General Education Course Information Sheet
Please submit this sheet for each proposed course

Department & Course Number	FILM TV 98T
Course Title	Video Games, Aesthetics, and Politics
Indicate if Seminar and/or Writing II course	Seminar

1   Check the recommended GE foundation area(s) and subgroups(s) for this course

Foundations of the Arts and Humanities
- Literary and Cultural Analysis   XXX
- Philosophic and Linguistic Analysis
- Visual and Performance Arts Analysis and Practice   XXX

Foundations of Society and Culture
- Historical Analysis
- Social Analysis   XXX

Foundations of Scientific Inquiry
- Physical Science
  With Laboratory or Demonstration Component must be 5 units (or more)
- Life Science
  With Laboratory or Demonstration Component must be 5 units (or more)

2. Briefly describe the rationale for assignment to foundation area(s) and subgroup(s) chosen.

> This course teaches students to examine video games and games criticism as increasingly important forms of cultural expression in a highly technical society. Significant attention is devoted to both analyzing the formal elements of games as a performative aesthetic practice, and responding to the written discourse that situates games within broader cultural and political contexts. Particular attention is given to the impact of social science and political discourses in criticizing games as a medium.

3. List faculty member(s) who will serve as instructor (give academic rank):
    Oscar Moralde, Teaching Fellow; Faculty Mentor - Stephen Mamber (Professor)

    Do you intend to use graduate student instructors (TAs) in this course?   Yes _____   No   X

    If yes, please indicate the number of TAs _____

4. Indicate when do you anticipate teaching this course:

    2018-2019   Fall   Winter   Spring
                Enrollment _____   Enrollment   X _____   Enrollment _____

5. GE Course Units
    Is this an *__existing__* course that has been modified for inclusion in the new GE?   Yes ____   No   X
    If yes, provide a brief explanation of what has changed. _____

    Present Number of Units: _____   Proposed Number of Units: 5

6. Please present concise arguments for the GE principles applicable to this course.

❑ General Knowledge

> Students will learn and practice key methods in media studies, including textual-formal analysis and study of cultural context, and apply them to the video game medium. Key readings will demonstrate how these findings are communicated both within the discipline and to public readership.

❑ Integrative Learning

> The course locates video games at the intersection of multiple disciplines, including media studies, cultural studies, computer science, social science, and art history. Students will hear voices from across these disciplines and the critical conversation they create.

❑ Ethical Implications

> The core questions of the seminar ask students to consider the responsibilities and implications of using games as a form of expression, and the potential social and political effects of games discourse on the public sphere.

❑ Cultural Diversity

> Several weeks of the seminar consider games as both a potential vehicle for expression by marginalized groups, and as a contested cultural site for media representation; race, gender, sexuality, and nation are key questions addressed in the course readings.

❑ Critical Thinking

> Students will consider multiple perspectives on contentious questions around the aesthetic and political role of video games in culture, and will develop their own positions on these arguments through classroom debate and critical writing.

❑ Rhetorical Effectiveness

> Throughout the quarter, students will read examples of critical games writing aimed at persuading a public readership, and they will use these articles as models for their own writing in weekly responses and a final critical writing project.

❑ Problem-solving

> Students will learn how to use hands-on subjective aesthetic experience as a basis for discerning formal and thematic elements in games, along with situating those elements within larger social and cultural contexts as part of analysis.

❑ Library & Information Literacy

> Students will search out bodies of critical discourse on specific games and game concepts in preparing their own critical writing interventions. They will learn how to locate and assess credible information in both traditional academic writing and from nontraditional sources such as social media.

(A) STUDENT CONTACT PER WEEK (if not applicable write N/A)

1.	Lecture:	N/A	(hours)
2.	Discussion Section:	3	(hours)
3.	Labs:	N/A	(hours)
4.	Experiential (service learning, internships, other):	N/A	(hours)
5.	Field Trips:	N/A	(hours)

(A) TOTAL Student Contact Per Week   **3**   **(HOURS)**

(B) OUT-OF-CLASS HOURS PER WEEK (if not applicable write N/A)

1.	General Review & Preparation:	1.5	(hours)
2.	Reading	2.5	(hours)
3.	Group Projects:	N/A	(hours)
4.	Preparation for Quizzes & Exams:	N/A	(hours)
5.	Information Literacy Exercises:	1	(hours)
6.	Written Assignments:	4	(hours)
7.	Research Activity:	3	(hours)

(B) TOTAL Out-of-class time per week | 12 | (HOURS)

GRAND TOTAL (A) + (B) must equal at least 15 hours/week | 15 | (HOURS)

FILM TV 98T : Video Games, Aesthetics, and Politics
Instructor: Oscar Moralde (omoralde@ucla.edu)

Course Description
Are video games addictive? How do they compare to other media, like film? Does video game violence affect people? Are video games art? Can video games change the world? Even as video games have emerged as a multibillion-dollar industry on the level of other forms of popular art and media, the ways that we publicly discuss them continue to be contentious. Questions have arisen about their status as a "serious" mode of artistic expression, along with questions about their role in ongoing "culture wars" that have shaped the political life of the United States and the world.

