

**AH 260/FMS 253: Global Video Games: Cultures, Aesthetics, Politics
Spring 2017**

Class Locations and Meeting Times:

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:50-6:05pm
Morey Hall 524

Contact Information:

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30am-12:00pm (or by appointment), Morey 521

Course Description:

This course will explore the production, distribution, and consumption of video games as a global phenomenon. Through thematic case studies and hands-on approach, we will consider how the juxtaposition of history, theory, and gaming practices operates in different geographical contexts. Several questions that we will explore in the course include:

- In what ways video games play and design are inflected by societal, cultural, and other factors?
- How do video games and their players' experience change when they move from one cultural or historical context to another?
- How do video game aesthetics and practices reinforce or confront national, ethnic, racial, and gender hierarchies in various part of the world?

Focusing on a combination between mainstream video game markets and regions not usually examined by video game studies, this course will expose students to a nuanced and fluid picture of video games as a medium and as a culture. Counts toward Media History, Theory, and Practice track for DMS Major.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students will have developed:

1. The ability to categorize and analyze video games in terms of their content, aesthetic approach, historical and socio-cultural contexts of their production, distribution, and consumption in various parts of the world
2. The ability to recognize and situate the cultural impacts of video games globally
3. The critical ability to contextualize how video games can reflect and shape our perception, conception, and interaction with our contemporary cultures both at local and global scales

Texts:

No required texts for the course. All materials are either accessible online or through BlackBoard. You are still required to bring the reading materials either in paper or electronic copies to every class meeting.

Required Games:

Every week specific games will be assigned alongside the readings. You are not required to play these games in their entirety, but you must make yourself familiar with their mechanics, narratives, and themes. Playing games as a class provides us an opportunity to put our critical understanding of the subject in perspective, as well as give us a sense of what makes video games compelling (or not) from the perspective of users.

Most of these games will be accessible to play in the Art and Music Library. I have booked a dedicated time (**Mondays, 7-10pm**) for the class to access the game room in the library. Alternatively, you may also use your own devices to access the games.

Nearly all of the games are available for free (in whole or in part). However, there is one specific game that you are required to purchase:

- **Never Alone** (\$0.99 - \$14.99 iOS, Android, Wii U, Steam, Xbox One, PS 3, PS 4)

Students will also be required to access games using Mac/Windows PC machines; online services such as Google Play, Steam, Playstation Network, and/or Xbox Live; mobile device capable of running Android or iOS applications; and web video/streaming service like Youtube or TwitchTV.

If you have any difficulty accessing any of these platforms, please let me know as soon as possible.

Other materials:

On several sessions, students will also have to watch films, online videos, and other digital objects throughout the semester. Nearly all materials will be available in the library, or for free online, for purchase/rent through Amazon or iTunes, or will be streaming on Netflix.

There are also two specific applications: [Timeline.js](#) and [Twine](#), that students will use to complete two assignments for this course. Tutorials and workshops sessions will be provided during class meetings.

Deadlines

Assignment must be handed in on time. Unless you have a verifiable reason for missing a deadline, I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade for each day the assignment is late. Unless otherwise indicated, **submit all written work electronically.**

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please see the University guidelines for academic honesty. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please speak with your adviser or consult me with particular questions related to this course. See: <http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty>.

Disabilities or Other Concerns

If you have a documented medical condition or learning disability, please speak with me regarding special consideration or accommodations that you require.

Grading Rubric

All grades are the purview of the instructor and will change only for computational errors.

