesday, March 9
Recommended:

March 15 (Tuesday)
  - Final analyses due by noon in Carol’s office

APPENDIX (MISC POLICIES):

1. **Attendance:** This course is designed for motivated, respectful students who do all the readings and attend classes. You are responsible for asking questions if you don’t understand something. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to get materials covered during that session from a classmate and to make sure you understand what was discussed in your absence. Students who fail to meet these very basic expectations will perform poorly in this class.

2. **Participation:** This course will be run as a seminar. What that means is that much of class time will be devoted to discussing the assigned readings and related ideas. In order to fully participate, you will need to have completed the readings. In addition, we often focus so much on what we have to say in a course that we neglect to pay attention to what others are saying. We would ask that you listen carefully to other students and address what they have to say. Given the size of the course, we would ask that you keep your own comments pithy and refrain from meandering lines of conversation.

3. **Getting to Class Late and Leaving Early:** Late arrivals and early departures distract and disrupt class. Your teachers find them especially annoying. If you know that you have to leave early, let us know before class and please leave the classroom quietly. If you are more than 10 minutes late, do not bother coming to class. Here again, experience demonstrates a simple truth: students who do not attend class perform poorly.

4. **Assignments and Extensions:** All assignments are listed on the syllabus and will be announced well before they are due. If you know ahead of time that you can’t turn an assignment in on time, please talk to Carol, Annie, and David about this before the due date. Requests for extensions after a
due date will be given only in exceptional circumstances and must include (a) one typed, double-spaced page explaining the reason for missing the deadline, and (b) supporting documentation (e.g. an official doctor’s note). Any such written request must be received by us no later than one week after the missed due date. In addition, any assignments that are accepted after the due date may suffer a significant grade penalty.

5. Missed Labs: If you miss a lab, you are responsible for contacting Annie and David regarding materials missed.

6. Grades: We really want you to do well on your assignments. The best advice we can give for doing well on assignments is to visit us during office hours to ask us questions when you are working on an assignment or reviewing material. If you have questions about a grade, please see the person who has evaluated your assignment as soon as you have received the grade to get further feedback. These are the circumstances under which we would change a grade: (a) if we have made an error, or (b) if we have failed to hold you to the same standard as everyone else. If you believe that you have received an undeserved grade, you should make your case in writing to the professor within two weeks of receiving the grade.

7. Incompletes: A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of the quarter but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated causes beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete some limited amount of term work.

8. Students with disabilities: If you will need accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please let Carol know as soon as possible.

9. Academic Misconduct: The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act
constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students.

10. **Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment):** The University will not tolerate discriminatory conduct. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well being of students, faculty, and staff. Such behavior will not be allowed in this classroom.

11. **Announcements:** Any changes to the syllabus, class cancellations, or other matters pertaining to the class will be posted on blackboard. You should check this site at the beginning of each week.

12. **Inclement Weather:** in the case of snow, please check the course website for information about class/lab cancellations.

For further information about university policies, please see the UO Student Conduct Code: http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=puLfAzFDbsg%3D&tabid=69