

Disclaimer: This syllabus is tentative and extremely likely to change during the semester, as we will need to accommodate to a workshop series offered by the Visual Studies program. Changes will be notified via CANVAS e-mail and/or announcements, but you are still responsible for checking the syllabus at least once a week to make sure you have not missed an update. Assignments, schedule, expectations, meeting time, and meeting place are among the things that may change, but there may also be other changes.

FALL 2018
INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO GAME CULTURE
CMLIT 191 – DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Meeting time/day/place: 9:05 - 10:20 / Tue, Thur / 203 Willard bldg. Website: CANVAS.

Instructor: Camila Gutierrez-Fuentes ckg5141@psu.edu

Office hour: Thur 11:00 - 12:00 and by appointment / 252 Burrowes bldg.

Mailbox: 442 Burrowes bldg.



This course is grounded on the premise that video games are a form of literature. I have planned it so that it serves as a space to observe, discuss, and further the ways in which video games evolve. Participating and succeeding in this course requires that students' interaction with games goes beyond the surfaces of entertainment or escapism, and progresses towards critique, criticism, and craft (i.e., observing/reporting, analyzing/theorizing, and creating games. Towards the end of the course, students should be able to denaturalize games, gaming, and gaming cultures by considering their regional, material, linguistic, literary, historical, and political contexts.

Course Objectives:

- To actively engage students in contemporary gaming culture.
- To contextualize video games as a literary form, covering issues of narratology and textuality.
- To familiarize students with video games history.
- To analyze games' regional, material, linguistic, literary, historical, and political contexts.
- To create original content that may respond to a social issue through an interactive platform that qualifies as "video game."
- To generate critique and criticism of video games and gaming communities (or gaming cultures.)

Humanities Domain Goals:

The Pennsylvania State University provides humanities courses (GH) and an appropriate learning environment for students to:

- engage in the qualitative study of the humanities;
- expand their knowledge of the variety of human experiences;
- gain access to various intellectual traditions and their changes through time;
- probe the foundations of communication and thought and become aware of the scope and limitations of human communication;
- encounter concepts and traditions that attempt to bring sense to human existence;
- develop their competency in interpreting and critically evaluating diverse ways of life, traditions, and shared or individual values, including their own.

Required Texts:

Rise of the Videogame Zinesters, by Anna Anthropy.
The Storytelling Animal by Jonathan Gottschall
Replay: The History of Video Games by Tristan Donovan.
Various articles (on Canvas).

Games:

Zork (web, free)
Dys4ia (web, free)
Dance Dance Revolution (arcade on campus at Pollock Commons, or at Northland Bowl)
Final Fantasy XIV (free 30 day trial, purchase recommended)
Bury me, My Love (app stores, purchase)
Lineage II (optional)
Tibia (optional)

More games will be considered as the semester progresses. Some may be suggestions by the students, while some may be determined by the instructor. **If there is a game assigned on a particular day and you are absolutely unable to play it, you must watch at least 3 hours of gameplay instead, or a full run of the game if it is shorter than that.**

Grading:

Tests (x2) 15% (x2) (30% total)
Gaming Reports (x2) 10% (x2) (20% total)
Final Portfolio 25%
Presentation 10%
Class Performance 15%
Scouting Points 2%

Grading Scale:

94 and above	A	79 – 77	C+
93 – 90	A-	76 – 70	C
89 – 87	B+	69 – 60	D
86 – 84	B	59 and below	F
83 – 80	B-		

Tests (x2): 15% each (30% total)

There will be two tests during the semester. These may include multiple choice questions, open ended questions, and essay type questions. To prepare, take notes of the readings and games you play, and also of class discussions. Anything presented either in writing or orally for this course constitutes test material.

Gaming reports (x2): 10% each (20% total)

Throughout the semester there will be different games assigned as class material. Pick any two and write gaming reports that describe the game, your experience, and demonstrate your capacity to play and comment critically. Reports should be 1 page long, written in font size 12, Times New Roman, and in 1.5 spacing. Submit via CANVAS by midnight the night before the game is assigned (i.e., if the game was assigned for Tuesday, submit by Monday night). For more instructions and details, check CANVAS.

Final portfolio: 25%

Around Thanksgiving and until the end of the semester you will be working on designing an original video game in groups. During finals week you will need to submit a portfolio that compiles your work and includes: an essay explaining the rationale behind your video game (revised), a design appendix, a link to the game, a final reflection, the testing feedback you received, and a self-assessment sheet. For more instructions and details, check CANVAS. Submit on the date that appears in the schedule.

