
INTRO TO GAME STUDIES SYLLABUS

Fall 2019

Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Office Location & Hours
Ayse Gursoy	agursoy@utexas.edu	UTA 5.550, 2-3 PM, Mondays

General Information

INF 350G, Intro to Game Studies, meets Mondays from 3-6 p.m. in CAL 21.

Material in this syllabus may change before the first class session. Please be sure you have the latest version. Extended assignment descriptions will be available on Canvas, as will the readings.

Description

In this seminar class on game studies, we will engage with readings by various game studies scholars grouped into topics. You will be reading a lot and discussing what you read. My goal for the assignments is to cut down on busywork, while giving you opportunities to engage with the material in more depth. You will occasionally be asked to give short presentations on various topics.

Expectations

I have two basic expectations for you as a participant. First, that you will respect your fellow participants in the course, and second, that you will respect yourself. You should engage in the discussions in good faith and be committed to learning. We are all here to learn from one another, so please ask questions and use what you don't know to spark discussions! I am also here to learn from you and I always welcome feedback on the course design. I understand that student life can get messy and everyone bites off more than they can chew sometimes, or things get in the way of your plans. Speak up, and we can work things out.

Course Materials

Required Materials

Required readings will be posted in Canvas. If you have any issues accessing the materials, contact me.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1	September 9	Introduction to the Class	Aarseth, 2001
Week 2	September 16	Studying Artifacts	Montfort and Bogost, 2009 Fernandez-Vara, 2018
Week 3	September 23	Studying Design	Bogost, 2008 Flanagan, 2009
Week 4	September 30	Studying Play	Juul, 2006 Huizinga, 1952
Week 5	October 7	Playing in Public	Kocurek, 2015 Witkowski, 2012
Week 6	October 14	Professionalization of Play	T.L. Taylor, 2012
Week 7	October 21	Labor	Yee, 2006 Taylor et al., 2015 Lu et al., 2014*
Week 8	October 28	Game Cultures	Pearce, 2011 Nardi, 2010 Dibbell, 1998
Week 9	November 4	Performance	Murray, 1998 Laurel, 1993
Week 10	November 11	Designing for Identity	Harrell and Harrell, 2009 Paul, 2018 Nakamura, 2017*
Week 11	November 18	Metagaming	Boluk & LeMieux, 2017 Consalvo, 2009
Week 12	November 25	Thanksgiving week	Workshop time for final projects
Week 13	December 2	Games Doing Things	Gee Light, 2008
Week 14	December 9	Final Presentations	
Week 15	December 16	Final Presentations	

Assignments

Name	Subject	Weighting
Notes	Enter subject	10%
Class Participation		10%
Self Reflection		5%
Author Overview	Enter subject	10%
Venue Overview		10%
Game Analysis	Enter subject	15%
Final Paper		25%
Final Presentation		15%

Assignments

Notes

For each required reading, you will submit 3-4 sentences about your thoughts. We will go over note-taking in a guided exercise during the first class session. Good things to include in notes are questions you may have after reading, links between the reading and other material, or application of concepts in the reading to your own experiences. You are encouraged to use your notes during the in-class discussions!

Class Participation

When you are in class, you should participate in discussions in good faith. Respect your classmates, acknowledge what you don't know, ask questions of the readings and of each other.

Self Reflection

When you complete an assignment, I would like for you to turn in a short, 3+ sentence reflection capturing your thoughts. In this, please address how you felt about the assignment, what you think you did well, and what you think you could do better. I will not read these until I have graded the assignments, and you will get full credit if you turn it in.

Author Overview

Once during the semester, you will give a short, 5-minute overview presentation of the authors for that session. This overview will help orient us as we engage with the readings. In this assignment, I am looking for some detail about the author's background, their research, and their scholarly community. You should focus on getting solid, basic details about the authors in question. Good questions to answer include the following:

- Where were they educated? What discipline(s) did they focus in? Who was their advisor?
- What kind of industry or design experience do they have?
- Who do they often work with?

- Where do they publish their work? What kind of venue is it?
- Who do they cite? Who cites them?
- What kinds of research methods do they use?

Venue Overview

Once during the semester, you will give a short, 5-minute presentation about a game studies publication venue that you will choose from a list. This will help us gain context for the readings and authors we will study.

Game Analysis

In this assignment, you will give a 15-20 minute presentation about a game, using some concepts from the readings so far to orient your analysis. This is not a sentimental review (no “5/7 with rice”), but please feel free to use your own experiences of play and your own response to the game in your analysis. In this assignment, you should give a short overview of the game, brief historical or social context for the game, and then go into your analysis of 2-3 aspects of the game. You are welcome to use slides, videos, or other props to help you demonstrate. (I recommend against live demos just as a rule of thumb.)

Final Paper

The 5 page final paper will be an opportunity to put together the work you’ve done over the course of a semester. I would like you to use at least 3 of the readings for class, as well as 2 outside sources, to put together an argument about some aspect of game studies. If you would like to focus on research, consider doing a brief literature review about a specific theme in readings. If you would like to focus on design, consider doing an analysis of a design feature. You are encouraged to use material like the author or venue overviews, as well as your game analysis, in your paper - please be sure to acknowledge this in a footnote if you do so. You are welcome to experiment with different formats for this paper and encouraged to discuss this with me before submission.

Final Presentation

The final presentation is a chance to go over the concepts from your final paper in class. You are free to use a “conference presentation” format which we will discuss in class, but I encourage you to put together a presentation style that works for you! Every student will have 20 minutes for their presentation, and 10 minutes for Q&A afterwards.

University Resources for Students¹

Services for Students with Disabilities

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. For more information, visit <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>.

Counseling and Mental Health Center

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support.

<http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/individualcounseling.html>

The Sanger Learning Center

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

BeVocal

BeVocal is a university-wide initiative to promote the idea that individual Longhorns have the power to prevent high-risk behavior and harm. At UT Austin all Longhorns have the power to intervene and reduce harm. To learn more about BeVocal and how you can help to build a culture of care on campus, go to: wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal.

Other Resources

- Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>
- Libraries: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

¹ This section and the following two sections are adapted from syllabus templates provided by UT Austin. If you have any questions about the content of these sections, please contact me.

- ITS: <http://www.utexas.edu/its/>
- Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

Important Safety Information:

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right - it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency

Title IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's [relevant policies](#).

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered "Responsible Employees" or "Mandatory Reporters," which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. **I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu For more information about reporting options and resources, visit titleix.utexas.edu or contact the Title IX Office at titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

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University Policies

Academic Integrity

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.” **Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT.** Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

Q Drop Policy

If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you’ll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop>