



English/Film Studies 294

Game Culture

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Course Preview Fall 2021

This class will be taught asynchronously online – it's been in that mode since long before the pandemic. Weekly discussion posts are required, along with brief reading quizzes and papers with a light research component. A creative project can be substituted for one of the papers.

Game Culture is a first course in the critical study of games, especially computer games, and the participatory culture to which they belong. We will introduce the concept of games and play as meaning-making activities; survey the forms, conventions, and practices that inform design and reception of games; outline major theoretical trends within the field of Game Studies; examine the place of games in contemporary culture; and consider some of the problems and challenges they pose for society.

The course is intended for students in any major who want to think critically, creatively, and seriously about playful media. Seriousness is not necessary the opposite of joy or fun. The work will involve a certain amount of reading and writing: critical evaluation of games, applications of history and theory. It may also entail a good deal of game play, both in and out of class, and observation of play by others. Fun may be unavoidable -- and so, hopefully, will be understanding how computer games represent a significant medium for expression.

Recent versions of this course shifted focus to independently produced games of personal expression. In this eighth iteration, Game Culture turns back toward its original eclecticism, mixing indies and mainstream titles. We'll be using a new textbook, *How to Play Video Games*, which pairs popular and classic games with essays by major critics and designers.

The required textbook is \$30 in paperback, \$23 for Kindle. **NO GAME PURCHASES ARE REQUIRED**, though at least one is recommended. Videos of play will be available for all assigned titles.

If you have questions, please email moulthro@uwm.edu. A syllabus will be available mid-August.