

**University of Waterloo**  
**Department of Women's Studies**  
**WS 365**  
**Gender and Race in the Global Gaming Industry**  
**Winter 2016**  
**Tuesdays 6pm-8.50 pm; HH227**

**Instructor Information**

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**Course Description**

Over the past forty years videogames have come to pervade contemporary life. More than fifty percent of North Americans play videogames on a semi-regular basis, while the global digital games industry is projected to generate \$100 billion in annual revenue by the end of the decade. During their rise to prominence videogames have emerged not only as a part of a burgeoning entertainment industry but as a novel form of communication, one capable of addressing issues related to science, education, health, and socio-political equality. At the same time videogames have been criticized for glorifying violence and militaristic aggression, while also perpetuating negative stereotypes surrounding gender, race, sexuality, and disability. This course critically examines the production and reception of videogames. Drawing from critical texts, popular press, documentaries, games, and guest speakers, the course offers skills for thinking critically and globally about games and culture from the intersecting perspectives of gender, race, sexuality, and disability. Throughout the course students will develop a vocabulary for discussing how games construct representations, perpetuate values, ideas, and biases, as well as foster communication and understanding. Portions of this course, including this syllabus, were developed in conjunction with Dr. Srabani Maitra.

**Course Goals and Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Think critically about games & culture in relation to gender, race, sexuality, & disability.
- B. Evaluate games for their depiction of various identities, values, and logics, especially in regards to norms, biases, & stereotypes.
- C. Recognize games as a global, inter-cultural phenomenon in which values & biases are encoded, transmitted, reinforced, & deconstructed.
- D. Deploy various feminist, queer theory, disability studies, & game studies concepts & theories in analyzing the production and reception of videogames.

## Readings Available on LEARN and E-RESERVE.

All articles, book chapters, essays, etc. for this course are accessible through LEARN.

## Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Class Participation	Ongoing	15%
Unit Reflections	See schedule below	25%
Group Presentation	Feb 9th, 2016	15%
Final Project		
Topic and Thesis Statement	March 15th	10%
Annotated Bibliography	March 22nd	10%
Submit First Draft	March 29th	-
Final Submission	April 5th	25%
Total		100%

### General Assignment Guidelines

All assignments are due on the dates listed above. Unless otherwise noted, assignments must be submitted *before class starts* (i.e. 6pm sharp). Documents are to be submitted to the course dropbox on LEARN with the following formatting:

- Double-spaced; 12pt Times New Roman font.
- Format: doc, docx, rtf.

Below you will find general outlines for each type of evaluation/assignment. More detailed information on assignments will be provided in class.

### Participation (15%)

- **Format:** Active engagement in course activities.
- **Description:** This course requires active engagement with both the material and fellow students. Rich, constructive discussion fosters our understanding of the material and opens us up to various perspectives. Participation might involve answering questions, becoming involved in group discussions, introducing games and/or articles from the popular press to the class, and other alternative forms. Many classes will involve working in groups to answer discussion questions, and so being prepared to contribute is essential to you, your group, and the class at large.
- **Outcome:** Contribute to a lively, constructive, and informed classroom.

### Unit Reflections (5 x 5% = 25%)

- **Format:** Informal/personal essay (1 page, ~250-300 word).
- **Description:** For each unit covered in this course students will submit a short personal essay that connects a concept, theory, or topic addressed in the readings with a particular game (think along the lines of an academically-informed blog post). Students should apply the course material to *any* well-suited game. Some suggested games, broken down by unit, are offered below. Due dates for each unit reflection are listed in the course schedule, also below.
- **Outcome:** Demonstrate your comprehension of and facility with the course material by

showing how issues related to gender, race, sexuality, & disability relate to particular games.

**Group Presentation (15%)**

- **Format:** Presentation (5mins)
- **Description:** In groups of 2-3 students will put together a 5 minute presentation that draws on the course readings in Units 1-3. Each presentation will make an argument through the use of speech, images, video, and/or on-screen text. References to specific theories, concepts, games, and/or game publishers are required. The presentation will be didactic in tone; your group has taken the time to examine a particular issue and the presentation is an opportunity to share that knowledge persuasively with the class.
- **Outcome:** Establish your group’s capacity to clearly communicate a concept, theory, or topic using the various affordances of a multimedia presentation.

