

NYU Prague

MCC-UE9008P01

Video Games: Culture and Industry

Spring 2020

Instructor Information

- TBA

Course Information

- MCC-UE9008P01
- Video Games: Culture and Industry
- Wednesday 15:00-17:50
 - Dvořák, BB

Course Overview and Goals

This course examines the emergence of video games as site of contemporary cultural production and practice. It pays special attention to the symbolic and aesthetic dimensions of video games, including their various narrative forms and sub-genres, and concentrates on their interactive dimensions. The course provides insight into the emerging trends in the interface between humans and media technologies. It also situates video games within the business practices of the entertainment industries.

The course combines various teaching methods: each session will start with a 15-minute discussion of current events in digital games, followed by a short introductory lecture which introduces the context of the topic, which in turn leads into a discussion of the assigned readings and games. Starting in mid-term, sessions will include student presentations, which will be further developed into final essays.

Readings include academic articles and book excerpts by leading experts on digital games. A specific piece of reading is assigned for each session except for the introductory one. All readings are either accessible online or available in PDF copies. Additionally, specific computer games will be assigned for students to play. These are invariably short and free games which run on PC and/or Mac computers.

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- Understand the history and current developments of digital games
- Evaluate digital games as parts of culture and entertainment industry
- Discuss potential positive and negative effects of digital game use
- Understand the dynamics of digital game industries and communities
- Discuss ethical and political issues regarding digital games

Course Requirements

Class Participation

The students read assigned materials and play assigned games for each class and participate in discussions. Given the course's focus on timely topics, it necessary for the students to follow news sources that cover game studies, such as the websites Rock, Paper, Shotgun, Polygon or Kotaku.

Assignment 1: presentation

Each student prepares a 15minute presentation about a topic related to the content of the course. It should make a persuasive expert argument about a new media phenomenon. It may or may not use slides and/or other media.

Assignment 2: blog posts

(1) Each student writes a 500-word annotation of a historical game on the course's blog. The assignment is intended to familiarize the students with historical games and with the standard of ludographic references. The game must be published before 1995. The post will include a description of gameplay and the social, economic and cultural context in which the game was produced.

(2) Each student writes an analysis of one of the assigned games. These games are selected based on their topicality and will be announced at the beginning of the semester. In the 1,000–1,500 word analysis, the student situates the game within the socio-cultural context, identifies the message or aesthetic effect that the game seeks to express, and examines the means of expression it uses to achieve this end.

Final essay

A 2,000 word academic essay with full references, based on research of scholarly sources, as well as own factual or empirical research. It should engage with literature and critically engage with journalistic and lay discussions of the topic. The choice of topic must be consulted with the lecturer.

Midterm test

The mid-term test will include open-ended questions related to readings assigned during the first six sessions and the assigned textbook.

Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Class participation	20
Presentation	20
Blog posts	15
Midterm test	15
Final essay	30

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Percent
A	90 % and higher
B	80 % - 89.99 %
C	70 % - 79.99 %
D	60 % - 69.99 %
E	50 % - 59.99 %
F	49.99% and lower

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: Excellent work demonstrating a critical and observant approach to the subject, sound research, active participation in discussions, and an ability to express thoughts cogently and persuasively.

Grade B: Very good work.

Grade C: Satisfactory work.

Grade D: Passable work.

Grade F: Failure to achieve a passable standard.

Course Schedule

Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 1 Wednesday, February 5	Introduction, class requirements	x	
Session 2 Wednesday, February 12	Video games history	x	
Session 3 Wednesday, February 19	FIELD TRIP I: Muzeum her	x	
Session 4 Wednesday, February 26	Defining games: What is game and play?	Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Understanding video games (pp. 32-44). GAME TO ANALYSE: It is as if you were doing work	Blog post I.: deadline

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 5 Wednesday, March 4	Modes of expression in digital games: rulesets, narrative and audiovisual content	GAMES TO ANALYSE: Phone story	
Session 6 Wednesday, March 11	FIELD TRIP II: One World Film Festival	x	
Session 7 Wednesday, March 18	Games, immersion and ethics: Understanding avatars and player agency	Calleja, G. 2011. In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (pp. 35-46) Machinima movies: Molotov Alva Movie Take the Bartle test: http://www.4you2learn.com/bartle/	
Session 8 Wednesday, March 25	Guest lecture: Jaroslav Švelch (history of czech gaming)	x	
Session 9 Wednesday, April 1	Midterm test	x	
Session 10 Wednesday, April 8	Games and gender – culture and representation	MacCallum Stewart. " Take That, Bitches! " Refiguring Lara Croft in Feminist Game Narratives GAMES TO ANALYSE: Terrible whiteness of appalanchian nights, Don't wake her	
Spring Break April 11 - 19	Spring Break		
Session 11 Wednesday, April 22	Games and identity, ethnicity	Eerett, Anna. The Power of Play: The Portrayal and Performance of Race in Video Games , http://www.bendevane.com/VTA2012/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Everett-Watkins-Digital-Learning-and-Race.pdf	Blog post II. deadline
Make-up Day Friday, April 24 (9am-5pm)	Make-up day for missed classes		

