

MEDIA 212/328: VIDEO GAMES: THEORY AND CULTURE Semester One, 2018

Lectures:	Wednesday 14:00-16:00 401-439 (Engineering Block 1, Room 439)
Convenor:	Dr Allan Cameron Office: Social Sciences Bldg, Room 535 Email: allan.cameron@auckland.ac.nz
GTA:	Ben Hall (contact details/ office hours will be announced on Canvas)

Please read this course outline carefully. It contains important information about how the course is taught, administered, and assessed.

This information, and any updates, can be found on Canvas. You will need to make sure you are familiar with Canvas and check it regularly.

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course considers video games as forms of media, experience and interaction, as sites of aesthetic innovation and as tools for persuasion and resistance. A major component of the contemporary media landscape, games produce distinctive social, cultural, political and personal effects. In addition to games themselves, this course also explores the role of players and communities, as well as debates surrounding notions of identity, gender, immersion and control.

In this course, you will be encouraged to link your own experiences with video games to both academic and popular debates, and situate video games in a critical and theoretical context. The course is designed not only for those experienced with video games, but also for those who wish to explore this growing field of new media studies.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- outline the distinctive features of the video game as a medium
- analyse the formal and structural workings of individual video games
- demonstrate your understanding of key theoretical debates regarding the form, function and significance of video games
- articulate a critical understanding of video game players, audiences and communities

As with other 15-point courses, the University of Auckland's expectation is that students spend 10 hours per week on this course. You should manage your academic workload and other commitments accordingly. Students attend a two-hour lecture each week. They take part in a one-hour tutorial each week from Week 2 onwards. This leaves 7 hours a week outside the classroom to study for tutorials, assignments and the exam.

ASSESSMENT

1. Assignment 1: 20% | Blog Posts | 1000 words (MEDIA 212) or 1200 words (MEDIA 328) over four entries

Deadline (collated posts): Friday 30 March, 5pm

2. Assignment 2: 30% | Essay | 1500 words (MEDIA 212) or 1800 words (MEDIA 328)

Deadline: Monday 14 May, 5pm

4. Tutorial participation: 10% | You must participate actively in at least ten out of eleven tutorials to be eligible for the full mark (and must also complete assigned worksheets before each tutorial).

5. Examination: 40% (Date TBC)

Your overall course mark is the sum of your assignments, exam and participation marks. There is no plussage on this paper. **A total of 50% (C-) is the minimum pass mark.**

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READING AND INDEPENDENT STUDY

In order to pass this course, you will need to undertake independent reading and research throughout the semester. Core readings will be provided for each week on Canvas, as well as suggested further readings. You will also need to undertake further research for relevant academic sources. Your blog entries, essay and exam answers will all need to demonstrate that you have been undertaking relevant independent research using academic as well as other (e.g. journalistic) sources. The library has a growing collection of game studies books/eBooks. The list of further readings (on Canvas) should help you find your way to the right journals, communities and authors in the field.

Some general websites that are useful for this course include:

- Game Studies: the International Journal of Computer Game Research (<http://gamestudies.org>)
- First Person Scholar (<http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/>)
- Gamasutra (<http://www.gamasutra.com/>)
- Rock, Paper, Shotgun (<http://www.rockpapershotgun.com/>)

LECTURE OUTLINE/ REQUIRED READING

The following schedule may be subject to minor alterations. Any changes will be announced in lectures and posted on Canvas.

1. Studying Games Wed 28 Feb

Jagoda, Patrick. "Videogame Criticism and Games in the Twenty-First Century." *American Literary History* 29(1): 2017. 205-218

Aarseth, Espen. "Playing Research: Methodological Approaches to Game Analysis." *Game Approaches / Spil-Veje. Papers from Spilforskning.dk Conference*. Aalborg: Aalborg University, 2004.

2. Play and Interactivity Wed 7 Mar

Salen, Katie and Eric Zimmerman. "Defining Games." *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004. 70-84.

Landay, Lori. "Interactivity." *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies*. Ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron. New York: Routledge, 2014. 173-184.

3. Ludology vs Narratology Wed 14 Mar

Newman, James. "Narrative and Play, Audiences and Players: Approaches to the Study of Videogames." *Videogames*. London: Routledge, 2004. 91-106.

Jenkins, Henry. "Game Design as Narrative Architecture." *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*. Ed. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004. 118-130.

4. Spaces and Worlds Wed 21 Mar

Tavinor, Grant. "Stepping into Fictional Worlds". *The Art of Videogames*. Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 61-85.

Shinkle, Eugénie. "Corporealis Ergo Sum: Affective Response in Digital Games." *Digital Gameplay: Essays on the Nexus of Game and Gamer*. Ed. Nate Garrelts. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2005. 21-35.

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5. Players, Avatars, Identity

Wed 28 Mar

Waggoner, Zach. "Videogames, Avatars, and Identity: A Brief History." *My Avatar My Self: Identity in Video Role-Playing Games*. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2009. 3-21.

Murphy, Sheila C. "Live in Your World, Play in Ours': The Spaces of Video Game Identity." *Journal of Visual Culture* 3(2): 2004. 223-238.

ASSIGNMENT ONE DEADLINE: Friday 30 March, 5pm

MID-SEMESTER BREAK: 2 – 13 April

6. Gender and Sexuality

Wed 18 Apr

MacCallum-Stewart, Esther. "Take That, Bitches!': Refiguring Lara Croft in Feminist Game Narratives." *Game Studies* 14(2): 2014.

