

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION COMM 258 Spring 2015

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R 4:15PM – 6:45PM
SOC 015
Office Hours T/R 1-2PM
or by appointment.

Game Studies

Prerequisites: COMM 200 or CMUN 240.

Course Description:

This course is an up-close and personal examination of games and their complex role within contemporary culture. Examining games as medium of Communication, students will critically engage with 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 in this global industry 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:

Salen, Katie and Zimmerman, Eric. (2004). *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*.
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 and commentary (25%)

Game workshop (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. Documentation for university-authorized absences must be cleared with the professor in advance. It is your responsibility to ask classmates for announcements you may have missed by arriving late. In the case of severe illness, death in the family, or religious holiday, the professor will help you find ways to make up the work.

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.

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.

Game workshop and social issues walkthrough

Starting week 3, each student will conduct a 30-minute game workshop and social issues walkthrough one time during the semester. You will identify a game on which to focus your discussion, and walk/talk the class through a play session. The discussion should undertake a reading theme in the course syllabus or some aspect of game studies of interest to you. If the lab does not have software already installed or accessible and you wish classmates to simultaneously participate, please notify the professor before your scheduled workshop takes place for planning purposes. A signup sheet will be circulated in week 2.

Weekly design and commentary

Before Noon on the day of each class, students should email the professor a 1-page (250 word) synopsis of the readings, as well as 2-3 questions/critiques raised by the readings, games, and popular media for discussion. The evaluation is credit/no credit for the 1) Synopsis 2) Questions and 3) Critique components of the submission. These discussion briefs are to be used to inform our debates that will occur during class.

Prospectus and Final Project/Paper

Writing for this course consists of two parts: the paper prospectus and the term paper. The prospectus (3 pages) is due at the beginning of class week 9. In it, you will outline your final study topic and give a supporting rationale for choosing it. Theoretical perspectives, site of study, and potential primary and secondary sources (bibliography) will also be included. At this point, you should be in dialogue with the professor and other useful resources at Loyola (such as the Writing Centre and our Librarian) on how to approach reading, researching, organizing, and writing about your topic. If you talk about your paper with those who can help, it will improve your grade. The term paper (10-12 pages, depending on format) is due in week 15. Submission of final papers must be in both paper and electronic form. Submissions will not be considered complete until both are received. The formatting and specific requirements for these assignments will be explained in class.

Final Presentation:

Your final presentation will take place on the last day of class, following submission of your Final project/paper. The presentation may use multimedia to convey the key points of your work, and discuss any changes in regard to the way you think about games/game studies in Communication.

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READINGS
(Subject to change if necessary)

Week 1: January 15
Why do games matter? Introductions, objectives, and directions
Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ None. Students are to come to subsequent lectures prepared with assigned readings done.
Week 2: January 22
Core Concepts (I)
Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Rules of Play (ROP) 1 – 55 SIGN UP for your Game Workshop in class
Week 3: January 29
SPECIAL CAREER WEEK EVENT: Regents Hall, Lewis Towers from 4-6pm
Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Class topic
Week 4: February 5
Core Concepts (II)
Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ ROP 56 – 115
Week 5: February 12
Rules (I)
Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ ROP 116 - 189
Week 6: February 19
Rules (II)
Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ ROP 190 - 297
Week 7: February 26
Play (I)
Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ ROP 298 - 361
Week 8: March 5
SPRING BREAK
Have a great break and play lots of games.

Week 9: March 12
Play (II)
*** FINAL PAPER OUTLINES DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ***
Readings:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ROP 362 - 501

Week 10: March 19
Culture (I)
Readings:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ROP 502 – 555

Week 11: March 26
Culture (II)
Readings:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROP 556 – 607

Week 12: April 2
EASTER BREAK
Begins for classes that take place 4:15pm Thursdays

Week 13: April 9
Industry Practices
Readings:
Workshop Class topic:

Week 14: April 16
Final Presentations: Launch Party!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students will make their final presentations to the class and invited guests

Week 15: April 23
FINAL PROJECT/PAPER DUE TODAY (THURSDAY APRIL 23th)
Submit by email to Dr. Chee no later than 7pm
Submit paper copy no later than Friday April 24th, 4pm at the SOC front desk
(Attn: Dr. Chee, COMM 258)

FINAL EXAM PERIOD
*** Have a great break! ***

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 any doubts about any of these practices, you must confer with the professor.

Students with Disabilities

Any student that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's 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.