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 12 Wednesday, April 29	Games and war, violence	Guanio-Uluru, Lykke. War, Games, and the Ethics of Fiction . Games Studies. GAMES TO ANALYSE: Raid Gaza, September 12th	
Session 13 Wednesday, May 6	Negative and positive effects of video games	Ferguson, C. J. Much Ado About Nothing: The Misestimation and Overinterpretation of Violent Video Game Effects in Eastern and Western Nations. Psychological Bulletin, 2010. http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/bul/136/2/174.pdf GAME TO ANALYSE : Phone story - http://www.phonestory.org/game.html	
Session 14 Wednesday, May 13 (last day of classes)	Games and/as art	Borgonjon, Jeroen, Vandermeersche Geert and Kris Ruuten: Perspectives on Video Games as Art, Comparative Literature and Culture CLCWeb GAME TO ANALYSE: Passage	
Session 15 Wednesday, May 20	Movie analysis	x	Final essays deadline

Course Materials

Required Textbooks & Materials

The basic textbook for the course is:

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., Smith, J. H., & Tosca, S. P. (2013). [Understanding video games](#): the essential introduction (2nd edition). New York: Routledge. ISBN: 9780203116777.
<http://www.tandfebooks.com/isbn/9780203116777>

This will be read in its entirety. Additional readings and games will be assigned for each session. If you encounter difficulties retrieving a game because the URL is not working, try searching for it using your Internet search engine of your choice. If this does not help, please contact the instructor.

Supplemental Text (not required to purchase, copies available in NYU P Library)

- None

Resources

- **Access your course materials:** [NYU Classes](http://nyu.edu/its/classes)(nyu.edu/its/classes)
- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](http://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](http://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:**[IT Help Desk](http://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)
- **NYU Prague library:**[Tritius Catalog](https://nyu.tritius.cz/?lang=EN) (https://nyu.tritius.cz/?lang=EN)

Course Policies

Attendance and Tardiness

Absences only for medical reasons and for religious observance will be excused. To obtain an excused absence, you are obliged to supply either a doctor's note or corroboration of your illness by a member of the housing staff (either an RA or a Building Manager). To be excused for religious observance, you must contact the instructor and the Academic Director via e-mail one week in advance of the holiday. Your absence is excused for the holiday only and does not include days of travel associated with the holiday. Unexcused absences will be penalized with a 2% percent deduction from your final course grade for every week of classes missed.

Please note that Friday, April 24 (9am – 5pm) is reserved as a make-up day for missed classes. Do not schedule any trips for this day.

Late Submission of Work

Late submissions of written work are not allowed. Each student is permitted to reschedule their live presentation up until week 7. Any later rescheduling for other than medical reasons will result in a penalty of 5 points on the 100 point scale for each rescheduled presentation.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

According to the Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook, plagiarism is defined as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as though it were one's own. More specifically plagiarism is to present as one's own a sequence of words quoted without quotation marks from another writer, a paraphrased passage from another writer's work; facts or ideas gathered, organized and reported by someone else, orally and/or in writing. Since plagiarism is a matter of fact, not of the student's intention, it is crucial that acknowledgment of the sources be accurate and complete. Even where there is no conscious intention to deceive, the failure to make appropriate acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism.

The College of Arts and Science's Academic Handbook defines plagiarism similarly and also specifies the following:

“presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written), writing a paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else's idea without a reference to the source of the idea, or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both teachers have given their permission in advance).

Receiving help on a take-home examination or quiz is also cheating – and so is giving that help – unless expressly permitted by the teacher (as in collaborative projects). While all this looks like a lot to remember, all you need to do is give credit where it is due, take credit only for original ideas, and ask your teacher or advisor when in doubt.”

“Penalties for plagiarism range from failure for a paper, failure for the course or dismissal from the university.” (Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook)

Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.