<p>A (90-100)—Excellent. Student exhibits originality and creativity in media, cultural, and critical analysis. Writing and argumentation are clear and concise and grammatically flawless.</p>	<p>D (60-69)—Poor. Student fails to engage with the material and does not attempt any critical analysis. Writing and argumentation are weak and/or illogical.</p>
<p>B (80-89)—Good. Student offers critical analysis with reference to relevant course materials, but relies on information and analysis presented in lectures and class discussions. Writing and argumentation are clear, with minimal mistakes.</p>	<p>F (59 and below)—Fail. Student does not hand in assignment and/or work is very poor that and cannot be graded.</p>
<p>C (70-79)—Satisfactory. Student makes adequate reference to course material but offers little critical analysis. Argumentation and writing are unclear or off-topic, lacking in relevance to the assignment and the course concerns.</p>	

Codes of Conduct:

The material for this course is diverse and can be challenging. We will likely discuss contentious issues and topics. So I want you as students to be receptive to new ideas and/or arguments, to respect your classmates, and to create inclusive environment where you can debate and disagree with each other in a respectful manner. I will not tolerate personal attack, intolerance, and/or hate-speech in this course.

Electronic Devices:

Laptops, smartphones, tablets, and other devices are permitted in class **only when being used for purposes directly related to class**. Please do not distract your classmates and the professor with uses that are not related to class activities.

Assignments and Grading

Attendance and Participation (20%):

Class attendance is required. It is expected that you will arrive on time and participate in in-class activities. Your grade for class participation will reflect your preparation for class, your participation during individual and/or group in-class activities, your contributions to class discussions. Students are allowed 2 absences without consequence; after that, absences will affect your ability to stay current and will lower your grade.

There will be **weekly assigned group presentations** as part of your participation. These presentations should identify key issues and questions raised by assigned readings and games, and should suggest possible directions for class discussions.

Game critique (25%)

Students will choose to write **a 5-page game critique** (double spaced) from these two options:

1. Game review: Students will write a review essay of either a non-US or non-AAA game of their choosing. They have to discuss aspects of the game mechanics and narrative, and provide the reader with critical insights into how societal, cultural, and/or other factors affect the design and production of the game.
2. Game culture analysis: Students will write an academic essay that reflects their global perspectives on games. They can focus on either the production, distribution, or consumption of a particular game in global settings (e.g. *Pokémon Go* in Indonesia), or examine a particular concept or idea that has social, cultural, or political significance in global video game cultures (e.g. Representations of non-western cultures in US-produced games).

Further instructions on this assignment will be provided in class.

Weekly responses (15%)

- Online response: Starting on the second week of class, you will have to submit critical responses to readings, games, and discussions every **Thursday by 4pm**. Each response should be 2 paragraph minimum and posted on Blackboard. You may not submit late. Your grade for the response will be based upon **a random selection of 5 responses**, with points docked for every response that is not submitted.

Group game history timeline (10%):

Using Timeline.JS, students will work in group of 3 to create an interactive timeline of the history of video games in a country of their choosing that is not the United States or Japan. The group can choose either to focus on the overall history of games, a history of a particular game that is culturally-

significant, or a history of a particular gaming community and/or gaming practice in the country that they choose.

Further instructions on this assignment will be provided in class.

Final group project and presentation 30%

Using Twine 2.0 students will collaborate in group of 3 to develop a speculative design for a game that reflects their critical engagement with the class material and discussions. The game could be designed for a specific country in mind, or could respond to a particular issue in contemporary global game cultures. Students should accompany their design with **a 5-page reflective essay** (double-spaced) that explains the rationale behind their design choice and inspiration.

Further instructions on this assignment will be provided in class.

Course Schedule:

* Please note that the course schedule and assignments are **subject to change**. All changes will be notified in advance. Readings and screenings are to be completed for the date under which they are listed.

