

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

❑ General Knowledge

As a course on videogame history and theory, this seminar both historicizes theory and theorizes history. Foregrounding theories and methodologies central to the growing field of game studies, the course asks students to critically deconstruct these intellectual arguments and theses, providing students analytic skills applicable to game studies specifically, media studies as a whole, and cultural and textual analysis generally.

❑ Integrative Learning

While each week of the seminar focuses on a different topic central to videogame studies, the readings assigned outside of class and discussed within emphasize multiple approaches to these specific issues – examples include game historiography, design theory, and the narratology/ludology debate. A central part of class discussion will focus on how different methodological approaches reveal varied understandings of particular topics, and will place emphasis on the rich possibilities inherent in the synthesis of differing viewpoints and conceptions.

❑ Ethical Implications

As this seminar deals with a medium that has the potential to represent culture and society in powerful, visually striking and emotionally arresting ways, the course will encourage students to share their opinions and perspectives on the ethical implications of such representational forms, through both in-class discussion and written responses. The seminar will ask students to both critically and ethically consider such contemporary issues as videogame violence, and tie such analysis into issues of both technological advancement and the potential for fan appropriation.

❑ Cultural Diversity

Videogames are inherently multicultural and international, from their physical technical production to their multiple domains of representation. How and in what ways multiple cultures and cultural tropes both influence and are represented in game form is a central question of the course. Students will have the opportunity to explore differences inherent to games produced within varied cultures, while they also explore how game narrative and design influence the representation of multiple cultures and subcultures.

❑ Critical Thinking

An expectation of the seminar is student involvement in actual game play. The seminar will ask students to not just enjoy the games they play, but encourage a critical involvement that will allow them to analytically deconstruct these games. I will pose discussion questions, both during class and in the syllabus itself, that encourage critical thought during the experience of play. The goal is to allow critical thinking to broaden experiential knowledge.

❑ Rhetorical Effectiveness

The seminar will require individual in-class presentations, where students present their own analysis of assigned readings and their interrelationship to individual games. As well, the seminar requires two game analysis papers that relate to one another, the longer final paper existing as an expansion of the first focused analysis. As such, the seminar will allow students to reflect upon and improve their own critical prose and approach to argumentation.

❑ Problem-solving

Short responses to weekly readings and discussion questions will address specific elements apparent within broader topics. Answering the focused questions effectively requires students to work through a large amount of information and synthesize those elements that specifically relate to the question at hand.

❑ Library & Information Literacy

The seminar will require students to use articles other than those assigned so as to complete both their midterm and final papers. I will highlight important research tools germane to such critical inquiry.

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

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------|
| 1. Lecture: | <u>1/2 - 1</u> | (hours) |
| 2. Discussion Section: | <u>2.5 - 2</u> | (hours) |
| 3. Labs: | <u>N/A</u> | (hours) |
| 4. Experiential (service learning, internships, other): | <u>N/A</u> | (hours) |
| 5. Field Trips: | <u>N/A</u> | (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: | <u>1</u> | (hours) |
| 2. Reading | <u>7</u> | (hours) |
| 3. Group Projects: | <u>N/A</u> | (hours) |
| 4. Preparation for Quizzes & Exams: | <u>N/A</u> | (hours) |
| 5. Information Literacy Exercises: | <u>N/A</u> | (hours) |
| 6. Written Assignments: | <u>2</u> | (hours) |
| 7. Research Activity: | <u>2</u> | (hours) |

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

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

Videogames: History, Theory and Criticism

Film and Television 98T

Instructor: Harrison Gish

Seminar Description:

In this course, we will examine the videogame as a medium, learning how videogames have developed historically and technically during the forty years of their existence. We will learn how issues of design, genre, narrative, interactivity, and spatiality inform both the medium as a whole and individual games in particular. We will also discuss how videogames function as media texts within popular culture, and how they work to both represent and actively produce the culture within which they are designed and played. Studying a range of games, both classic and contemporary, and actively reading a range of theory and criticism that characterizes the many possible approaches available to the videogame scholar, we will ask the following questions: How do videogames function? In what ways do *videogames* differ from other types of games? What effects does videogame design have on how we experience and play individual games? In what ways do videogame players interact with videogames as a digital technology? How do videogames function aesthetically, narratively, spatially and technically?

