GAM 530–401: Game Studies Proseminar

Location: 14EAS 212

Class time: Tuesdays 5:45-9 PM

Instructor: Michael Anthony DeAnda, PhD

Pronouns: any human-related pronouns are
      acceptable (i.e. not "it)

Email: mdeanda@depaul.edu

Phone: 312.362.1244

Office: Daley 205B

Office Hours: MW noon𝆑-1 PM

I will usually respond to emails within a few hours between 9AM and 5 PM Monday through Friday. It is rare that I will check and respond to emails on weekends.
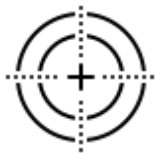

Overview

This seminar class introduces students to a broad range of historical and current topics in game studies. It aims to support creative practice by expanding the theoretical foundation established in Game Design Proseminar with additional, deep insight into disciplines that relate to games, play, players, learning, activism, and art.

Prerequisite: GAM 520

Course Description

What is play? What makes players follow rules or subvert them? How are play and games imbricated within cultural politics and structures of power? These are some of the (many) questions posed by game studies that also matter to game designers, but which cannot be answered with design. In this course we will survey several of the major questions and methods of game studies for how they can challenge, complicate, and expand the kinds of games that we design. We will start by looking at some of the foundational texts focused on play and games. Then, we will focus on different intersections between games and culture such as gender, race, and technology and look at the different things we can learn by framing games as historical artifacts, meaningful systems, and expressions of power. Each of these perspectives will challenge the authority of the game designer over a game, but will also give us more tools to design with. This course provides students with the tools to understand and analyze academic arguments about games, and use these arguments to imagine new approaches to design.

Course Objectives

By the end of the quarter, you will be able to:

- Read academic articles about games in order to summarize their main arguments and hone your understanding of those arguments through discussion with your peers.
- Apply a method from game studies to an individual game in order to gain a new perspective on some aspect of its design and player experience.
- Produce oral and written discourse based on scholarly arguments about games and from the unexpected application of game studies methods.
- Employ game design and play as unique methods for pursuing scholarly work in the social sciences and humanities.
- Engage in methods of peer review

Required Materials

All readings will be provided via D2L or as PDFs.

Academic track students will be required to select a games studies book published within the last 3 years to review. They should not be required to purchase the text, but are responsible for obtaining a copy through a journal or the publisher.

Design track students are encouraged to put together and maintain a game prototyping kit that fits their style. While this is up to you, the instructor recommends index cards, paper, pencils, markers, scotch tape, paper clips, and a notebook.

D2L

We are using D2L (http://d2l.depaul.edu) as a platform for this course. All course materials including class information, syllabus, and assignment descriptions are available on D2L under 'Contents.'

Slides and lecture notes from the instructor will not be made available on D2L, but students may share their slides and lecture notes on the platform.

Assignments are to be submitted to their dedicated folder on D2L.

Grading

Your grade will be based on the following components. A full description and grading rubric of each will be available on D2L.

*Participation 20%
*Class discussion 10%

Design Track	Academic Track
*Annotated Design Document 25%	*Book review 25%
*Design Journal 10%	*Annotated bibliography 10%
*Final game prototype 35%	*Game Studies Article 35%

You must pass each listed component (indicated with an asterisk) to pass the class.

Students wishing to contest a grade may do so during office hours or by appointment a minimum of 24 hours and a maximum of a week after assignments have been returned.

Breakdown

A	100-93
A-	92-90
B+	89-87
B	86-93
B-	82-80
C+	79-77
C	76-73
C-	72-70
D	69-60
F	59-0

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance

Participation is a major part of this course, and will be measured across all parts of the course including discussion, office hours, online postings, and in-class writing. It is not enough to show up and sit in class or on your phone. Participation points are based on your contributions to class discussions and engagement with in-class exercises. "Entrance tickets" and "Exit tickets" will contribute to participation, these are small exercises done in-class that will be collected.