This course acquaints students with these debates by providing the intellectual framework and critical vocabulary to examine video games as media texts that provide experiences of narrative and formal play , and as works that fit into larger cultural contexts that address who gets to play, and how and why we play. This critical approach to text and context wil l allow students to address questions of aesthetics the value of gameplay experiences and how we fit them into our lives . It will also address questions of politics: how can games shape, and how are they shaped by, the fabric of public life?

Class sessions will focus on discussing and elaborating the concepts in the readings, which include both scholarly writing that provides conceptual frameworks and vocabulary, and popular critical writing that mobilizes that vocabulary to speak to the larger public. We will also put theory into practice by using both video recordings of gameplay and actual hands-on demonstrations as a basis for critical discussion The course culminates with students producing their own piece of scholarly/critical game writing. Participants do not need previous experience with games or computers, but only a willingness to engage with games and gameplay within a critical context.

Goals and Outcomes
Students will explore the following key concepts:
- the position of the video game medium within a media studies context
- textual, narrative, and rhetorical strategies used by media and artworks
- the social and cultural effects of media production and its discourses

Students will complete the course better able to:
- contextualize technological platforms and interactivity within everyday life
- critically analyze moving-image and interactive media on a granular level
- write critically and persuasively on contemporary digital culture debates

Student Expectations
Students should be prepared to engage in intensive intellectual inquiry and debate befitting an undergraduate seminar, and to generate ideas from an engagement with a

wide variety of assigned written, audiovisual, and interactive media. Grading and assessment will be based on:

- *Participation* (30%) and engagement with the classroom discussions, demonstrations, and activities. I can only gauge student effort based on what you say and do in class. If you have difficulties with speaking in a seminar environment, I am happy to talk with you in office hours and provide what guidance I can. Similarly, thoughtful and critical participation in gameplay demonstrations will be expected, but you will not be judged on skill or competence in play—there is no wrong way to play as long as you display earnest effort and engagement.

- *Weekly blog posts* (40%) which respond to the course readings and class discussions, and also help scaffold the final project . Most weeks, you will write short responses (300-400 words) to prompts that ask you to draw upon the readings, media examples, and classroom discussions. You will also read your classmates' posts and write at least one follow-up post. For some weeks, you will instead work on a writing activity designed to help your progress with the final writing project.

- *A final piece of critical writing* (30%) that uses an examination of a video game or aspect of video game discourse to intervene in larger aesthetic and political conversations. This will consist of **either one 2500-word critical essay** following the model of scholarly journal writing, **or two 1300-word essays**, connected by theme, following the model of popular critical writing. This work should not rehash content from the weekly blog posts, but reflect a sustained engagement with one or two works from which you derive a textual and contextual critique that intervenes in the course's key debates. You will share some of your writing and findings with the class with final presentations during exam week.

Weekly Schedule
Unit One: Frameworks for Understanding Games

- Week One: Introduction: Situating Games within Media and Culture.
  How do people talk and write about video games? What is their position within popular culture and media culture?
  - Media: Flappy Bird (2013); Gone Home (2013)

- Week Two: Talking about Games: Criticism of Form and Content.
  What elements of gameplay experience are worth sharing and analyzing? How do you reframe your personal experiences within a larger critical context?
  - Readings: Fernández-Vara, "The Whys and Wherefores of Game Analysis"; Walker, "Real Human Beings: *Shadow of Mordor, Watch Dogs* and the New NPC"
  - Media: Flywrench (2015); Assassin's Creed II (2009)
  - Blog: Reading Response Question

- Week Three: Histories of Play and the Ludological Approach.
  How do we situate the unique formal and structural elements of play in critical discussion? How do these qualities distinguish games from other media?
  - o Readings: Salen and Zimmerman, "Rules"; Yu, "Spelunky Unlocked"
  - o Media: Super Mario Bros (1985); Spelunky (2012)
  - o Blog: Reading Response Question

- Week Four: Player-Driven Narrative and Storytelling.
  What is the importance of story within video games? What narrative possibilities are extended or foreclosed by interaction and play?
  - o Readings: Newman, "Narratives"; Pratt, "In the Shadow of the Holodeck"
  - o Media: Myst (1993); What Remains of Edith Finch (2017)
  - o **Blog: Final Project Ideation, Topics, Research Questions**