Presentation: 10%

At the end of the semester you and your group will present your designed video game to the class. This will include a short presentation (5-10 minutes) and a Q&A. A significant portion of your grade will depend on your peers’ evaluation (through a rubric). I reserve the right to veto peer evaluation on a case by case basis.

Class performance: 15%

I expect you to attend every class meeting, and to prepare accordingly. You must contribute to discussions by bringing up key points, helping to clarify confusing points, and bringing up new information (games/trends/etc) that enriches our discussion. Smaller assignments such as researching a particular game or

preparing a mini presentation, as well as participation in the *Data Privacy, Democracy, and The Humanities* workshop series will count towards your class performance grade too.

You may be absent up to 4 times in the semester “no questions asked” (illness/injury, family emergency, religious holiday, sports practice, etc). Further absences will impact your Class Performance grade by 2% per absence. **At 10 absences you will fail the course.** I reserve the right to excuse further absences on a case-by-case basis should they be notified for consideration, via e-mail, well in advance.

Scouting points: 2%

If you wish to increase your grade, you may attend events on campus that are either related to comparative literature, visual culture, gaming culture, and similar topics. I will announce scouting opportunities through CANVAS. You may suggest scouting opportunities for consideration (send me a CANVAS message with a description of the event and how it relates to class contents). A permanent opportunity is attending a talk from the comparative literature luncheon series (see schedule online). After you attend an event, you must send me a CANVAS message with a 200 word report on what you saw and how it relates to class contents and discussions.

COURSE POLICIES / ETIQUETTE / NETIQUETTE

Name/Pronoun Statement: I will gladly address you by your chosen name and gender pronoun. Please advise me on your preference at any point in the semester if there is a change.

Communications: You are expected to be clear, courteous, and concise in all e-mail communications with me; this includes starting your message with a salutation (I prefer “Dear Camila” to “Dear Ms. Gutierrez”, but either is fine), briefly explaining the reason for your message, following standard rules of spelling and grammar, and signing your e-mail with your full name. I do not check my e-mail after hours, and I may take a couple of days to reply to messages. Do not wait until last minute to ask important questions!

Electronic Devices: I will enforce a NO PHONES policy in this class. I will also enforce my NO USE OF LAPTOPS FOR NON-CLASS-RELATED ACTIVITIES WHILE IN CLASS (no checking e-mails, no online shopping, no doing work for other classes, etc). If it is my impression that you are distracted because of your laptop use, I will ask you to put it away. Repeated offenses will result in lowering your final Class Performance grade.

Dress Code: Because this class requires your active participation, and you will need to listen, speak, and look, I require that you do not wear hats, earbuds, or earphones of any type during class period (students with authorized disability accommodations may be excused). You must also come to class fully dressed (i.e., wearing clothes that cover your body sufficiently for the semi-formal educational context that is the classroom).

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity: Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, failing to document sources, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions. See the College policy at <http://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/G-9-academic-integrity.html>.

Note to students with disabilities: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services. For further information regarding policies, rights and responsibilities please visit the Office for Disability Services (ODS) Web site at: <http://equity.psu.edu/ods>. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable accommodations.

Registration policy: During the drop-add period at the beginning of the semester, the Department of Comparative Literature encourages students to visit this and other courses in order to make informed judgments about which courses to take. After this drop/add period, however, only students registered in the course may remain; no student may late-add (or restore a dropped registration) after the third week of the semester without petitioning the department on a form available in the office, 466 Burrowes Building.