You are expected to attend all classes and attend all activities. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to make up work. Please arrive to class on time, tardiness is disruptive to the class as a whole and will be factored into your participation grade.

Attitude

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any of these issues arise, a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office (to navigate such student issues.

Civil Discourse

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be socially responsible leaders. It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

Late Assignments

I will only accept late assignments if you contact me at least two days before the assignment is due and we come to an agreed upon extension. Assignments submitted late without such an agreement will receive a 10% deduction each day. Please note that due to the grade submission deadline, I may be unable to give an extension on some projects, especially near the end of the term.

Devices

In class you may find it helpful to use laptops or tablets to review the readings or games that have been assigned. Otherwise, your attention should not be divided between classroom activities and personal devices.

College Policies & Resources

Changes to Syllabus
This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. Any changes are for the benefits of the course. If a change occurs, it will be addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email. Changes to the syllabus require students to purchase additional materials.

Tutoring/ Writing Center
I strongly recommend you make use of the Writing Center throughout your time at DePaul. The Writing Center provides free peer writing tutoring for DePaul students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Writing Center tutors work with writers at all stages of the writing process, from invention to revision, and they are trained to identify recurring issues in your writing as well as address any specific questions or areas that you want to talk about. Visit www.depaul.edu/writing for more information.

Idea Realization Lab (IRL)
The Idea Realization Lab is a resource available to the entire DePaul University community, from students to alumni, faculty, and staff. They provide machines, tools, and materials at no cost, and offer workshops to teach visitors how to use the equipment safely. Their goal is to foster a spirit of collaboration and to promote creativity across the campus and throughout the city of Chicago.
I encourage you to make use of the IRL, including prototyping your design and getting a consultation from the staff there. This space is a great resource for all levels of the design and development process. Visit http://irl.depaul.edu/ for more information.

Contact Info: **Location:**
Email: idearealizationlabdpu@gmail.com   Room 310
Phone: (312) 362-1451   14 E Jackson Blvd
                                                                       Chicago, IL, 60604

Name & Pronouns
Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and

documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332

Online Course Evaluations

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in CampusConnect.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/. If you have any questions, be sure to consult with your professor.

Student Rights

You have rights as a student. To learn about your rights as a student please read DePaul's policies located here
http://sr.depaul.edu/catalog/catalogfiles/current/undergraduate%20student%20handbook/pg 51.html

Incomplete

An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final. For more information on requesting an Incomplete:
http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at:
http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment

Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation bused on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussion will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of the course) and be sure to contact the following office for support and additional services:

> **Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD)**
> Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.
> Phone number: (312) 362-8002
> Fax: (312) 362-6544
> TTY: (773) 325.7296 www.studentaffairs.depaul.edu

The Dean of Students Office

The Dean of Students Office (DOS) is primarily responsible for meeting the urgent needs of students by providing clear and critical support structures in times of need. Additionally, the department helps develop and maintain community standards in order to facilitate a safe and healthy campus environment for our students. The Dean of Students Office provides the administrative withdrawal and absence notification processes, and can help students identify campus and community resources in times of personal and/or family crises and medical emergencies.

The Dean of Students Office at DePaul University promotes student learning and ethical decision making in an inclusive and student-centered environment. Utilizing a comprehensive approach to student advocacy that is informed by DePaul's Catholic, Vincentian, and urban mission, the office collaborates with students, staff, faculty, parents and community partners to support students in reaching their academic and personal success.

Contact
Lincoln Park Campus
Student Center, Suite 307
2250 N. Sheffield Ave.
Phone: 773-325-7290
Email: deanofstudents@depaul.edu

Sexual and Relationship Violence

As a DePaul community, we share a commitment to take care of one another. Classroom relationships are based on trust and communication. Sometimes, material raised in class may bring up issues for students related to sexual and relationship violence. In other instances, students may reach out to faculty as a source of help and support. It is important for students to know that faculty are required to report information reported to them about experiences with sexual or relationship violence to DePaul's Title IX Coordinator. Students should also know that disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence in course assignments or discussion does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response.