Seminar Objectives:

In this seminar, you will learn to do the following:

- Analyze, discuss, and write about videogames using critical analysis grounded in videogame language.
- Actively participate in discussions about individual videogames, the assigned readings, and your own game play experiences.
- Understand the ways in which videogame design developed from electronic media and how videogames function within contemporary media culture.
- Learn to think critically about the writing of a medium's history, and comparatively analyze scholarly research that differs methodologically.
- Write two videogame analysis papers analyzing a videogame, or videogames, of your choosing using the critical vocabulary you have acquired in the class.

Course Requirements:

To do well in this course, you need to:

- Actively participate in class discussions.
- Read the assigned texts before class and be prepared to discuss them.
- Write a weekly 400-600 word response to be turned in to me at the beginning of each class meeting.
- Write two videogame analysis papers (one 4-5 page and one 10-12 page paper).
- Give a short presentation (five to ten minutes) to the class about your final paper project.

Grading Breakdown:

Class participation: 20%

Weekly response: 10%

Thesis and Outlines for both papers: 10%

First paper: 20% (Due Week 5)

Final project presentation: 10%
Final paper: 30% (Due Finals Week)

Participation: Your class participation grade will be based on your active participation in class discussions. Please come prepared to ask insightful questions and express your own ideas and opinions. There is a substantial amount of reading in this class and you need to do it all in order to be able to participate fully.

Readings and Responses: Each week there will be assigned readings, which can be found in the course reader. As the critical study of videogames employs a multitude of theoretical approaches, I have assembled this reader so as to effectively convey the large body of scholarly work the field encompasses. It is important that everyone does the reading *before* class and comes prepared with questions and comments. Please read the discussion questions provided below before you begin reading – these questions will guide you in how to approach the readings, and thinking of answers to these questions before class will allow you to actively participate. You may feel free to answer these questions in your weekly written responses, which I will collect at the beginning of each class meeting. These responses should be well written and thought provoking, but they are still responses; they can be personal, and they do not require footnotes. They are meant to prepare you for discussion, and encourage your active critical thinking concerning the assigned readings.

Videogame Analysis Papers:

Paper #1: A short (4-5 page) paper in which you analyze a specific videogame in terms of its historical influence, functionality as a game, its utilization of narrative, or its game play design. This paper can then be expanded into the larger final paper. Due Week 5.

Paper #2: A sustained, 10-12 page critical analysis of a game or group of games. Your papers will be graded on the originality of your ideas, the persuasiveness of your arguments, the clarity of your writing, your ability to tie together written sources, and your ability to use the language of videogame analysis to make your points. You may take any of the theories and critical approaches we have discussed in class and apply these methodological approaches to a game, or games, of your choosing. Due Finals Week.

Late Assignments: If any of your assignments is late, I will deduct one-third of a letter grade per day late. In other words, a paper handed in a day late that would have normally received an A would now receive an A-.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the act of using ideas, words, or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own, without giving proper credit to the original sources. Plagiarism is the intellectual version of stealing, and can lead to administrative sanctions from the university such as a failing grade, probation, and expulsion. We will discuss how and when to cite sources in class. If you have any questions about how to cite your sources, please consult me.

Weekly Discussion Topics and Reading Assignments

Week One: Introduction to Videogame Studies

Introductory Topics: Why should we study videogames? How can we approach videogames critically? What role do videogames play in popular culture? In what ways do videogames relate to other media? What are some of your favorite videogames, and why do you enjoy playing them?