Week 1: Introduction			
Th 1/19	Welcome and syllabus review		
Week 2: How to Make a Mess of Games Critically			
T 1/24	- Ian Bogost, " Videogames are a Mess. " - Clara Fernández-Vara, <i>Introduction to Game Analysis</i> (Ch. 1). Bb/ebrary	Play your own games 1/24	
Th 1/26	- Mary Flanagan and Hellen Nissenbaum, <i>Values at Play in Digital Games</i> (Ch. 1&2). Bb - Gonzalo Frasca, " Videogames of the Oppressed " Optional: Read the responses to Frasca's article	Play by 1/26 : - <i>Ico</i> (PS 2) - <i>The Sims</i> (PS 2) - <i>Angry Birds</i> (Cross-platforms)	
Week 3: Global heterogeneity			
T 1/31	- Phillip Penix-Tadsen, <i>Cultural Code</i> (Ch.1). Bb - René H. Reynolds, Ken S. McAllister, and Judd Ethan Ruggill, "Game Culture." Bb - Philip Tan and Konstantin Mitgutsch, "Heterogeneity in Game Histories." Bb	Play by 1/31 : - <i>Lucha Libre AAA: Heroes del Ring</i> (PS 3/Xbox 360/Wii) Also check out: Trojan Chicken website and short video for D.E.D	
Th 2/2	- Mia Consalvo, <i>Atari to Zelda</i> (Ch.1). Bb/ebrary - Ben Aslinger, "Redefining the Console for the Global, Networked Era." Bb	By 2/2 : - <i>Final Fantasy XIII</i> (PS 3/Xbox 360) - <i>Valkyria Chronicles</i> (PS 3/4)	

Week 4: Gamic Ecologies: Sites, Rhythms, and Spaces			
T 2/7	- Jun-Sok Huhh, "The 'Bang' Where Korean Online Gaming Began." Bb - Thomas Apperley, <i>Gaming Rhythms</i> (Ch. 3). Bb	Play by 2/7: TBA By 2/9:	
Th 2/9	- Ge Zhang, " The Stroller in the Virtual City: Spatial Practice of Hong Kong Players in <i>Sleeping Dogs</i> ." - Holin Lin, "Body, Space, and Gendered Gaming Experiences." Bb	- <i>Sleeping Dogs</i> (PS 3/Xbox 360)	
Week 5: Not A Pastime No More – The Professionalization of Gaming			
T 2/14	- T.L. Taylor, <i>Raising the Stakes</i> (Ch. 2). Bb/ebrary	Watch by 2/14: - <i>Vice</i> documentary on esports	
Th 2/16	- Stephanie Boluk and Patrick Lemieux, <i>Metagaming</i> (Ch. 5). Bb	Watch by 2/16: - The International 2016 All Star DotA Match	
Week 6: History and Nostalgia in Games			
T 2/21	- Raiford Guins, <i>Game After</i> (Ch.5). Bb/ebrary - Melanie Swalwell, "Classic Gaming." Bb	Play by 2/21: - E.T. (Atari) on Virtual Atari	
Th 2/23	- Erkki Huhtamo, "Amusement Arcade." Bb - Carly A. Kocurek, <i>Coin-Operated Americans</i> (Ch. 7). Bb/ebrary	Watch by 2/23: - <i>Atari: Game Over</i> (Zak Penn, 2014). On reserve/Netflix By 2/23: - Games in Internet Arcade	
Week 7: Gaming the System – Cheating, Hacking, Modding			
T 2/28	- Mia Consalvo, <i>Cheating</i> (Ch. 4). Bb/ebrary - Tonguc Ibrahim Sezen and Digidem Isikoglu, "From Ozans to God-Modes." Bb	Watch by 2/28: - Walkthroughs, Let's Play videos on Youtube	
Th 3/2	- Judy Ehrentraut, " The Ethics of Commodification ." - Tom Apperley, "Modding the Historians' Code." Bb	- Also check out: Various game cheat resources	Game critique due at the beginning of class
Week 8: Augmenting Reality/Augmenting Play			
T 3/7	- Jason Farman, <i>Mobile Interface Theory</i> (Ch. 4). Bb - Brendan Keogh, " Pokémon Go and the politics of digital gaming in public " - Danielle Cave, " The geopolitics of Pokémon Go in Asia " - James Tennent, " Syrian refugee artist uses Pokémon Go to illustrate tragedy of lives ripped apart by war "	Play by 3/7: - Pokémon Go (Android/iOS) By 3/9: - Ingress (Android/iOS)	

