

The Games We Play



From *Assassin's Creed* to *Candy Crush*, from football to Foursquare, from *World of Warcraft* to *Words With Friends*, games are ever-present in our day-to-day lives. While we tend to think about games in terms of amusement and diversion, they clearly have consequences beyond the board, off the field and offline. In this course, we'll take games seriously by expanding our vocabulary for thinking and talking about playing. We'll look at how games operate in texts like novels, films and television shows—as well as how novels, films and television shows operate like games; we'll determine what makes a game a game by reading board games and videogames as texts; and we'll ponder whether or not "[a]ll the world's a stage/And all the men and women merely players" by considering how games function beyond texts. Along the way, we'll discuss which rules govern the game of academic writing as we explore the growing field of game studies.

Texts

John Darnielle, *Wolf in White Van*

Bryan Lee O'Malley, *Scott Pilgrim, Vol. 1: Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life*

Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*

Black Mirror, "Fifteen Million Merits" [DVD 16700]

Community, "Advanced Dungeons and Dragons" [DVD 10450], "Digital Estate Planning" [DVD 12124]

The Game [DVD 12175]

The Walking Dead [PS3 7; XBOX 2]

All other materials will be posted under "Resources" on Sakai.

Course Goals

Critical Reading

- Read source texts critically, revealing awareness of purpose, audience, tone, multiple voices, argumentative techniques, and rhetorical devices,
- Demonstrate understanding of a text's rhetorical contexts,
- Analyze and synthesize varied texts as a means to further their own writing skills.

Writing Process

- Demonstrate the ability to write in a variety of genres such as summary, response, report, argument, and critical analysis,
- Find and assess sources, synthesizing research with their own ideas,
- Engage in writing as a recursive process that includes idea discovery, structural and developmental revision, and editing a final copy.

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Write with a strong understanding of and focus on purpose,
- Write in ways that respond to the needs of different audiences,
- Adopt voice, tone, and level of formality appropriate to situation and purpose,
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing.

Knowledge of Conventions

- Be aware of the rhetorical differences among and stylistic conventions of common citation formats.

Course Policies

Attendance

Your success in English 110 depends largely upon your effort to attend class regularly. You may miss three classes—excused or unexcused—without it affecting your grade, but with each subsequent absence, your participation grade will drop by a third of a letter (i.e. a B becomes a B-).

Preparedness

Please come to class on time and prepared to discuss the materials for that day. You should arrive with all of the primary and secondary materials for the day's discussion in hand.

Decorum

Please show respect for your fellow classmates and me by refraining from talking out of turn, texting, using your cell phone or surfing the Internet during class time. Such behavior will negatively affect your participation grade.

Late Work

Both you and your assignments should be showing up on time. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates listed below. For every day an assignment is late (including weekends), your grade on that assignment will drop by a third of a letter (i.e. a B becomes a B-).

Formatting

All major assignments should be formatted according to MLA style: written in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, with a heading in the upper-left-hand corner of the first page and your last name and the page number in the upper-right-hand corner of each subsequent page. Unless otherwise noted, you should submit all assignments to me electronically via Sakai. Please submit your assignments in .doc or .docx format; otherwise I may not be able to open the file.

Academic Integrity

Any work that you submit at any stage of the writing process—draft, thesis and outline, bibliography, etc., through final version—must be your own; in addition, any words, ideas, or data that you borrow from other people and include in your work must be properly documented. Failure to do either of these things is plagiarism. The University of Delaware protects the rights of all students by insisting that individual students act with integrity. Accordingly, the University severely penalizes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty.

Emergency Absences

If serious illnesses, family emergencies, or other crises occur during the term, one of the key things you must do is to contact the Assistant Dean of your College as soon as possible. This office can assist you in notifying faculty and in validating for your teachers what has happened. Such validation will be necessary for you to make up missed classwork and assignments.

Course Evaluation

A final expectation of the course is for you to complete the online student evaluation. This survey will be available for you to complete during the last two weeks of the semester. Apart from being an expectation of the course, your evaluation provides valuable information to me and to the Department.

Resources

Writing Fellows

This semester, you will have the additional advantage of Writing Fellows to aid you in the writing process outside of the classroom. Writing Fellows are students specially trained to read and respond to their peers' work. You will be required to meet with the Writing Fellows at various points this semester to discuss your works in progress.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center in 016 Memorial provides free one-on-one instruction to students who have writing assignments in this or any course. You may make an appointment by visiting the Center's website: www.english.udel.edu/wc. (The telephone number is 831.1168.)

