

# ATCM 3366: GAME STUDIES I

Spring 2018 :: Wednesdays 4:00pm - 6:45pm :: ATC 2.101  
The School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication  
University of Texas at Dallas

## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor :: Dr. Lindsey Joyce

Email :: [lxj132030@utdallas.edu](mailto:lxj132030@utdallas.edu)

Office Location :: ATC 1.509

Office Hours :: By appointment at <https://lindsey-joyce.youcanbook.me/>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course serves as an introduction to basic vocabularies, frameworks, and arguments discussed in the field of game studies. Together, we will explore how established concepts and arguments about games and play can help us examine and reflect upon our own gameplay experiences. At the same time, we will consider how our gameplay experiences can contribute to existing understandings about games and play. By extension, we will practice using these concepts and our experiences as building blocks for constructing well-grounded arguments about games and play. To do so, we will read and watch a variety of foundational texts and videos relevant to game studies. We will play and critique a variety of both analog and digital games. We will reflect and analyze on how our gameplay experiences intertwine with or interject existing arguments made by game studies scholars. Last but not least, you will compose well-supported and researched arguments about your experiences by writing across media.

A note on the intention and position of this course in your overall learning trajectory in games: This course is meant to be a companion to Game Design I, as the process and practice of dissecting and analyzing games and play explored in this course will feed into your ability to be better game designers. At the same time, your experiences as a game designer will provide you the ability to perceive and notice specific design logics and choices made by other game designers. This course is also meant to be a prerequisite to Game Studies II, where you will go on to further critical investigation of games in close relationship to its various contextual elements after acquiring the basic vocabularies, framework, and arguments.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- You will gain an overview of the concepts and arguments in the field of game studies by investigating games from a variety of thematic approaches
- You will practice constructing and validating arguments about your own gameplay experiences using approaches and key concepts articulated by other game studies scholars
- You will develop your research and writing skills, including academic and multimedia writing, for participating in the scholarly study of games and play

## REQUIRED READINGS

Please refer to the SCHEDULE section of this syllabus for all assigned readings. They will be available electronically through eLearning.

## GRADING POLICY

Your final grade for this class will be based on the following assignments.

- Weekly In-class Writings 20 points
- Writing with Video 25 points
- Research Paper 25 points
- Participation 30 points

**Late works will not be accepted.** To arrange an extension on any assignment, please contact me at least one week in advance. Each assignment's points will be tallied as I return your assignments to you. Your final tallied points will be assigned a letter grade according to the scale below.

Points	Letter Grade
100-94	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
83-80	B-
79-77	C+
76-74	C
73-70	C-
69-67	D+
66-64	D
63-60	D-
59-0	F

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I value your academic integrity, and academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade. Please review and abide by the academic integrity guidelines set forth by the University of Texas at Dallas here <https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/integrity/>.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

It is the policy and practice of The University of Texas at Dallas to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. However, written notification from the Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA) is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with me and allow one-week notice. Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact OSA for a confidential discussion. OSA is located in the Student Services Building, SSB 3.200. They can be reached by phone at 972-883-2098, or by email at [studentaccess@utdallas.edu](mailto:studentaccess@utdallas.edu).

## UTD SYLLABUS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### assignment 1 :: weekly in-class writings

To study and discuss games and play on a systematic and communicative level, we must first acquire the necessary vocabularies and grasp the common concepts utilized by other people already invested in these endeavors. We must also practice using these ideas in our own communicative gestures. Thus, the purpose of this assignment is for you to not only read but also practice writing about what you read. For each week, I have assigned 1-2 readings concerning the theme of that week. During class, we will have in-class activities that pertain to the themes and readings. After the activities, you will have to write a reflection that connects either our activities or your other play experiences with the assigned readings. In other words, this assignment is due and done in class every week when we have assigned readings. This assignment will be graded on it being turned in; in other words, I will not use a rubric to assess your grade, and you will earn the full points for the assignment by turning it in.

DUE :: IN EVERY CLASS

### assignment 2 :: writing with video (Squier, 2010)

Writing can take the form of manipulating alphabets, images, soundbites, and more. The goal of this assignment is for you to practice making an argument about games and play in a video format. Given that most video games come multimodal and mediated by a screen, it is important to consider how to make an argument about this medium in ways that closely represent its qualities. For this assignment, you will create a 3-5 mins video that makes a central argument about a topic of your choice relating to games, play, players, and/or playgrounds. To do so, you should first ask yourself what are you invested in about games that prompted you to take this class? What do you believe regarding game, play, players, and/or playgrounds based on your previous and current engagement with games and play? To brainstorm and get a sense of direction, you can consider consulting the assigned readings for this course. Going from there, you should research readings, videos, games, news, podcasts, and/or anything else to get a sense of how this topic has been covered from multiple perspectives and acquire a wealth of materials to work with. Then, you will have to think through how you can compose a video that threads and utilizes all of these scattered materials as evidence into a coherent argument.