Week Two: Videogame History

Discussion Topics: How were videogames created? Where were the first videogames invented? How do early games differ from contemporary games? What game elements have changed over time, and what elements have remained constant? How do historians understand the development of videogames over time differently?

Assigned Readings:

Herz, JC. *Joystick Nation: How Videogames Ate Our Quarters, Won Our Hearts, and Rewired Our Minds* (Little, Brown and Company, 1997): Chapters 2-4.

Kent, Steven L. "Super Mario Nation." In *The Medium of the Video Game*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001): 35-48.

Ruggill, Judd Ethan. "Convergence: Always Already, Already." In *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 3 (2009): 105-110.

The Dot Eaters. "The Dot Eaters: Videogame History 101." Available online at <http://www.thedoteaters.com/>

Week Three: Defining Games and Play

Discussion Topics: What defines a game? How do the videogames you play today fit within this definition? How do you define play? How has game play changed over time? How do videogames, and videogame play, relate to digital technology? What unique elements structure digital game play in particular?

Assigned Readings:

Salen, Katie and Eric Zimmerman. "Unit 1: Core Concepts" and "Unit 2: Rules." In *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004).

Wolf, Mark J.P. "Genre and the Video Game." In *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, eds. Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005): 193-205.

Week Four: Narratology and Ludology – Differing Approaches to Game Studies

Discussion Topics: How does narrative function within the contemporary videogame? How do videogame narratives differ from the narratives found in cinema and literature? What is ludology? How and why do videogame theorists see ludology as fundamental to understanding how games function? In what ways do narratology and ludology relate to, and function with, one another?

Assigned Readings:

- Aarseth, Espen. "Aporia and Epiphany in *Doom* and *The Speaking Clock*: The Temporality of Ergodic Art." In *Cyberspace Textuality: Computer Technology and Literary Theory*, ed. Marie-Laure Ryan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
- Juul, Jesper. "Games Telling Stories?" In *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, eds. Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005): 219-227.
- Neitzel, Britta. "Narrativity in Computer Games." In *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, eds. Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005): 227-251.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Chapter 8: Computer Games as Narrative." In *Avatars of Story* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006): 181-204.

Week Five: Interactivity, New Media Theory, and Videogames

Discussion Topics: How does a player interact with a videogame? How is a "feedback loop" constructed within digital games? What are the differences between videogame interaction and videogame immersion? What is a database, and what is an interface? How do databases and interfaces appear within, and foundationally structure, contemporary videogames?

Assigned Readings:

- Calleja, Gordon. "Digital Game Involvement: A Conceptual Model." In *Games and Culture* 2, no. 3 (2007).
- Crawford, Chris. "Interactive Storytelling." In *The Video Game Theory Reader*, eds. Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003): 259-275.
- Galloway, Alexander R. "Gamic Action, Four Moments." In *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006): 1-39.
- McMahan, Alison. "Immersion, Engagement, and Presence: A Method for Analyzing 3-D Video Games." In *The Video Game Theory Reader*, eds. Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003): 67-87.

Week Six: Game Worlds and Spatiality

Discussion Topics: In what various ways is space represented onscreen in contemporary videogames? How has the visual presentation of videogame space changed over time? How are these visual changes related to videogame technology? How are videogame spaces "mapped" through interfaces? How does videogame space relate to narrative, and to issues of play?

Assigned Reading:

- Newman, James. "Videogame Structure: Levels, Breaks and Intermissions" and "Videogames, Space and Cyberspace: Exploration, Navigation and Mastery." In *Videogames* (London: Routledge, 2004): 71-91 and 107-127.
- Wolf, Mark J.P. "Space in the Video Game." In *The Medium of the Video Game*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001): 51-77.

Week Seven: Videogames, Game Players and Avatars

Discussion Topics: How are videogame players represented onscreen, within videogame worlds? What is an avatar? Does a videogame avatar differ from a videogame character? How do videogame players construct avatars? How does the construction of an avatar relate to

videogame technology and design? In what ways do avatars relate to interactivity and immersion?