Schedule

<p>August 21 – 23</p>	<p>21: Course introduction. Setting expectations. Syllabus and schedule overview.</p> <p>23: A History of Video Games Read: <i>Rise of the Videogame Zinesters</i> by Anthropy (chapters 1 and 2). <i>Replay: The History of Video Games</i> by Donovan (chapter 1).</p>	<p>UNIT 1 HISTORY AND DEFINITIONS</p>
<p>28 – 30</p>	<p>28: A History of Video Games - Definitions Read: <i>Replay: The History of Video Games</i> by Donovan (chapters 2 - 3). <i>Rise of the Videogame Zinesters</i> by Anthropy (chapter 3) Play: Pong (game) and try finding any other of the games mentioned in the <i>Replay</i> chapters. If you cannot find more, please watch 10-15 minutes of gameplay and write down impressions to bring to class.</p> <p>30: A History of Video Games - Japan Read: <i>Replay: The History of Video Games</i> by Donovan (chapter 5). Play: Zork I. (game) (video), King's Quest (game), and Doom (game).</p>	
<p>September 4 – 6</p>	<p>4: Game Studies & Gaming Literacy. Read: "Gaming Literacy" by Zimmerman. "The Gaming Situation" by Eskelinen</p> <p>6: --no class: I will be away at a conference-- Play: Final Fantasy XIV Prepare: mini group presentation materials posted on Canvas by the end of today (see Canvas/ Discussions).</p>	<p>UNIT 2 HOW TO "READ" VIDEO GAMES</p>
<p>11 – 13</p>	<p>11: Storytelling and Gaming: can games tell stories? Read: "Games Telling Stories?" by Jull. In-class: mini group presentations (see Canvas/ Discussions). Play: Undertale, OR Life is Strange – Episode 1 (free).</p> <p>13: Storytelling and genre. Watch: Final Fantasy History parts 1, 2, and 3. Play: Final Fantasy XIV, and Final Fantasy Tactics Advance, Final Fantasy VII. (Since all of these games require a significant time investment, you only need to play enough to get an idea of how the game works and how it innovates in terms of genre and storytelling within the Final Fantasy franchise).</p>	
<p>18 – 20</p>	<p>18: TEST #1</p> <p>20: PANELS I (and II Read: <i>The Storytelling Animal</i> by Gottschall (Chapters 1-3.) Do: Bring examples of games that pair with the Gottschall chapters, according to the thematic group you were assigned. Be prepared to share with the class (audiovisual materials encouraged).</p>	<p>UNIT 2.2 IN CLASS CONFERENCE ON NARRATOLOGY AND TEXTUALITY</p>

25 – 27	<p>25: PANELS III and IV Read: <i>The Storytelling Animal</i> by Gottschall (Chapters 4-6) Do: Bring examples of games that pair with the Gottschall chapters, according to the thematic group you were assigned. Be prepared to share with the class (audiovisual materials encouraged).</p> <p>27: PANELS V and VI Read: <i>The Storytelling Animal</i> by Gottschall (Chapters 7-9) Do: Bring examples of games that pair with the Gottschall chapters, according to the thematic group you were assigned. Be prepared to share with the class (audiovisual materials encouraged).</p>	<p>SEPT 30TH DUE: Gaming Report #1 Submit on Canvas.</p>
October 2 – 4	<p>2: Adaptation and Media Mix Read: <i>From Barbie to Mortal Kombat</i> (chapter on Japanese Media Mix)</p> <p>4: Adaptation and Machinima For this day bring examples of games that have been adapted from other storytelling modes (film, novel, poetry, non-digital games, etc). Watch: Find “machinima” examples on youtube. Read: “Machinima’s Promise” and “MM Machinima Mikusuto” (both on Canvas).</p> <p>Recommended read: <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> by Linda Hutcheon. p.114-137</p>	<p>UNIT 3 GAMING COMMUNITIES AND CULTURES</p>
9 – 11	<p>9: Data Privacy, Democracy, and The Humanities Workshop Series. Today our class will attend Kristene Unsworth’s workshop. Room: 117 Sacket. Time: same as class. Do: Familiarize yourself with the speaker’s work.</p> <p>11: Gaming Communities Watch: Free to Play: The Movie on DOTA. Do: Find examples of gaming communities and come prepared to discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is this community. How does it meet/function? What are the qualities of games/gaming that create this community? What does it show about the mechanics and the opportunities in a game? How do they “make an art” out of “breaking” the game? (are they breaking or enhancing the game?). </p>	
15 – 18	<p>15: Watch: Competing in America’s Biggest Fighting Game Tournament: Evo 2017 Read: How the FCG’s roots grew the most racially diverse community in gaming.</p> <p>18: Gaming and Health Read: .pdf files on Canvas (links on previous versions of this syllabus are broken, so I have uploaded items under modules). Replay: <i>The History of Video Games</i> by Donovan (Chapter 18). “Games are not making us more violent, study shows” from <i>The Guardian</i>.</p>	

