HIST. 490A.01 Games in Cultural History

Dr. Ömer Fatih Parlak
fatih.parlak@boun.edu.tr

Credits: 3 ECTS: 6

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the long history of games covering a period from the earliest known games and game tools to the Modern Age. It aims to demonstrate the importance of games for the study of cultural history. We will pay attention to the relationship between games and the culture that invented, adopted, transformed, and enjoyed playing them. We will begin with locating the place of games in culture and outlining the fundamentals about games to build our basic knowledge. After historical periods are covered, we will delve into selected topics to further our understanding of games in the intersections of religion and politics. Our course ends with a workshop on game design to prepare the students for their final projects.

The course is designed to instruct students about how to use games as sources in historiographical research through selected case studies in which various textual, visual and ludic approaches are executed. During the course we will play some of the selected historic games from different periods, cultures and geographies covering the Far East, South Asia, Pre-Colombian America, Africa, and Europe. This way we will have a unique chance to interact with historic games (our primary sources) and experience what these games might tell about that particular culture/society.

Our readings are designed to nurture our perspective while studying cultural history; it includes works from various disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, history, literature and game studies. We will investigate each week several games related to the topic of the class. You will be provided with games that we will study in this course. The reading list will be shared via the MOODLE.

Requirements:

1. Class Participation (20%): You must do all assigned readings before the scheduled date of discussion. During each class, you are expected to engage actively in the discussion as it proceeds. Each class will include a short lecture, but it will be taught in seminar fashion; class discussion is an essential part of instruction and your participation is required. I expect everyone to share their informed views and to be open to a constructive exchange of perspectives.

2. Midterm Paper. 30%

3. Reading Quizzes. 20%
4. Final project (30%): You are expected to design an original game by using the game mechanics and game types studied in the course. Your game must clearly reflect the characteristics of a freely chosen period / culture. The medium can be analog or digital. Best game(s) will be presented in a panel in Board Game Studies Colloquium 2021 in Paris.

**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1: Introduction** (22.10.2020)

**Week 2: Game and Play in Culture** (27-29.10.2020)


**Week 3: Structure of Games: Game Mechanics and Types of Games** (3-5.11.2020)


**Week 4: Games in the Neolithic Period** (10-12.11.2020)


**Week 5: Games in Antiquity** (17-19.11.2020)


**Week 6: Games in the Medieval Period** (24-26.11.2020)


**Week 7: Games in China, Africa, and Pre-Colombian America** (1-3.12.2020)


**Week 8: Games in the Early Modern Period** (8-10.12.2020)


**Week 9: Games in the Modern Period** (15-17.12.2020)


**Special Topics**

**Week 10: Games in the Ottoman Empire** (22-24.12.2020)


Week 11: Games, Divination, Spirituality and Religion (29-31.12.2020)


Week 12: Games, Politics, and Propaganda (5-7.1.2021)


Week 13: Game Design Workshop (12-14.1.2021)