Students seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul should contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400) or the Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7290; Loop: 312-362-8066 or titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu).

Students seeking to speak confidentially about issues related to sexual and relationship violence should contact a Survivor Support Advocate in the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness for information and resources (773-325-7129 or hpw@depaul.edu). More information is available at the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness website. Students are encouraged to take advantage of these services and to seek help around sexual and relationship violence for themselves as well as their peers who may be in need of support.

Schedule

Week 1, Sept. 17

Syllabus overview.
What are games? What is games studies? How are the two related?
Schedule student-led discussions.

Recommended reading: Paul Edwards, "How to read a book."

Week 2, Sept. 24

Foundational Theories of Play

Johan Huizinga, "Nature and the Significance of Play as Cultural Phenomenon" in *Homo Ludens*.
Brian Sutton-Smith, "Play and Ambiguity," in *The Ambiguity of Play.*
Roger Caillois, "The Definition of Play," in *Man, Play and Games.*

Week 3, Oct. 1

Intro to Games Studies

Roger Caillois, "The Classification of Games," in *Man, Play and Games.*
Espen Aarseth, "Playing Research: Methodological Approaches to Game Analysis."
Katie Salen & Eric Zimmerman, "Defining Games" and "Defining Digital Games" in *Rules of Play.*

Week 4, Oct. 8

Procedural Rhetoric

Ian Bogost, "The Rhetoric of Video Games."
Eric Kaltman, "Procedurality" in *Debugging Game History.*
Miguel Sicart, "Against Procedurality."

Student Discussion: Bonnie Ruberg, "Playing to Lose: The Queer Art of Failure in Video Games,"
in *Gaming Representations.*

Week 5, Oct. 15

History, Materiality & Infrastructure

Carly Kocurek, "Ronnie, Millie, Lila-- Women's History for Games"
David Parisi, "Game Interfaces as Disabling Infrastructures"
Nathan Altice, "Family Computer," in *I Am Error.*

Student Discussion: Raiford Guins, "Landfill Legend," in *Game After.*

Due: Design Documents/ Book reviews

Week 6 Oct. 22

Games and Gender

Anne-Marie Schleiner, "Does Lara Croft Wear Fake Polygons? Gender and Gender-Role Subversion in Computer Adventure Games."
Adrienne Shaw, "When and Why Representation Matters to Players: Realism versus Escapism" in *Gaming at the Edge.*
Shira Chess, Nathaniel J. Evans, and Joyya Ja Dawn Baines, "What Does a Gamer Look Like? Video Games, Advertising, and Diversity."

Student Discussion: Anastasia Salter and Bridget Blodgett, "Come Get Some: Damsels in Distress and the Male Default Avatar in Video Games," in *Toxic Geek Masculinity in Media.*

Week 7, Oct 29

Games and Race

Kishonna Gray, "Intersecting Oppressions and Online Communities."
Soraya Murray, "The Rubble and the Ruin: Race, Gender, and Sites of Inglorious Conflict in *Spec Ops: The Line*," in *Gaming Representation.*
TreAndrew Russworm, "Dystopian Blackness and the Limits of Racial Empathy," in *Gaming Representation.*

Student Discussion: Amanda Phillips, "Shooting to Kill: Headshots, Twitch Reflexes, and the Mechropolitics of Video Games."

Week 8, Nov. 5

Games and Affect

Katherine Isbister, "A Series of Interesting Choices: The Building Blocks of Emotional Design," in *How Games Move Us.*
Jonathan Belman and Mary Flanagan, "Designing Games to Foster Empathy."
Aubrey Anable, "Touching Games," in *Playing with Feelings.*

Student Discussion: Teddy Pozo. "Queer Games After Empathy: Feminism and Haptic Game Design Aesthetics from Consent to Cuteness to the Radically Soft."