A few notes on logistics: We will have a first workshop on this assignment on Wednesday, January 24th, 2018, where I will introduce this assignment in further detail and the technical needs required for this assignment. On Wednesday, February 14th, 2018, we will hold a second workshop on this assignment to refine your drafts. This assignment is due at noon on Wednesday, February 21st, 2018. To submit this assignment, please submit the URL link to your video on eLearning. Our class period on Wednesday February 21st, 2018, will be dedicated to the showing of your videos.

DUE :: NOON,WEDS., FEB 21, 2018, ON ELEARNING

### assignment 3 :: research paper

As the culminating assignment for this course, you will write and present a clearly-articulated, well-researched, and fully-substantiated paper that makes a central argument about a topic of your choice relating to games, play, players, and/or playgrounds. By clearly-articulated, I mean that you are able to communicate a central thesis and demonstrate how that thesis is worthy of investigation. By well-researched, I mean that you are able to discuss how your thesis relates to, is supported by, and/or contradicts with ideas brought up by other scholars writing in the same domain. By fully-substantiated, I mean that you are able to support your thesis with your own experiences and/or other empirical evidence. This paper could be a companion to your assignment 2, where you extend your original argument in detail, or it could be on a different topic. You should include at least four peer-reviewed references in this paper, which could be drawn from our assigned readings or other academically relevant sources. This paper should be at least 2000 words (excluding references) in length, and it should be written in APA style. As a companion to this assignment, you are expected to present on your paper to the class for approximately 5 minutes during week 15 and 16. For the presentation, you can utilize visual aids, though it is not mandatory.

A few notes on logistics: During week 8, February 28, 2018, I will host a workshop on this assignment in class, where I introduce the assignment in further detail and facilitate an opportunity for you to brainstorm for this assignment. Your first draft of the research paper is due at noon on Monday, March 26th, 2018. During week 12, March 28th, 2018, we will not meet as a class but you will be assigned your peers' draft final research paper to review and provide suggestions. In return, you will receive feedback from your peers on your draft, and you should revise your paper based on those feedbacks. The final paper is due at noon on Wednesday, April 18th, 2018 on eLearning. Our regular class meeting time during week 15 and 16 will be dedicated to your presentations on your paper.

PAPER DRAFT DUE :: NOON, MON, MAR 26, 2018, ON ELEARNING

PAPER DUE :: NOON, WEDS., APR 18, 2018, ON ELEARNING

PRESENTATION DUE :: IN CLASS ON WEDS., APR 18 & 25, 2018

### assignment 4 :: participation

Each week, we will play games, discuss readings, and/or have other kinds of activities. To reach the learning objectives specified for this course, your cooperation by showing up to class, reading the assigned readings for that week, and participating in in-class activities are required. Thus, attendance and participation will be counted towards your final grade. Attendance is mandatory, but you are allowed two absence per semester without affecting your grade. You may use these absence for personal, medical, or familial reasons, no questions asked. To excuse your further absences, please consult with me before or after class for ways to make up for class. If you came to class unprepared to participate in in-class activities, you will be counted as absent for that week. **You will automatically fail this course if you have more than six absences.**

FULLY PRESENT AND ENGAGED PARTICIPATION DUE :: IN EVERY CLASS

## SCHEDULE

WEEK	THEME	PLAN
1 JAN 10	Play, games, playgrounds, and players, oh my!	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Introductions &amp; 5 Things</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> This syllabus. Bolter, J. D., &amp; Grusin, R. A. (2000). Computer games. In <i>Remediation: Understanding New Media</i> (pp. 88-103). The MIT Press.</p>
2 JAN 17	Play & Culture	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Monopoly</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Sicart, M. (2014). Play is. In <i>Play Matters</i> (pp. 1-18). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Henricks, T. S. (2015). Cultural play. In <i>Play and the Human Condition</i> (pp. 184-208). Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press.</p>
3 JAN 24	Critical Play	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Assignment 2 Workshop &amp; Let's Plays</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Flanagan, M. (2009). Introduction to Critical Play. In <i>Critical Play: Radical Game Design</i> (pp. 1-15). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Lyne, C. (2014, October 8). Meet the Grand Theft Auto Pacifists. <i>Vice</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ppmvmg/playing-it-safe-with-the-grand-theft-auto-pacifist-915">https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ppmvmg/playing-it-safe-with-the-grand-theft-auto-pacifist-915</a></p>
4 JAN 31	Games as Toys	<p><b>:: bring ::</b> Your favorite childhood toy or the best representation of it, such as an image or video</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Sicart, M. (2014). Toys. In <i>Play Matters</i> (pp. 35-48). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Irwin, J. (2016, March 4). Internet-Connected Toys Spark a New Era of Play. <i>Kill Screen</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://killscreen.com/articles/internet-connected-toys-spark-a-new-era-of-play/">https://killscreen.com/articles/internet-connected-toys-spark-a-new-era-of-play/</a></p>
5 FEB 7	Games as Narratives	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Her Story &amp; Once Upon a Time</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Ryan, M. L. (2009). From Narrative Games to Playable Stories: Toward a Poetics of Interactive Narrative. <i>Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies</i>, 1(1), 43-59. Short, E. (2016, April 12). Beyond Branching: Quality-Based, Salience-based, and Waypoint Narrative Structures. <i>Emily Short's Interactive Storytelling</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://emshort.blog/2016/04/12/beyond-branching-quality-based-and-salience-based-narrative-structures/">https://emshort.blog/2016/04/12/beyond-branching-quality-based-and-salience-based-narrative-structures/</a></p>