Assigned Readings:

- Rehak, Bob. "Playing at Being: Psychoanalysis and the Avatar." In *The Video Game Theory Reader*, eds. Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003): 103-129.
- Schroeder, Ralph. "Social Interaction in Virtual Environments: Key Issues, Common Themes, and a Framework for Research." In *The Social Life of Avatars: Presence and Interaction in Shared Virtual Environments*, ed. Ralph Schroeder (London: Springer, 2002): 1-19.
- Taylor, T.L. "Living Digitally: Embodiment in Virtual Worlds." In *The Social Life of Avatars: Presence and Interaction in Shared Virtual Environments*, ed. Ralph Schroeder (London: Springer, 2002): 40-63.
- Waggoner, Zach. "Videogames, Avatars, and Identity: A Brief History." In *My Avatar, My Self: Identity in Video Role-Playing Games* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009): 3-21.

Week Eight: Videogames and Representation

Discussion Topics: How do videogames function within popular culture? In what ways do videogames represent culture and society? How do videogames represent history, and how do these representations differ by genre? How do war games, both simulations and first-person shooters, actively represent and work to produce both culture and history?

Assigned Readings:

- Croghan, Patrick. "Gametime: History, Narrative, and Temporality in *Combat Flight Simulator 2*." In *The Video Game Theory Reader*, eds. Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003): 275-303
- Salen, Katie and Eric Zimmerman. "Unit 4: Culture." *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004).
- Uricchio, William. "Simulation, History, and Computer Games." In *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, eds. Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005): 327-341.

Week Nine: Classic Theories of Play

Discussion Topics: In what ways do classic theorists understand play and how play functions within society? How do these understandings of play relate to the theories of digital game play we have previously encountered? How do contemporary game genres relate to Roger Caillois' understanding of different types of play?

Assigned Readings:

- Caillois, Roger. "The Definition of Play," "The Classification of Games," "The Social Function of Games," and "The Corruption of Games." In *Man, Play, and Games* (The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1961): 3-57.
- Huizinga, Johan. "Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon," "The Play-Concept as Expressed in Language," and "Play and Contest as Civilizing Functions." In *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955): 1-76.

Week Ten: Games and Social Theory

Discussion Topics: Do videogames function as social discourse? In what ways have videogames been understood to affect society? How can videogames be used to promote knowledge and learning? How does Bernard De Koven understand the potential positives and negatives of game play?

Assigned Readings:

De Koven, Bernard. "Guidelines," "The Play Community," "Keeping it Going," "Changing the Game," and "Ending the Game." In *The Well-Played Game: A Player's Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1978): 15-110.

Prensky, Marc. "Computer Games and Learning: Digital Game-Based Learning." In *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, eds. Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005): 97-125.

Raessens, Joost. "Computer Games as Participatory Media Culture." In *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, eds. Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005): 373-389.



New Course Proposal

	Film and Television 98T Videogames: History, Theory and Criticism			
Course Number	Film and Television 98T			
Title	Videogames: History, Theory and Criticism			
Short Title				
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	Satisfaction of entry-level Writing requirement. Freshmen and sophomores preferred.			
Course Description	This seminar will introduce students to the rich intellectual field of videogame studies, investigating both the medium's forty-year history & the exiting research & theory currently being conducted within. The seminar emphasizes both focused class discussion and critical writing skills.			
Justification	Part of the series of seminars offered through the Collegium of University Teaching Fellows.			
Syllabus	File Film & TV 98T syllabus.doc was previously uploaded. You may view the file by clicking on the file name.			
Supplemental Information	Professor Stephen Mamber is the faculty mentor for this seminar.			
Grading Structure	Class participation: 20% Weekly response: 10% Thesis and Outlines for both papers: 10% First paper: 20% Final project presentation: 10% Final paper: 30%			
Effective Date	Spring 2011			
Discontinue Date	Summer 1 2011			
Instructor	Name	Title		
	Harrison Gish	Teaching Fellow		
Quarters Taught	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
Department	Film, Television, & Digital Media			
Contact	Name	E-mail		
	CATHERINE GENTILE	cgentile@oid.ucla.edu		
Routing Help				