**Final Project (45%)**

- **Format:** Essay (6 pages, ~1800 words) **Or** Video Essay/Critical Let’s Play (7-10mins) **OR** text game (i.e. Twine).
- **Description:** For the final project chose any unit from the course and develop an argument around that topic. You may build on one of your unit reflections or pursue a different approach entirely. There are numerous formats that this assignment can take, from a traditional argumentative essay to a video essay or a text-based game (using a platform such as Twine). Whatever format you chose, you will need to create a topic and thesis statement and an annotated bibliography. These documents will be submitted in the weeks leading up to the final submission and they will provide opportunities for formative feedback. All submissions, regardless of format, require five sources/references, at least two of which must draw from material not contained on this syllabus. Students will have the opportunity to submit a draft/rough cut video/demo prior to the final submission. While this is optional, it is strongly encouraged.
- **Outcome:** Develop critical thinking and communication skills in regards to a particular topic.

W Unit 1: Games in a Global Context	Assignments
<p>1 <b>Course Overview</b>                      Jan. 5 -Introductions</p> <p>Optional                      -Krenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color.” <i>Stanford Law Review</i>.                      -Film: Rise of the Videogame (see LEARN for link).</p>	
<p>2 <b>Contextualizing Games</b>                      Jan. 12 - Consalvo and Dutton, “Game analysis: Developing a methodological toolkit for the qualitative study of games.” <i>Game Studies</i>.</p> <p>- Shaw, “From Custer’s Revenge and Mario to Fable and Fallout: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Digital Games.” <i>Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture</i>.</p> <p>- Taylor, “The Assemblage of Play” (331-339). <i>Games and Culture</i>.</p>	<p>Form groups for upcoming presentations</p>

3	<b>Games Around the Globe</b>	<p>Jan. 19 - Guest Speaker: Alexandra Orlando</p> <p>- Wolf, "Introduction." <i>Video Games Around the World</i>.</p> <p>- Consalvo, "Console video games and global corporations: Creating a hybrid culture." <i>New Media &amp; Society</i>.</p> <p>- Picard, "The Foundation of <i>Geemu</i>: A Brief History of Early Japanese video games." <i>Game Studies</i>.</p>	Unit 1 reflection due
<b>W Unit 2: Gender &amp; Games</b>		Assignments	
4	<b>Representations of Women</b>	<p>Jan. 26 - Jenkins and Cassell, "From Quake Grrls to Desperate Housewives: A decade of gender and computer games." <i>In Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat: New Perspectives on Gender and Gaming</i>.</p> <p>- Fisher, "Sexy, Dangerous—and Ignored An In-depth Review of the Representation of Women in Select Video game Magazines. Games and Culture." <i>Games and Culture</i>.</p> <p>-Select news articles (See LEARN)</p> <p>-Film, "Tropes vs Women." (Select Episodes)</p>	
5	<b>Masculinity</b>	<p>Feb. 2 - Consalvo, "The Monsters Next Door: Media Constructions of Boys and Masculinity." <i>Feminist Media Studies</i>, Vol. 3, No. 1, March 2003.</p> <p>- Chess &amp; Shaw, "A Conspiracy of Fishes, or, How We Learned to Stop Worrying About #GamerGate and Embrace Hegemonic Masculinity." <i>Journal of Broadcasting &amp; Electronic Media</i>.</p> <p>Optional</p> <p>- Pascoe, "Making Masculinity: Adolescence, Identity, and High School." <i>Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School</i>.</p>	Unit 2 reflection due
<b>W Unit 3: Queerness, Sexuality, &amp; Games</b>		Assignments	
6	<b>Queerness &amp; Games</b>	<p>Feb. 9 - Shaw, "Circles, Charmed and Magic." <i>QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking</i>.</p> <p>- Clark and Kopas, "Queering Human-Game Relations: Exploring Queer Mechanics and Play." <i>First Person Scholar</i>.</p> <p>- Kopas, "On Gone Home."</p> <p>- Film: Gaming in Colour</p>	Group presentations
7	<b>Sex, Sexuality, &amp; Games</b>	<p>Feb. 23 - Guest Speaker: Emma Vossen</p> <p>- Ruberg, "Sex as Game: Playing with the Erotic Body in Virtual Worlds." <i>Rhizome</i>.</p>	Unit 3 reflection due

- Krzywinska, "The Strange Case of the Misappearance of Sex in Video Games." *Computer Games and New Media Cultures*.

- Blythe-Adams, "Renegade Sex: Compulsory Sexuality and Charmed Magic Circles in the Mass Effect series." *Loading.. The Journal of the Canadian Game Studies Association*.

**W Unit 4: Race, Disability, & Games**

Assignments

**8 Race & Games**

Mar. 1 - Gray, "Introduction" and "Racing and Gendering the Game." *Race, Gender, and Deviance in Xbox Live: Theoretical Perspectives from the Virtual Margins*.

