FILM 155: Media Technologies
DIGITAL GAME CULTURES

CONTACT

Prof. Jacob Gaboury   Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-5pm
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Lecture: Mon/Wed 3:30-5:00
Game Lab: Mon 5:00-7:00

Zoom: https://berkeley.zoom.us/j/97084556970

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 such as speed running and art games, 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 bCourses.

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

01/20

LECTURE:

Introduction and Syllabus Presentation

2_GAME

01/25

LECTURE:

What is a Game?

LAB:

Universal Paperclips (Frank Lantz, 2017)

Minit (Devolver Digital, 2018)

Genshin Impact (miHoYo, 2020)

01/27

READING:

Juul, Jesper. "The Game, the Player, the World: Looking for a Heart of Gameness" In *Level Up: Digital Games Research Conference Proceedings*, edited by Marinka Copier and Joost Raessens, 30-45. Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2003.

Jagoda, Patrick. "Videogame Criticism and Games in the Twenty-First Century" *American Literary History*, Volume 29, Issue 1, Spring 2017, Pages 205–218.

Zimmerman, Eric. "Manifesto for a ludic century." *The gameful world: Approaches, issues, applications* (2015): 19-22.

3_GAMER

02/01

LECTURE:

Who is a Gamer?

LAB:

Vintage Game Magazine Archives

02/03

READING:

Alexander, Leigh. "Gamers Don't Have to Be Your Audience. Gamers Are Over." *Gamasutra*. August 28, 2014.

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

ACTIVITY:

Personal Game History

4_DEBATE

02/08

LECTURE:

Narratology vs. Ludology

LAB:

Play or Watch one of the following games: *The Last of Us* (Naughty Dog, 2013), *Uncharted: The Lost Legacy* (Naughty Dog, 2017), *Gone Home* (Fullbright, 2013), *Firewatch* (Campo Santo, 2016), *Telltale's The Walking Dead* (Telltale Games, 2012).

Briefly skim the contents of: *Game Studies* Issue 1 (2001)
http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/

02/10

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_PREHISTORY

02/15   NO CLASS

President's Day

02/17

LECTURE:

Games Before Games

READING:

Evans, Claire. "The Longest Cave" in *Broad Band: The Untold Story of the Women Who Made the Internet*. Portfolio/Penguin, 2018.

Wardrip-Fruin, Noah. "Gravity in computer space." *ROMchip* 1, no. 2 (2019).

WATCH:

    "When Games Went Click: The Story of Tennis for Two" The Vladar Company (2013)

IN CLASS:

    Colossal Cave Adventure (William Crowther, 1976)

6_HISTORY

02/22

LECTURE:

    Arcades, Consoles, and Microcomputing

SCREENING:

    The Lost Arcade (Kurt Vincent, 2015)

02/24

READING:

    Newman, Michael Z. "Good Clean Fun: The Origins of the Video Arcade" in *Atari Age: The Emergence of Video Games in America*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017.

    Kocurek, Carly. "The Microcosmic Arcade: Playing at the Cultural Vanguard" in *Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade*. University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

7_PLATFORM

03/01

LECTURE:

    Hardware, Software, Code, Engine

LAB:

    Game Engine Tutorial

03/03

READING:

    Montfort, Nick. "Combat in context." *Game Studies* 6, no. 1 (2006).

    Nicoll, Benjamin, and Brendan Keogh. "The Unity game engine and the circuits of cultural software." In *The Unity Game Engine and the Circuits of Cultural Software*, pp. 1-21. Palgrave Pivot, Cham, 2019.

WATCH:

    Unreal Engine 5 Demo (2020)

8_CULTURE

03/08

LECTURE:

What is the object of game studies?

LAB:

Research the speed running community for a game you are very familiar with, watch videos, look at best times and/or scores.

03/10

READING:

LeMieux, Patrick. "From NES-4021 to moSMB3. wmv: Speedrunning the Serial Interface." *Eludamos. Journal for Computer Game Culture* 8, no. 1 (2014): 7-31.

Juul, Jesper. "What is Casual?" in *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Players*. MIT Press, 2010.

9_MIDTERM

03/15　　　　　　　**IN CLASS MIDTERM**

03/17　　　　　　　Game Presentation Day

10_SPRING BREAK

11_QUEER

03/29

LECTURE:

Glitch, Failure, and Non-Normative Play

LAB:

Genital Jousting (Free Lives, 2018)

Realistic Kissing Simulator (Jimmy Andrews and Loren Schmidt, 2014)

Mainichi (Mattie Brice, 2012)

Queers in Love at the End of the World (Anna Anthropy, 2013)

03/31

READING:

Ruberg, Bonnie "Introduction" *Video Games Have Always Been Queer*. New York: NYU Press, 2019.

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.

12_ART

04/05

LECTURE:

Games and/as Art

LAB:

Passage (Jason Rohrer, 2007)

Journey (thatgamecompany, 2012)

SCREENING:

SOD (Jodi, 1999)

Parallel I (Harun Farocki, 2012)

04/07

READING:

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

Parker, Felan. "Roger Ebert and the games-as-art debate." *Cinema Journal* 57, no. 3 (2018): 77-100.

13_TOUCH

04/12

LECTURE:

Touch, VR, and Embodied Play

LAB:

Pokémon Go (Niantic, 2016)

The Walking Dead: Our World (Next Games, 2017)

Angry Birds AR: Isle of Pigs (Rovio Entertainment, 2019)

SCREENING:

Ready Player One (Steven Spielberg, 2018)

04/14

READING:

Parisi, David "Rumble/Control: Toward a Critical History of Touch Feedback in Video Games" *ROMchip* 1, no. 2 (2019).

14_WORK

04/19

LECTURE:

Crunch, Labor, and Passion in Video Game Development

LAB:

Cyberpunk 2077 (CD Projekt, 2020)

Hades (Supergiant Games, 2018)

04/21

READING:

Nooney, Laine. "The Uncredited: Work, Women, and the Making of the US Computer Game Industry." *Feminist Media Histories* 6, no. 1 (2020): 119-146.

15_SPORT

04/26

LECTURE:

Professionalization and the Future of Games

LAB:

Watch the videos in this article:

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

Research the competitive scene for a game you like to play. Come prepared to discuss it on Wednesday.

04/28

READING:

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

05/12   **FINAL PROJECTS DUE**

ASSESSMENT

10% Engagement

10% Game Presentation

20% Discussion Questions

20% Midterm

40% 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 week 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.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

Each week you will be required to produce a single question based on the week's readings, due via bCourses by 11:59pm on Tuesday night. Your question must engage the reading explicitly and demonstrate your engagement with the text. It should be short, no more than three sentences, and will be graded pass/fail. We will use these questions to structure our discussion. These are extremely important, and you should spend time crafting a question that could be used to generate discussion about the readings for that week. Questions might engage the themes of the reading, compare the readings to one another, or relate the readings to our weekly lecture. The goal of the response is to demonstrate engagement with the text and to provide a basis for class discussion. We will discuss what goes into crafting a good question in class.

GAME PRESENTATION

Over the course of the semester each student will be tasked with a short, 5-minute presentation on a game of their choice. The presentation will be strictly timed and should focus on one feature that makes the game unique or important to the history of games. The goal of the presentation is to expose students to a wider range of game texts while contextualizing those games within the themes of the class. A guide for these presentations can be found on bCourses.

MIDTERM

There will be an in-class midterm held on March 15th during class and lab time. 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 May 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 game will be based on our in-class game engine workshop and the student's own goals and interests. Assignment sheets and further information can be found on bCourses.

POLICIES

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.