Week 9, Nov. 12

Peer review and playtesting week. Bring drafts and game prototypes to class.

Week 10, Nov. 19

Dealer's Choice!

Readings to be decided based on student input.

Week 11, Nov. 26

Wrap-up.

No readings.
In-class presentations and demos.
Due: Final game prototypes/ article.

Assignments

"3, 2, 1 Entrance Tickets"

Each week, you are to complete an assessment of the readings using this tool. This assignment addresses the following course objectives:
- Read academic articles about games in order to summarize their main arguments and hone your understanding of those arguments through discussion with your peers.
- Apply a method from game studies to an individual game in order to gain a new perspective on some aspect of its design and player experience.
- Produce oral and written discourse based on scholarly arguments about games and from the unexpected application of game studies methods.

Your job is to summarize, reflect, and discuss the readings using the following formula:
> 3 things from the readings that stuck out to you. Some examples of these may include: moments that correlate with your own design/research projects; contributions that made you think differently about designing and playing games; and parts that spoke to you as a person.
>
> 2 discussion questions that put the readings in conversation with other readings from the course. Be specific in your questions and list page numbers to help demonstrate your thought process.
>
> 1 example of how the readings from this week may be used to analyze a game of your choice. What might someone learn differently by observing the game through the framework provided by the reading?

These are due at the beginning of each class in printed form (handwritten or typed are both acceptable).

Each completed submission is worth 1 point of participation.

Student-led Discussion

Starting on Week 4, a group of students will lead a 20-30 minute discussion on a scholarly article. This assignment addresses the following course objectives:
- Read academic articles about games in order to summarize their main arguments and hone your understanding of those arguments through discussion with your peers.
- Produce oral and written discourse based on scholarly arguments about games and from the unexpected application of game studies methods.

Your job is to critically engage the text. You will begin by providing a 10-minute summary of the article using a presentation-technique of your choice (slides are an option). Your presentation should address:
- Who is the author? What is their field of study? What might this indicate about the way they are approaching the subject matter? When are they writing this piece?
- What is the main argument (thesis) of the article?
- What major claims does the author make? What evidence does the author use to support these claims?
- What is the purpose of this article?
- Who does the author identify as the audience? Who else might benefit from reading this article?
- What are the stakes attached to this argument? When answering this question consider:
  - What gaps in scholarship does it address or how is it encouraging us to think differently?
  - Who/what is affected by thinking about this subject in this way?
  - How does this address culture? Community? Design practices?

In the following 10 to 20 minutes, you will guide a discussion of the article with your classmates. In this discussion, consider how it speaks to other course readings? What might we understand about studying and designing games from this article?

You should cite page numbers during your summary and discussion of the text to help your classmates find in the text where you are referring. You should also encourage your classmates to cite page numbers when answering.

I recommend reviewing Paul Edwards's "How to Read a Book" to help you discern major points in the article to discuss.

Component	Points
Summary clearly identifies thesis of the article.	1
Presenters identify major claims and methods employed in the article and show how these help build the main argument.	2
Presenters articulate stakes and stakeholders	1
Presenters strategically use page numbers and section headings to draw class's attention to specific parts in the readings.[1]	2
Presenters actively engaged and encouraged class in discussion.	1
Discussion was relevant to the topic of the week. Presenters kept the discussion on-track.	1
Presenters asked thought-provoking questions that challenged class to make connections between readings and think about studying and designing games differently.	2
Total	10

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[1] If there is a specific quote you want us to read that really contributes to the summary, you should tell us where to find it in the reading so we can follow along. Another example might be: "When the author claims game controllers enact power fantasies and then proceeds to discuss this in XYZ ways on page 27." In discussion, you might ask "How might the authors discussion of game controllers enacting power fantasies relate to Raiford Guins's discussion of video game materials in last weeks article?"