

FW22 AP/HIST 3801 3.0A Video Games and History (Fall term) – ****Tentative Course Outline****

Additional Contact Details: mmartel@yorku.ca

Expanded Course Description (expanded from course calendar description):

This course introduces students to the video game industry and the development of video games as a social, cultural, and technological phenomenon since the 1970s.

The course looks at the social, political, technological, and economic impact of the video game industry. It pays attention to the development of this industry by identifying the leading players and by analyzing the business strategies to capture market shares. It takes into consideration the role of the state and the diversity of its interventions and public policies in order to attract and to foster the growth of video game companies. It considers video games as a genre in its own right (with its subgenres, such as role-playing game and action-adventure), and it analyzes genre, narratives, themes, the use of History and the depiction of class, gender and race in video games. It addresses the issues of the educational value, the cognitive learning outcomes of video games, and the risks associated with video games, such as addiction and other mental health issues.

Additional Requirements: There are no additional requirements.

Required Course Text/Readings: *TENTATIVE*

All readings are available online. There are no required textbooks for this course.

September 12, 2022 Introduction

September 19, 2022 Unit 1-1 History of videogames from the 1960s to the 1990s

Read: Jason W. Buel, "Playing (With) the Western: Classical Hollywood Genres in Modern Video Games, in *Game on, Hollywood! Essays on the Intersection of Video Games and Cinema* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2013): 47-57.

Play: Oregon Trail <https://classicreload.com/oregon-trail.html>

Watch: Classic Game Postmortem: Oregon Trail (with Oregon Trail creator Don Rawitsch), 2017, 62 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdGNFhKhoKY>

September 26, 2022, Unit 1-2 Videogames as an Industry

Podcast: The Worst Video Game Ever? Sidedoor, Season 4, Smithsonian Museum, <https://www.si.edu/sidedoor/ep-15-worst-video-game-ever>

Read: Yolande Pottie-Sherman and Nicholas Lynch, "Gaming on the edge: Mobile labour and global talent in Atlantic Canada's video game industry," *The Canadian Geographer*, 63, 3 (2019): 425-439. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12522>

Play: Manito Ahbee Aki, Minecraft: Education Edition

October 3, 2022, Unit 1-3 Videogames, competitions and moral panic

Watch: Why do we play video games? (2019, 6:21 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyS35s-vA9o>

Watch: 15 Reasons People Play Video Games (2020, 13:38 minutes)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3DO_sNd0CE

Week of October 10, 2022: Reading week

October 17, 2022, Unit 2-1 Videogames, gender and harassment

Play: Assassin's Creed: Odyssey.

Read: Shannon Lawlor, "Your daughter is in another castle: Essential Paternal Masculinity in Video Games", *The Velvet Light Trap*, no 81 (Spring 2018): 29-42.

Watch: The Dark Side of Gaming – The Females Fighting Back (BBC Three, 2016) 11 minutes **Warning:** Sexist Language <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZMjGwjCAuQ>

October 24, 2022, Unit 2-2 Videogames as a medium for commenting on sexuality

Read: Gareth Healey, "Proving Grounds : Performing Masculine Identities in Call of Duty: Black Ops", *Games Studies*, volume 16, no 2 (December 2016) <http://gamestudies.org/1602/articles/healey>

October 31, 2022 Unit 2-3 Videogames as a medium for commenting on race

Play: "Detroit: Become Human"

Read: Kishonna L. Gray, "Power in the Visual: Examining Narratives of Controlling Black Bodies in Contemporary Gaming", *The Velvet Light Trap*, 81 (Spring 2018): 62-66.

Read: Anna Everett, "Serious Play: Playing with Race in Contemporary Gaming Culture," in Joost Raessens and Jeffrey H. Goldstein, eds., *Handbook of Computer Game Studies* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005): 311-23.

November 7, 2022, Unit 2-4 Videogames, health benefits and mental health

Play: Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice. (**Warning:** This is a fantasy game and the main character is struggling with psychosis. The game is fairly shocking at times with gore and horror elements).

Watch: Hellblade: Senua's Psychosis (**Warning:** this video deals with mental health issues):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31PbCTS4Sq4>

Read: Isabella Granic, Adam Lobel, and Rutger C. M. E. Engels, "The Benefits of Playing Video Games," *American Psychologist*, vol. 69, No. 1 (January 2014): 66-78.
<https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/amp-a0034857.pdf>

November 14, 2022, Unit 3-1 Developing video games

Read: Jeremiah McCall, "Playing with the past: history and video games (and why it might matter)", *Journal of Geek Studies* 6, 1 (2019): 29-48. <https://jgeekstudies.org/2019/04/22/playing-with-the-past-history-and-video-games-and-why-it-might-matter/>

November 21, 2022, Unit 3-2 Videogames and the use of the past

Read: Alyssa Sepinwall and Andrew Denning on Historical Video Games, AHR Interview, March 23, 2021, 29 minutes <https://ahrinterview.libsyn.com/alyssa-sepinwall-and-andrew-denning-on-historical-video-games>

Read: Jordyn Lukomski, "Accuracy vs Inclusivity: Women in Historical Games," *Feminist Game Studies* (October 2018) <https://www.nymgamer.com/?p=17807>

November 28, 2022, Unit 3-3 Videogames, war and masculinity

Read: Gareth Healey, "Proving Grounds : Performing Masculine Identities in Call of Duty: Black Ops", *Games Studies*, volume 16, no 2 (December 2016) <http://gamestudies.org/1602/articles/healey>

Read: Adam Chapman, "It's hard to play in the trenches: World War I, Collective Memory and Videogames," *Game Studies*, volume 16, no 2 (December 2016) <http://gamestudies.org/1602/articles/chapman>

December 5, 2022, Conclusion

Read: "Royal Canadian Legion uses Fortnite to reach young people on Remembrance Day", Zulekha Nathoo, CBC News, November 2019 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/rcl-uses-fortnite-for-remembrance-day-1.5354595>

Watch: The Story of Fornite (2018, 17 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqMrSRioPfM>

Weighting of Course: *TENTATIVE*

Written Assignment 1 (Playing video games) 25%

Students will be conducting a structured/unstructured interview with individuals who play and/or develop video games. This assignment also gives students an opportunity to experiment with oral interviews and assess its strengths and weaknesses.

Written Assignment 2 part 1 (A video game proposal) 35%

Students will develop a proposal for a new video game. Your video game proposal should refer to historical events.

Final take-home exam 20%

Tutorial participation. 20%

Organization of the Course:

This course involves in-person lectures and tutorials. Classroom discussions will enrich, clarify, and illustrate crucial issues from the lectures, assigned readings and videos. For each week, there is a series of assigned readings, podcasts, short videos and video games.

Students will have the opportunity to acquire skills in critical analysis, historical research and writing. Assignments to improve academic skills will take the form of two papers. There will be a final take-home exam based on the content of the lectures, readings and videos.

Course Learning Objectives:

Students who complete this course will be able to (1) think broadly and deeply about video games and the use of the past, (2) participate in critical discussions, (3) understand and analyze primary and secondary sources on video games, (4) develop both written and oral communications skills.