23 – 25	<p>23: Data Privacy, Democracy, and The Humanities Workshop Series. Today our class will attend Hannah Sassaman’s workshop. Room: 201 Thomas bldg. Time: same as class. Do: Familiarize yourself with the speaker’s work.</p> <p>25: In-game Gaming Communities Read: <i>Replay: The History of Video Games</i> by Donovan (Chapters 23, 24) Play: MMORPG of your choice (Tibia, Lineage II, or Final Fantasy XIV) Try to join (or create) a group/guild/team in-game, and coordinate gaming sessions with them. Reflect on the in-game culture that originates from such interactions.</p>	<p>After class today and tomorrow: Visit the DDR machine and VR lab on campus. See information in [orange brackets] below.</p>
30 – Nov 1	<p>30: AR/VR/Bemani and Embodiment Read: <i>Replay: The History of Video Games</i> by Donovan (Chapter 22). Recommended: “Toward a (Kin)Aesthetic...” Play: -- Visit and play on a Dance Dance Revolution machine (on campus at Pollock Commons, or off campus at Northland bowling alley) [Thur Oct 25th 4 – 5pm at Pollock commons] -- Visit the AR/VR lab on campus [Fri Oct 26th 12 – 1pm or 4 – 5pm at IST bldg. W135]</p> <p>1: Games and Representation Read: -no reading- Play: Never Alone</p>	<p>In orange are the times when the DDR machine and the VR lab will be reserved for our class to visit.</p> <p>If you will not visit during those times because you have a time conflict, it is your responsibility to coordinate a different time with the people in charge. E-mail me to know how to do that.</p>
November 6 – 8	<p>6: Video Game Making Workshop #1: Twine, Scratch. Place: Pattee Library W140 (Multimedia Room). Time: as usual. Read: Guides on making games with Twine and Scratch (CANVAS). Do: Explore Anna Anthropy’s website and play at least one of each of the different types of game (you do not need to purchase any of these games, but you may make a donation). Pay special attention to the games under “interactive fiction”. If you have not done so already, start thinking of possible topics for the game you will design. In class: Meet with your group, choose the topic of your game, start working on it, and begin drafting the essay that will explain the rationale behind your game (essay due November 27th). Check CANVAS for a guide.</p> <p>8: Games and Representation Read: <i>Rise of the Videogame Zinesters</i> by Antropy (Chapters 4, 5, and 6.) Play: Dys4ia and The Longest Couch</p>	<p>UNIT 5 MAKING VIDEO GAMES</p> <p>Start working on your game and your essay.</p> <p>UNIT 4 GAMING AND REPRESENTATION</p>

13 – 15	<p>13: Affect and Gaming Read: “Chapter 2: Touching Games” from <i>Playing with Feelings</i> by Aubrey Anable (Canvas). Play: Option A) Bury me, My Love (alternatively: Papers, Please.) Option B) Horse Prince (android, iOs), (alternatively: Doki Doki Literature Club.)</p> <p>15: TEST #2</p>	<p>NOV 13TH DUE: Gaming Report #2 Submit on Canvas.</p>
<p>Thanksgiving Break (Continue to work on your game and be ready to present a complete first version by next class)</p>		
27 – 29	<p>27: Video Game Making Workshop #2 TESTING DAY 1 Do: Submit your essay via CANVAS by 8am today. Bring a copy of your game for your tester group to play. In class: Be the tester group for another group’s work. Write a constructive response for the game you tested, and post it to CANVAS before the end of class. Each group member must write an individual response.</p> <p>29: Video Game Making Workshop #3 TESTING DAY 2 In class: Revise your essay, tweak and fix your game, begin drafting your final reflection, and prepare your portfolio for submission on the 10th.</p>	<p>NOV 27TH DUE: Essay + Complete first version of the game.</p> <p>Continue to work on revising the essay and the game through this week.</p>
December 4 – 6	<p>4: Presentations. Groups 1, 2, 3, and 4.</p> <p>6: Presentations. Groups 5, 6, and 7.</p>	<p>Continue to work on revising the essay and the game through this week. Add the final reflection based on the feedback you received on testing day 1. Get your portfolio ready.</p> <p>Bring me a draft on Thursday this week during office hour if you want me to take a look at what you have so far.</p>
10 (FINALS WEEK)	<p>Submit your final portfolio through Canvas by NOON today. Check instructions on CANVAS.</p>	<p>DEC 10TH DUE: Final Portfolio</p>