- Leonard, "Young, Black (& Brown) and Don't Give a Fuck: Virtual Gangstas in the Era of State Violence." *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies*.

- Twine Workshop with Rob Parker

**9 Disability & Games**

Mar. 8 - Gibbons, "Disability, Neurological Diversity, and Inclusive Play." *Loading.. The Journal of the Canadian Game Studies Association*.

- Powers, "Video Game Accessibility." *Disability Studies Quarterly*.

- Carr, "Ability, Disability and Dead Space." *Game Studies*.

- Film: Login 2 Life

Unit 4 reflection due

**W Unit 5: Learning, Production, & Games**

Assignments

**10 Learning, Argumentation, & Games**

Mar. 15 - Bogost, "The Rhetoric of Video Games" from *The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*, ed. Katie Salen.

- Allen, S. L. (2014). "Video Games as Feminist Pedagogy." *Loading.. The Journal of the Canadian Game Studies Association*.

- Pilon and Granados, "The Monopoly shame: Leftist D.C. inventor didn't even get token recognition." *The Washington Post*.

Thesis statement due

**11 Industry, Production, & Games**

Mar. 22 - Mia Consalvo. "Crunched by passion: Women game developers and workplace challenges." *In Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat: New Perspectives on Gender and Gaming*.

- Harvey & Fisher, "Everyone Can Make Games!" The post-feminist context of women in digital game production." *Feminist Media Studies*.

- Huntmann, "Women in video games: The case of hardware production and promotion." *Gaming Globally: Production, Play, and Place*.

- England, "Interview: On Game Design, Academia, & Interactive Fiction." *First Person Scholar*.

Annotated Bibliography due

12	<b>Review</b>	Unit 5 reflection due
	Mar. 29	First draft of final submission (optional)

## Games

Learning to evaluate and critique videogames in regards to gender, race, sexuality, and disability is a central component of this course. At the end of each unit you will demonstrate these skills by submitting a reflection that applies the readings from that unit to a particular game. Given the breadth of videogames, and their varying applicability to particular units, students are encouraged to apply the readings to whatever games they find most provocative and applicable. Listed below are several games that are thematically related to each unit and may provide useful sources of inspiration. Each list contains at least one game that can be played for free on a modern web browser (see LEARN for links, including more games).

Unit #1	Unit #2	Unit #3	Unit #4	Unit #5
- The Sims (\$) -Runescape (Free)	- Life is Strange (\$) - Stasis (Free) - Mainichi (Free)	- Coming Out Simulator (Free) - Gone Home (\$) -Lim (Free)	- Depression Quest (Free) - Anti-Sim (Free) - To The Moon (\$) -GTA: San Andreas (\$)	- Parable of the Polygons (Free) - Phone Story (Free)

## Rights and Responsibilities

Every member of this class—instructor as well as students—has rights and responsibilities to ensure a pleasant and productive experience for all. We are all answerable to University policies governing **ethical behaviour** (Policy 33) and **academic integrity** (Policy 71), as well as to those outlining **grievance or dispute procedures** (Policy 70). Please consult these documents, available from the website of the university secretariat.

Here are some more specific expectations for this course:

### You will:

- know the university policies that govern your behaviour
- attend all scheduled classes
- arrive prepared: with assigned reading and writing completed, and with appropriate materials in hand
- participate actively in your own learning, while respecting the rights of others to learn as well: this means active *listening* as well as active *speaking*
- give thoughtful consideration to instructor feedback on written and oral work

### **I will:**

- adhere to the university policies that govern my behaviour
- attend all scheduled classes
- make myself available for consultation in person and over email
- return assignments within 2 weeks
- provide helpful and respectful feedback on your work

*On academic dishonesty:* it is a serious offense to attribute the intellectual labour of another to yourself. Plagiarism consists of using the words or ideas of another without proper attribution. I expect that the work you submit in this course will be the product of your own labour, and that your research sources will be scrupulously documented. If you have any concerns or questions about appropriate practice, you are sincerely encouraged to come discuss this with me—I would really like to help.

### **Attendance & Late Policy**

Attendance is vital to your success in this course. If you choose not to attend, you will be missing in-class exercises upon which some of your grades will depend. There are no 'makeups' for this work.

Assignments are due as noted on the assignment sheets and on the LEARN calendar; **unless prior arrangements are made** late assignments will lose 10% per day late, counting weekends. Assignments more than three days late will not be accepted without documentation or explanation.

### **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.