

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION COMM 258 Spring 2016

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R 4:15PM – 6:45PM
SOC 015
Office Hrs Drop-In: 11AM-
12PM (T/R) or by appt.

Game Studies

Prerequisites: COMM 200 or CMUN 240.

Course Description:

How did games become a 90-billion dollar global industry? Who plays them, what, when, where, and why do they play? Like professional sports, when does it become serious business? Whether you already love games or are curious about why people love them, this course gives the student the opportunity to get up-close and personal with games and study their complex roles within contemporary culture. Examining games as medium of Communication, students will critically engage with multiple concepts including the nature of identity, community presence, design, ethics, social justice and culture. Through theory and practice, the work undertaken in this course will enable students to participate in the crucial conversations of our time and reflect on their own experience using a multitude of technologies at their disposal.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this semester, students should:

- 1) Build their understanding of some key foundational concepts in the field of Game Studies
- 2) articulate how the role of games are debated and discussed in governmental, industrial, and academic contexts around the world
- 3) engage with the creation of their own games through a range of design tools and methods
- 4) foster nuanced discussions of games and their relationship to our society
- 5) gain insight into how cultural norms and values are embedded in games, their design/production, and how we think about play

Course Readings:

Nardi, Bonnie. (2010). *My Life as a Night Elf Priest: An Anthropological Account of World of Warcraft*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Throughout the semester the instructor will guide students through core material that is accessible through our Sakai course system, Loyola Libraries, and the Web. As a key learning outcome of the course, students will be able to further hone their skills engaging with a wide variety of digital media. Technologies are permitted in the classroom with the understanding they are to be used for full participation in course objectives.

Course Organization:

This course consists of a 2-hour and 30 minute class once a week.

Assignments and Grading:

Weekly design critique and commentary (15%)

Origin Story (10%)

Game workshop/playthrough (15%)

Prospectus (10%)

Final paper/project (25%)

Final Presentation (15%)

Participation and Professionalism (10)%

*All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

*All assignments must be submitted on time or marks will be deducted.

Course Website: <https://sakai.luc.edu/>

Our Sakai space is where we will post information on COMM 258 online. It will also act as a community space where you can share your own interests and draw the class's attention to items of interest. So, check it often for course updates and other information. You are expected to ask questions and seek out information needed to fulfill the course requirements as an active learner. Additionally, seeking out technical skills to solve new media problems is a key element in this class (and a transferable skillset beyond our classroom). Depending on how you build your own responses to assignments, you may need to seek out more sophisticated technical skills. Your investment in your own learning outcomes will show.

Attendance/Participation/Professionalism

This course covers a wide range of material and we have a lot of work to do together. First off (and so important), attendance is foundational. Making it to class on time and being present for the lectures, assignments, and discussions is essential to your success in COMM 258 and a sign of mutual respect. Second, teamwork is a central aspect of our daily class life, so please come prepared to talk about the readings and issues of the day. Both the professor and your peers will be supporting and evaluating your participation throughout the semester. You are responsible to one another in fulfilling our shared course objectives that include in-depth participation and discussion grounded in the assigned material you will read before our class meetings.

Attendance counts as part of professionalism. It is your responsibility to ask classmates for announcements you may have missed by arriving late. Documentation for university-authorized absences must be cleared with the professor in advance. In the case of emergency or severe illness, death in the family, or religious holiday, notify the professor ASAP **AFTER** your first missed class, and we will find ways for you to make up any missed work. In any case, please provide documentation whenever possible. It allows your instructor to find better ways to help you as the course progresses. In the unfortunate event that you fall ill, especially with a contagious ailment, please aid in preventing the

spread of infection by not coming to class. Rather, submit the official documentation you are able to provide the professor when you are healthy and able to come to class.

Participation

As mentioned above, it is crucial to make your voice heard in this course. There will be plenty of different settings (lecture, the discussions, your presentations, online) to contribute to our evolving discussion over the semester.

Deadlines/Professionalism

Assignments are due on the dates indicated in the syllabus schedule below by paper and email at the beginning of class unless otherwise specified. It is the responsibility of the student to manage any scheduling conflicts with the course or missed time. I will not grant extensions except in the direst of circumstances and under no circumstances will I grant an extension within 24 hours of a due date. So please plan your semester ahead of time. As the old adage goes: *Plan your work. Then work your plan!* Missed deadlines will be assessed a deduction of one third of a letter grade per day (e.g. from A- to B+ for 1 day late). The penalty for lateness begins immediately after class on the due date.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

No assignment will be accepted more than 72 hours past the due date, unless authorized by the instructor before the original due date.

Student Meetings

I have regular drop-in office hours as indicated on the syllabus. You can also reach me via email to make an appointment to meet in person at my office. Missing a mutually agreed-upon meeting with me will negatively impact the professionalism component of your grade. Always follow through on your appointments, as they are for your benefit.

Academic Integrity

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. The School expects that the grades in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distributions of grades.

Please consult the Loyola School of Communication statement on “Academic Integrity” for information and guidelines.

<http://www.luc.edu/soc/Policy.shtml>

These policies, procedures and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of these principles will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the proper university office. If you have uncertainties about any of these practices, **coming to see the professor is generally the quickest and most efficient way to resolve most issues.**

Special Accommodations

While the instructor will accommodate student needs in the best way possible given the constraints of the course content and processes, it is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates. This includes providing any documents needed for accommodations for matters such as University Athletics or Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor.