ROUTING STATUS

Role:	Registrar's Scheduling Office
Status:	Pending Action
Role:	FEC School Coordinator - Soh, Michael Young (msoh@college.ucla.edu) - 45040
Status:	Returned for Additional Info on 10/28/2010 9:58:35 AM
Changes:	Title, Short Title
Comments:	Changed course title. Routing to Registrar's Office
Role:	Registrar's Office - Thomson, Douglas N (dthomson@registrar.ucla.edu) - 51441
Status:	Returned for Additional Info on 10/26/2010 5:41:07 PM
Changes:	No Changes Made
Comments:	Probably need a better title.
Role:	FEC School Coordinator - Soh, Michael Young (msoh@college.ucla.edu) - 45040
Status:	Returned for Additional Info on 10/26/2010 4:43:07 PM
Changes:	No Changes Made
Comments:	Routing to Registrar's Office
Role:	FEC Chair or Designee - McClendon, Muriel C (mcclendo@history.ucla.edu) - 53918
Status:	Approved on 10/26/2010 11:33:08 AM
Changes:	No Changes Made
Comments:	No Comments
Role:	L&S FEC Coordinator - Soh, Michael Young (msoh@college.ucla.edu) - 45040
Status:	Returned for Additional Info on 10/26/2010 10:18:29 AM
Changes:	No Changes Made
Comments:	Routing to Vice Chair Muriel McClendon for FEC approval
Role:	TFT Student Services Coordinator - Dacumos, Dean M (dacumos@tft.ucla.edu) - 64572
Status:	Approved on 10/26/2010 9:16:57 AM
Changes:	No Changes Made
Comments:	No Comments
Role:	Department Chair or Designee - Boyle, Barbara (boyle@tft.ucla.edu)
Status:	Approved on 10/21/2010 11:30:41 AM
Changes:	No Changes Made
Comments:	Course action approved by Senate Faculty on October 20, 2010: 15 In Favor; One abstension
Role:	FEC School Coordinator - Medina, Michele (mmedina@tft.ucla.edu) - 57891, 65344
Status:	Approved on 10/18/2010 4:12:07 PM
Changes:	No Changes Made
Comments:	Approved by TFT FEC Coordinator, Michele Medina based on the FEC Meeting held Tuesady, October 12, 2010.
Role:	Department/School Coordinator - Harris, Benjamin U (bharris@tft.ucla.edu) - 63761
Status:	Returned for Additional Info on 10/18/2010 3:29:57 PM
Changes:	Title, Short Title
Comments:	Changing course title to allow for variable topics in subsequent years, as per TFT FEC meeting of 10/12/2010.
Role:	FEC School Coordinator - Dacumos, Dean M (dacumos@tft.ucla.edu) - 64572
Status:	Approved on 9/15/2010 10:02:51 AM

Changes: No Changes Made**Comments:** No Comments**Role:** L&S FEC Coordinator - Soh, Michael Young (msoh@college.ucla.edu) - 45040**Status:** Returned for Additional Info on 8/25/2010 11:10:14 AM**Changes:** No Changes Made**Comments:** Routing to TFT for approval**Role:** CUTF Coordinator - Gentile, Catherine (cgentile@oid.ucla.edu) - 68998**Status:** Approved on 5/13/2010 11:52:24 AM**Changes:** Grading Structure**Comments:** on behalf of Professor Kathleen L. Komar, chair, Collegium of University Teaching Fellows**Role:** Initiator/Submitter - Gentile, Catherine (cgentile@oid.ucla.edu) - 68998**Status:** Submitted on 5/13/2010 11:50:25 AM**Comments:** Initiated a New Course Proposal[Back to Course List](#)

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