<p>6 FEB 14</p>	<p>Games as Industries</p>	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Assignment 2 Workshop</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Dyer-Witheford, N., &amp; de Peuter, G. (2009). Immaterial Labor: A Workers' History of Videogaming. In <i>Games of empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games</i> (pp. 3-34). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. Douglas, D. (2017, December 8). POST/CAPITALISM and the Optimistic Power of Educational Games. <i>Paste Magazine</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/12/postcapitalism-and-the-optimistic-power-of-educati.html">https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/12/postcapitalism-and-the-optimistic-power-of-educati.html</a></p>
<p>7 FEB 21</p>	<p>Assignment 2 Showing</p>	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Screen Assignment 2</p>
<p>8 FEB 28</p>	<p>Players as Learners</p>	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Assignment 3 Workshop</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Gee, J. P. (2007). Learning and Identity: What Does It Mean to Be a Half-Elf? In <i>What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy</i> (pp. 45-70). New York, NY: Macmillan. Whitton, N. (2014). Overview. In <i>Digital Games and Learning: Research and Theory</i> (pp. 1-11). New York, NY: Routledge.</p>
<p>9 MAR 7</p>	<p>Players as Performers</p>	<p><b>:: bring ::</b> Your Gamer Motivation Profile survey from here: <a href="https://apps.quantifoundry.com/surveys/start/gamerprofile/">https://apps.quantifoundry.com/surveys/start/gamerprofile/</a></p> <p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Charades &amp; The Stanley Parable</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Nguyen, J. (2016). Performing as Video Game Players in Let's Plays. <i>Transformative Works and Cultures</i>, 22.</p>
<p>10 MAR 14</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPRING BREAK</b></p>	
<p>11 MAR 21</p>	<p>Players as Laborers</p>	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> State of Play &amp; Human Resource Machine</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Hong, R. (2013). Game Modding, Prosumerism and Neoliberal Labor Practices. <i>International Journal of Communication</i>, 7(2013), 984-1002. Nakamura, L. (2009). Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in World of Warcraft. <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i>, 26(2), 128-144.</p>
<p>12 MAR 28</p>	<p>Peer-Review</p>	<p><b>:: no class meeting ::</b> Review peer's assignment 3 papers at the comfort of your home; yay!</p>
<p>13 APR 4</p>	<p>Analogue Playgrounds</p>	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Field trip; location TBD</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Sicart, M. (2014). Playgrounds. In <i>Play matters</i> (pp. 49-60). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Whitton, N. (2014). Games as Playgrounds. In <i>Digital Games and Learning: Research and Theory</i> (pp. 109-131). New York, NY: Routledge.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>14</b> <b>APR 11</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Digital Playgrounds</b></p>	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Discord observational study</p> <p><b>:: assigned readings ::</b> Taylor, T. L. (2009). The Assemblage of Play. <i>Games and Culture</i>, 4(4), 331-339. Grubb, J. (2017, July 24). Why Discord Is My New Online Home. <i>VentureBeat</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://venturebeat.com/2017/07/24/why-discord-is-my-new-online-home/">https://venturebeat.com/2017/07/24/why-discord-is-my-new-online-home/</a> Bernstein, J. (2017). A Thriving Chat Startup Braces for the Alt-Right. <i>Buzzfeed News</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.buzzfeed.com/josephbernstein/discord-chat-startup-braces-for-the-alt-right">https://www.buzzfeed.com/josephbernstein/discord-chat-startup-braces-for-the-alt-right</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>15</b> <b>APR 18</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assignment 3 Presentation</b></p>	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Presentation component of assignment 3</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>16</b> <b>APR 25</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assignment 3 Presentation</b></p>	<p><b>:: in-class activities ::</b> Presentation component of assignment 3</p>