Th 3/9	- Stacy Blasiola, Maio Feng, and Adrienne Massanari, " Riding in Cars with Strangers " - Nathan Hulseley and Joshua Reeves, " The Gift that Keeps on Giving " - Erin Stark, " Playful Places "		
Week 9			
T 3/14	SPRING BREAK (No Class)		
Th 3/16			
Week 10: Games as Avant Garde Art			
T 3/21	- Brian Schrank, <i>Avant-garde Videogames</i> (Selections). Bb/ebrary	Play by 3/21: TBA	
Th 3/23	No Class		
Week 11: Representations and Stereotypes in Games			
T 3/28	- Adrienne Shaw, <i>Gaming at the Edge</i> (Ch. 1). Bb/ebrary	Play by 28/30: TBA By 3/30: - World of Warcraft (online) - Eve Online (online)	Game history timeline due at the beginning of class
Th 3/30	- Catherine Goodfellow, "The Russians Are Coming!" Bb - Lisa Nakamura, "Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in <i>World of Warcraft</i> ." Bb - Hussein Ibrahim, "What it's like to always play the bad guy." Bb	Watch: - " Ni Hao (A Gold Farmers Story) " - " The Current State of Muslim Representation in Video Games "	
Week 12: False Binaries? Casual/Hardcore Gaming			
T 4/4	- Jesper Juul, <i>Casual Revolution</i> (Ch. 2). Bb	Play by 4/4:	
Th 4/6	- Aubrey Anable, " Casual Games, Time Management, and the Work of Affect. " - Ian Bogost, "Throwaways." Bb	- Kingdom Rush (Android/iOS) - <i>Warung Chain: GoFood Express</i> (Android/iOS) - Flappy Quetzal (Android) By 4/6: - Diner Dash (Android/iOS) - The Arcade Wire: Airport Security (Online) - Passage (PC/Mac/Linux/iOS)	
Week 13: Newsgames and Games with Agenda			
T 4/11	- Ian Bogost, Simon Ferrari, and Bobby Schweizer, <i>Newsgames</i> (Ch. 1 and 2). Bb	Play by 4/11: - McDonald's: The Video Game (online)	
Th 4/13	- Rafael Fajardo, "Pixels, Politics and Play." Bb/online - Osvaldo Cleger, "Procedural Rhetoric and Undocumented Migrants." Bb/online	- Kriminalisasi (Android) - So You Think You Can Drive, Mel? (online) - Madrid (online)	

		Watch: Jokowi Selamatkan Jakarta By 4/13: - La Migra (online) - Crosser (online) - ICED (PC/Mac) - Syrian Journey (online) - Phone Story - Invaders (online/mobile)	
Week 14: Gaming and Nations in the Global South			
T 4/18	- Vit Sisler, "Video Game Development in the Middle East." Bb - Radwan Kasmiya, "Arab World." Bb/JStor	Watch by 4/18: - Quraish part 1 & part 2 and Under Siege	
Th 4/20	- Inaya Rakhmani and Hikmat Darmawan, "Indonesia" (excerpt). Bb - Iskandar Zulkarnain, "'Playable' Nationalism." Bb	By 4/20: - Nusantara Online Part 1, part 2, part 3 - Nusantara Total War - Age of Empires III: Struggle of Indonesia	
Week 15: Community and Cultural Preservation			
T 4/25	- Celia Pearce, <i>Communities of Play</i> (Ch. 5 & 6). Bb - Heather Alexandra, " Why Some Games Are In Danger of Disappearing Forever. "	Play by 4/25: - Second Life (PC/Mac) By 4/27: - Never Alone (Cross-Platforms)	
Th 4/27	- Simon Parkin, " Never Alone: Could a Video Game Help to Preserve Inuit Culture? " - Elizabeth LaPensée, "Survivance As an Indigenously Determined Game." Bb - Jesse Matheson, " The Rise of Indigenous Storytelling in Games. "	Listen to: A Tribe Called Geek – Indigenous Gaming with Elizabeth LaPensée	
Week 16: The End is the Beginning			
T 5/2	- Course Reflection		
M 5/8	- Final Project Presentation due		