Unit Two: The Aesthetic Debates

- Week Five: The Legitimacy Question: B etween High Art and the Lowbrow.
  What is the perception of video games among the larger public and in other disciplines? How does this effect the discourse within game communities?
  - o Readings: Egenfeldt-Nielsen and Smith, "Video Games in Culture"; Mulkerin, "The History of Photography Could Predict the Future of Videogames"
  - o Media: Doom (1993); Doom ALT (2012); The Last of Us (2013)
  - o Blog: Reading Response Question

- Week Six: Authorial Expression and Emotional Resonance
  How do we speak of game designers as artists? How do discourses of authorship and intent factor into an interactive medium?
  - o Readings: Sharp, "Artgames"; Bogost, "Portrait of the Artist as a Game Studio"
  - o Media: Flow (2007), Flower (2009), Journey (2012)
  - o Blog: Reading Response Question

- Week Seven: Avant-Garde Experimentation in Games
  How do avant-garde practices with games and within game design communities connect games to other artistic mediums and practices?
  - o Readings: Schrank, "Videogames as Avant-garde Art" ; Larson, "Jason Rohrer and the Art of the Video Game"
  - o Media: Passage (2007) Everything (2017) ; work from UCLA Game Lab
  - o **Blog: Final Project Thesis, Structure, Synthesizing Research and Observations**

Unit Three: The Political Debates

- Week Eight: Controversies Over Video Game Violence
  How have historical debates over video game violence and youth psychology shaped the critical discourse? What is the importance of violent action in games?
  - o Readings: Coulson and Ferguson, "The Influence of Digital Games on Aggression and Violent Crime";' Tom Bissell, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Shooter"
  - o Media: Mortal Kombat (1992); Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (2009)
  - o Blog: Reading Response Question

- Week Nine: Games for Change and Games of Critique.
  How have people used video games for social or political intervention? What are the limits and possibilities for using games as vehicle for change?
  - o Readings: Flanagan, "Critical Computer Games"; Kunzelman, "1979 Revolution and the Politics of Choice"
  - o Media: *McDonald's Video Game* (2006); 1979 Revolution: Black Friday (2016)
  - o Blog: Reading Response Question

- Week Ten: Representation, # Gamergate and Cultural Conflict in Games Communities.
  How did video game discourse become a contested cultural space? What is the importance of identity within game representations and in game culture?
  - o Readings: Shaw, "Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Digital Games"
  - o Media: "Tropes vs. Women in Video Games" (2013); Dys4ia (2012)
  - o **Blog: Final Project Drafts and Revision Notes**

- **Exam Week: Presentations based on critical writing project**

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Course Readings (provided on course site):

Scholarly Readings

Coulson, Mark, and Christopher J. Ferguson. "The Influence of Digital Games on Aggression and Violent Crime." *The Video Game Debate: Unravelling the Physical, Social, and Psychological Effects of Digital Games,* edited by Rachel Kowert and Thorsten Quandt. Routledge, 2016, pp. 54-73.

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon, et al. "Video Games in Culture." *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*, 3rd ed. Routledge, 2016, pp. 157-198.

Fernández-Vara, Clara. "The Whys and Wherefores of Game Analysis." *Introduct ion to Game Analysis.* Routledge, 2015, pp. 1-23.

Flanagan, Mary. "Critical Computer Games." *Critical Play: Radical Game Design.* MIT Press, 2009, pp. 223-250.

Newman, James. "Narratives." *Videogames,* 2nd ed. Routledge, 2013, pp. 89-103.

Salen, Katie, and Eric Zimmerman. "Rules." *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals.* MIT Press, 2004, pp. 116-149.

Schrank, Brian. "Videogames as Avant-garde Art." *Avant-Garde Videogames: Playing with Technoculture* . MIT Press, 2014, pp. 1-26.

Sharp, John. "Artgames." *Works of Game: On the Aesthetics of Games and Art.* MIT Press, 2015, pp. 49-76.

Shaw, Adrienne. "From *Custer's Revenge* and *Mario* to *Fable* and *Fallout*: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Digital Games." *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Cul ture* . University of Minnesota Press, 2015, pp. 13-54.