Disabilities and Special Needs

If you need special assistance and/or classroom accommodations because of a disability, please let me know as soon as possible. To register and request accommodations, you will need to contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Office (413 Academy St., Room 165; 302.831.4643, TDD 302.831.4563) for physical or emotional disabilities or the Academic Enrichment Center (148-150 South College Ave.; 302.831.2805) for learning disabilities/ADHD.

Assignments

Class Participation

Class participation includes not only your active involvement in class discussions but also your satisfactory completion of rough drafts and peer reviews. You will be graded on the quality (not the quantity) of your contributions.

Blog Posts

Throughout the semester, I'll ask that you react or respond to certain readings and assignments in blog form on Sakai. I'll assess your blog cumulatively at the end of the semester.

Textual Analysis (due Tuesday, March 8)

Your first paper will focus on the role that games play in a particular novel, film or television show. [800-1000 words]

Game Analysis (due Thursday, March 24)

In your second paper, you'll analyze the cultural, historical and/or ideological significance of a particular board game or videogame. [800-1000 words]

Annotated Bibliography (due Thursday, April 21)

Once you've settled on an idea for a final project, you'll write an annotated bibliography with a critical preface in which you explain the major questions and concerns guiding your research. [1000-1200 words]

Research Paper/Gamification (due Tuesday, May 17)

Following your annotated bibliography, you'll enter into an academic conversation about your topic in a longer research paper. You'll gamify that paper at the end of the semester. [2400-2600 words]



Grading

Class participation	10%
Blog posts	10%
Game analysis	20%
Textual analysis	20%
Annotated bibliography	20%
Research paper/gamification	20%

A	94-100	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-79	F	Below 60

The University of Delaware stipulates that you must earn at least a C- in order to pass this course.

Schedule

Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class.

Date	Due
T February 9	<i>Radiolab</i> , "Games" [Sakai]
0 Games in theory	
Th February 11	Blog post #1 Caillois, "The Classification of Games" [Sakai]
T February 16	Blog post #2 Huizinga, "Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon" [Sakai]
Th February 18	Blog post #3 Sutton-Smith, "Play and Ambiguity" [Sakai]
1 Games in texts	
T February 23	Blog post #4 Palahniuk, <i>Fight Club</i>
Th February 25	Blog post #5 <i>Black Mirror</i> , "Fifteen Million Merits" [DVD 16700]
T March 1	Blog post #6 <i>The Game</i> [DVD 12175]
Th March 3	Rough draft textual analysis
T March 8	Final draft textual analysis Bogost, "Introduction: Nobody Asked for a Toaster Critic: Doing Videogame Criticism" and "The Squalid Grace of <i>Flappy Bird</i> " [Sakai]
2 Games as texts	
Th March 10	Blog post #7 <i>Dys4ia</i> [Sakai]; <i>LIM</i> [Sakai] Bogost, "Empathy" [Sakai]; Cárdenas, "A Game Level Where You Can't Pass" [Sakai]
T March 15	Meet in the library, room 116A
Th March 17	Blog post #8
T March 22	Rough draft game analysis
Th March 24	Final draft game analysis McGonigal, "Gaming can make a better world" [Sakai]; <i>World Without Oil</i> [Sakai]

T March 29	No class; spring break
Th March 31	No class; spring break
3 Games beyond texts	
T April 5	Blog post #9 Henricks, "Introduction," <i>Play and the Human Condition</i> [Sakai] Sicart, "Play Is" [Sakai]
Th April 7	Blog post #10 Meet in the library, room 116A
T April 12	Darnielle, <i>Wolf in White Van</i> , One
Th April 14	Darnielle, <i>Wolf in White Van</i> , Two
T April 19	Rough draft annotated bibliography
Th April 21	Final draft annotated bibliography <i>Community</i> , "Advanced Dungeons and Dragons" [DVD 10450], "Digital Real Estate Planning" [DVD 12124]
T April 26	O'Malley, <i>Scott Pilgrim, Vol. 1: Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life</i>
Th April 28	First draft research paper
T May 3	<i>The Walking Dead</i> , "Episode 1" [PS3 7; XBOX 2] Bell, Kampe, and Taylor, "Me and Lee: Identification and the Play of Attraction in <i>The Walking Dead</i> " [Sakai]
Th May 5	Second draft research paper Gee, from <i>What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy</i> [Sakai]
T May 10	No class; conferences
Th May 12	No class conferences
T May 17	Final draft research paper Gamification presentations