

## ENGL294: Game Studies

**Course Meetings:** Tues. 5:00 – 7:50 p.m., ECH 1205

**Professor:** Marcel O'Gorman, Director, Critical Media Lab

**Office Hours:** Hagey Hall 258, UW Main Campus, Wednesdays 3:00-5:00

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**CML Web Site:** <http://criticalmedia.uwaterloo.ca>

**Games Institute Web Site:** <https://uwaterloo.ca/games-institute/>

### Course Description

The UW Course Calendar describes ENGL 294 as follows: "This course introduces students to the field of humanities-based game studies. Topics may include the debate between ludological (rules-based) and narratological (story-based) approaches, procedural studies, platform and software studies, gamification, games and adaptation studies, and games as rhetorical objects." In this very first offering of ENGL 294, we will read about and discuss all of these subjects, in addition to playing games, making games, and critiquing games. This course was designed in collaboration with several graduate students from the UW Games Institute (GI), including Betsy Brey, Lauren Burr, Michael Hancock, Christopher Lawrence, Alexandra Orlando, Robert Parker, Emma Vossen, and Stephen Wilcox. Students in this class will have access to games at the GI, which can be used for the Player's Blog. Details about GI access will be provided in class.

### Bibliography: (Readings can be accessed on LEARN or via the links below)

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[http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/120720/Analysis\\_The\\_Psychology\\_of\\_Immersion\\_in\\_Video\\_Games.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/120720/Analysis_The_Psychology_of_Immersion_in_Video_Games.php)
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<http://www.gamespot.com/reviews/grand-theft-auto-v-review/1900-6414475/>
- Ratan, R. A., N. Taylor, J. Hogan, T. Kennedy, and D. Williams. "Stand by Your Man: An Examination of Gender Disparity in League of Legends." *Games and Culture*. 2015.
- Ruggill, Judd Ethan. "Convergence: Always Already, Already." *Cinema Journal* 48, Number 3, Spring 2009, pp. 105-11.
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- Yang, Grace S., et. Al. "Effects of Avatar Race in Violent Video Games on Racial Attitudes and Aggression." *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 2014 5: 698.

## Assessment

- Player's Blog (20%)
- Minor Design Project with Essay (10% +10%)

Major Design Project with Individual Essay (20% + 20%)  
Participation (20%)

*Player's Blog (20%)*

Student groups will maintain a blog to document their project work, and also to serve as individual "Player's Blogs." Each student will keep an online log of his or her playing activities. In addition to logging experiences about gameplay, the blog can be used to post comments about course readings or anything else related to game studies. The recommended procedure for completing this assignment is to play and blog TEN of the games listed in the syllabus's "PLAY" column (10 posts @ 2% each). Note that the blogs are graded INDIVIDUALLY, so you must create a separate account for yourself, and ensure that your posts can be identified clearly at the end of the term.

*Minor Group Design Project (10%) with Individual Essay (10%)*

Proposal Due: October 19

Final Project and Essay Due: October 26

Students will work in groups of 3 or 4 to complete a small game design project that embodies course readings. Since this is a design project only, groups are not required to produce a playable game, but the game must be feasible on a specific platform and complete. The FIVE PAGE essay must provide a critical and technical description of the game, based on at least THREE readings from the syllabus (including one on design) and ONE additional reading from independent research.

*Major Group Design and Development Project (20%) with Individual Essay (20%)*

Concept Proposal Due: Nov. 17

First Iteration Due: Nov. 24

Playable Iteration Due: Dec. 1

Essay Due: Dec. 4

Students will work in groups of 3 or 4 to design and develop a serious game, using one of the various platforms introduced in class workshops. Alternate platforms may be used if students can demonstrate the necessary skills. The game must embody course readings and follow the definition of a "serious game" as defined in class. The TEN PAGE essay will involve both a technical and critical description of the game, in addition to a justification of platform choice. At least FOUR readings from the syllabus must be cited in the essay, in addition to at least TWO readings from independent research.

*Alternate Project 1: Twitch-Inspired Game Critique Voiceover*

For this project, student groups will record gameplay with a voiceover that provides critical feedback about the game, based on course readings. The video should be no more than 10 minutes long, and it must involve at least FOUR readings from the syllabus and TWO readings from independent research. It must also be designed for a general audience, and uploaded to YouTube for viewing. The video must be accompanied by a five-page individual essay that discusses the making of the video and introduces the critical concepts used in the voiceover. Additional details provided in class.

*Participation (20%)*

The high participation grade in this course is a reflection of the course theme and content. This class is about games, and games require players. Failure to participate in class, frequent tardiness, and unexcused absences all have a negative impact on class morale and learning outcomes. Students are expected to attend all classes arrive on

time, and actively engage their colleagues in seminar discussions and fair play. In addition, students will be expected to complete in-class workshops, which also count toward the participation grade. Finally, students will be graded on their participation in group work, as assessed by their peers. Note that misuse of personal electronic devices in class (e.g., students who are obviously playing *Candy Crush* rather than listening to a lecture) will result in a lower participation grade.

## General UW Course Policies

### Academic Integrity:

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>.

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>.

**Academic Integrity website (Arts):**

[http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic\\_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

**Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo):** <http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>

### Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

**Note for students with disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

*NB: Most titles below are abbreviated. For full titles, consult the bibliography above.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings and Workshops</b>	<b>Presenters</b>	<b>Play Before Class</b>
<b>Sept. 15</b>	Intro. to course. In-class readings. Groups formed and blogs started.  Workshop: "What is a game?"	O'Gorman Games Institute Members	
<b>Sept. 22</b>	GAMES AND CULTURE Caillois, <i>Man, Play and Games</i> , selections Huizinga, <i>Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture</i> , selections  Workshop: Introduction to Game Design	O'Gorman  Steve Wilcox	<i>Settlers of Catan</i> <i>World of Warcraft</i> <i>Risk</i> <i>Sims</i>
<b>Sept. 29</b>	THE NARRATIVE VS. LUDOLOGY DEBATE Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture" Juul, <i>Half-Real</i> , Introduction  Workshop: Making Games with Twine	Michael Hancock Betsy Brey  Rob Parker	<a href="#"><u>Colossal Cave</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Adventure</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Depression Quest</u></a> <i>Tetris</i> <a href="#"><u>Candy Box</u></a>
<b>Oct. 6</b>	GAMES AS ARGUMENTS Bogost, Ferrari, Schweizer. <i>Newsgames</i> , Introduction Sicart, "Newsgames: Theory and Design" Flanagan and Nissenbaum, <i>Values at Play</i> , Chapters 5 and 6  Workshop: Making Games with Game-O-Matic	Steve Wilcox  O'Gorman Steve Wilcox	<a href="#"><u>September 12</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Cow Clicker</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Crosser</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Jeff Koons Must Die</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Art Game</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Pipe Trouble</u></a>
<b>Oct. 13</b>	GAMES AND IDENTITY Alexander, "Gamers Don't Have to be Your Audience" Ratan et al, "Stand by Your Man" Yang et al, "Effects of Avatar Race"  Workshop: Making Games with Grow-A-Game	Alex Orlando  O'Gorman	Anything on <a href="#"><u>Twitch</u></a> Anything by <a href="#"><u>PewDiePie</u></a>
<b>Oct. 20</b>	GAME CRITICISM Jennings, "Passion as Method" Petit, "City of Angels and Demons" Walker, "Some Subjective Thoughts"  Workshop: Making a Game Critique Voiecover	Emma Vossen  TBD	<i>Call of Duty</i> <i>Mortal Kombat</i> <i>Custer's Revenge</i> <i>Grand Theft Auto</i>
<b>Oct. 27</b>	Present Project 1: Serious Game	Everyone	Play a game at a games café.
<b>Nov. 3</b>	GAMES AND ADAPTATION Bogost and Montfort, <i>Racing the Beam</i> Ruggill, "Convergence: Always Already, Already"  Present Project 1 Proposals	Chris Lawrence	<i>Any LEGO Game</i> Cineplex Arcade <i>Empire Strikes Back</i> , <i>ET</i> (Atari) <i>Dante's Inferno</i>
<b>Nov. 10</b>	GAMES AS ALTERNATE REALITY	Lauren Burr	<i>Ingress</i>

	Farman, "Creative Misuse as Resistance" Sample, "Location Is Not Compelling"		<i>HATfinder</i> <i>Cytopath</i> <i>Zombies, Run!</i>
	Workshop: Making Games with HATengine	Lauren Burr	
<b>Nov. 17</b>	GAMIFICATION McGonigal, <i>Reality is Broken</i> , Chapter 7 Deterding et al, "From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness" Bogost, "Gamification Is Bullshit"	Rob Parker	McDonalds Monopoly Webkinz <i>Code Academy</i>
	Present Concept for Final Project	Everyone	
<b>Nov. 24</b>	IMMERSION AND ADDICTION Madigan, "The Psychology of Immersion" Csikszentmihalyi, <i>Flow</i> , Chapter 4. Weinstein, "Computer and Video Game Addiction" Present Iteration 1 of Final Project	O'Gorman	<i>Candy Crush</i> <i>World of Warcraft</i> <i>Flappy Bird</i>
	Present Iteration 1 of Final Project	Everyone	
<b>Dec. 1</b>	Present Final Iteration of Final Project Playtesting at Games Institute	Everyone	Mind Games Head Games