Popular Critical Readings

Bissell, Tom. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Shooter." *Grantland* , 12 July 2012, http://grantland.com/features/line -explores-reasons-why-play-shooter-games/

Bogost, Ian. "A Portrait of the Artist as a Game Studio." *The Atlantic,* 15 March 2012, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/03/a -portrait -of-the-artist-as-a-game-studio/254494/

Kunzelman, Cameron. "1970 Revolution and the Politics of Choice. " *Paste Magazine,* 10 May 2016, https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2016/05/1979 revolution -and-the-politics-of-choice.html

Larson, Sarah. "Jason Rohrer and the Art of the Video Game." *The New Yorker* , 23 June 2016, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultu re-desk/jason-rohrer -and-the-art-of-the-video-game

Mulkerin, Tim. "The History of Photography Could Predict the Future of Videogames." *Kill Screen* , 13 July 2015, https://killscreen.com/articles/history -photography -could-predict -future -videogames/

Pratt, Charles J. "In The Shadow of the Holodeck ." *Medium* , 15 May 2017, https://medium.com/@charlesjpratt/in -the-shadow-of-the-holodeck-ae6bbb4ac195

Walker, Austin. " Real Human Beings: Shadow of Mordor, Watch Dogs and the New NPC." *Paste Magazine,* 10 October 2014, https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2014/10/real-human -beings-shadow-of-mordor -watch-dogs-and.html

Yu, Derek. *Spelunky*. Boss Fight Books, 2016.

Media and Games (excerpts)

1979 Revolution: Black Friday (2016)
Assassin's Creed II (2009)
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (2009)
Doom (1993)
Doom ALT (2012)
Dys4ia (2012)
Everything (2017)
Flappy Bird (2013)
Flow (2007)
Flower (2009)
Flywrench (2015)
Gone Home (2013)
Journey (2012)
Last of Us, The (2013)
McDonald's Video Game (2006)
Mortal Kombat (1992)
Myst (1993)
Passage (2007)
Spelunky (2012)
Super Mario Bros. (1985)
Tropes vs. Women in Video Games (2013)
What Remains of Edith Finch (2017)

Film TV 98T

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New Course Proposal

Film and Television 98T
Video Games, Aesthetics, and Politics

Course Number	Film and Television 98T
Title	Video Games, Aesthetics, and Politics
Short Title	VID GAME&AESTH&PLTC
Units	Fixed: **5**
Grading Basis	Letter grade only
Instructional Format	Seminar - 3 hours per week
TIE Code	SEMT - Seminar (Topical) [T]
GE Requirement	Yes
Major or Minor Requirement	No
Requisites	Enforced: Satisfaction of entry-level Writing requirement. Freshmen and sophomores preferred.
Course Description	Seminar, three hours. Requisite: satisfaction of Entry-Level Writing requirement. Freshmen/sophomores preferred. Investigation of artistic and political impact of video games as medium of cultural expression. Includes formal and textual analysis of individual games along with consideration of broader cultural contexts for playing and critiquing games. Letter grading.
Justification	Part of the series of seminars offered through the Collegium of University Teaching Fellows
Syllabus	File _FILM TV 98T_Moralde_Syllabus.pdf_ was previously uploaded. You may view the file by clicking on the file name.
Supplemental Information	Instructor (Oscar Moralde) UID: 303881677 Professor Stephen Mamber is the faculty mentor for this course. UID: 100203530
Grading Structure	Participation - 30% Weekly Blog Posts - 40% Critical Writing - 30%
Effective Date	Winter 2019
Discontinue Date	Summer 1 2019

Instructor	Name	Title
	Oscar Moralde	**Teaching Fellow**

Quarters Taught	☐ Fall ☑ Winter ☐ Spring ☐ Summer
Department	Film, Television, & Digital Media

Contact	Name	E-mail
	MICHELLE CHEN	**mchen@oid.ucla.edu**

Routing Help

ROUTING STATUS

Role: Registrar's Office

Status: Processing Completed

Role: Registrar's Publications Office - Livesay, Blake Cary (BLIVESAY@REGISTRAR.UCLA.EDU) - 61590

Film TV 98T

Status: Added to SRS on 8/17/2018 9:57:56 AM

Changes: Description

Comments: Course description edited into official version.

Role: Registrar's Scheduling Office - Lin, Jessica (JLIN@REGISTRAR.UCLA.EDU) - 58253

Status: Added to SRS on 8/3/2018 3:23:58 PM

Changes: Short Title

Comments: Within e-mail thread from Mary Ries and Aaron Tornell, FEC Chair Aaron Tornell provided written approval of course proposal on 08/03/2018.

Role: FEC Chair or Designee - Ries, Mary Elizabeth (MRIES@COLLEGE.UCLA.EDU) - 61225

Status: Returned for Additional Info on 8/1/2018 3:28:54 PM

Changes: No Changes Made

Comments: Per 8/01/2018 e-mail from Michelle L. Chen, course proposal was approved by CUTF FAC on 5/08/2018. Copy of approval letter was attached to Michelle's e-mail.

Role: Initiator/Submitter - Chen, Michelle L. (MCHEN@OID.UCLA.EDU) - 53042

Status: Submitted on 8/1/2018 2:42:36 PM

Comments: Initiated a New Course Proposal

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