Kirkland, Ewan. "Masculinity in Video Games: The Gendered Gameplay of *Silent Hill*." *Camera Obscura* 24(2): 2008. 161-183.

7. Topic TBC

NO LECTURE (Anzac Day 25 Apr)

Reading TBC.

8. Persuasive Games

Wed 2 May

Bogost, Ian. "The Rhetoric of Video Games." *The Ecology of Games*. Ed. Katie Salen. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007. 117-140.

Additional required reading: also select one reading from the *Further reading* section for Week 8: *Persuasive Games*.

9. Countergaming

Wed 9 May

Galloway, Alexander. "Countergaming." *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. 107-126.

Newman, James. "Superplay, Sequence Breaking and Speedrunning." *Playing with Videogames*. Oxford: Routledge, 2008. 123-148.

ASSIGNMENT TWO DEADLINE: Monday 14 May, 5pm

10. Multi-play and Community

Wed 16 May

Taylor, T.L. "Pushing the Borders: Player Participation and Game Culture." *Structures of Participation in Digital Culture*. Ed. Joe Karaganis. Brooklyn NY: Social Science Research Council, 2007. 112-130.

Pearce, Celia. "Communities and Cultures of Play." *Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009. 125-136.

11. Games as Work and Leisure

Wed 23 May

Juul, Jesper. "A Casual Revolution." *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Players*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2010. 1-23.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick and Greig de Peuter. "Immaterial Labor: A Workers' History of Videogaming." *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. 3-33.

12. Recap/Exam Prep

Wed 30 May

FINAL EXAM: Date TBC. Please check your exam timetable.

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TUTORIALS

You are required to actively participate in **one tutorial per week (from week 2 onwards)**. Each tutorial provides the opportunity for students to discuss the previous work's lecture and reading material, and to prepare for the assignments and the exam. Each week a tutorial preparation document will be posted on Canvas to guide you in your preparation before class. Tutorials are not 'small lectures'. **Tutorial discussions and activities require that you have read the chapter, attended the lecture and completed the tutorial preparation.** You are encouraged to ask questions, to venture opinions, and to formulate and debate ideas. As university students you are expected to demonstrate intellectual curiosity about the media and engage seriously with the issues examined in the lectures and assigned reading. Please note that tutorials are a place for everyone to express their ideas in a collegial and respectful environment.

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) provide intellectual, administrative and personal support to students and act as their advocates in the final examiners' meeting for the course. In tutorials, GTAs facilitate discussion about the lectures, readings, and assignments, and they answer questions about course-related matters. They direct students to relevant resources, assess student work and hold office hours for student consultation. Please note that GTAs are appointed on a part-time basis and are not usually available outside their office hours, except by appointment.

GTAs will not read complete drafts of papers, but if asked, they offer advice on ideas, research plans and, in some instances, on small sections of prose. For more extensive help with writing please consult one of the resources listed in **Additional Learning Support**.

If you have any queries or concerns about the course, you should contact your GTA in the first instance. If an issue remains unresolved, then contact the convenor. Lecturers and GTAs will not be available to go over material covered in classes that you have missed.

TUAKANA MENTOR FOR STAGE 2 AND 3

Media and Communication provides academic support for all Māori and Pasifika students at Stage 2 and 3. You can contact the Tuakana Mentor via email to ask questions or make an appointment to meet. S/he will be working with the Academic Skills Tutor to provide academic skills workshops during the semester.

Email: tuakana.ftvms@auckland.ac.nz.

LEARNING RESOURCES

LIBRARY SERVICES

<http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/>

These services will be vital for your research for assignments and the exam.

The Subject Librarian for Media and Communication is Sarah Etheridge.

The **Audiovisual Collection** is located on the Ground Floor, General Library. Search the catalogue for film and media titles, and then provide the item

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number to staff at the lending desk.

STUDENT LEARNING SERVICES

<http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/student-learning/>

SLS caters to the learning needs of all students, from undergraduates to postgraduates. They can help you improve your academic writing, even if it is already quite good, and if needed they can facilitate the development of effective academic learning and performance skills. SLS specialises in helping those who encounter difficulties in their studies, but can also help students who are doing well to do even better. SLS is located in Room 320, Information Commons, 9 Symonds St. General queries can be directed to sls@auckland.ac.nz

THE DELNA PROGRAMME

<http://www.delna.auckland.ac.nz/>

The University DELNA programme is designed to assist students by providing a profile of their abilities that can then be used as a basis for their further development of academic skills.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT (ELE)

<http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/services/student-learning/ele>

Those who are already aware (or whose DELNA results reveal) that they need help with English reading, listening, speaking or writing should enrol at the English Language Enrichment Centre in the Information Commons. You will be able to direct your own learning with help from staff, who will help you get started and monitor your progress.

PRESENTATION OF COURSEWORK

You will lose marks for your assignments if you fail to meet the following instructions:

- **Type** your work
- **Use a plain, 12 pt font**
- **Double-space** your writing
- **Allow a 1-inch left and right margin** for the marker's comments
- **Keep electronic and hard copies of your assignments** as backup

ACADEMIC REFERENCING. Citing source material is an essential academic and research skill. All coursework assignments require full citation of references, including full titles, page numbers, and publication details. You must reference the sources from which you have taken ideas, arguments and/or specific quotations. **For this course you must use the MLA referencing style.** Please consult one or both of the following websites for information on referencing:

Referencite: <http://cite.auckland.ac.nz/>

OWL MLA Guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY OF COURSEWORK

Please visit the following web page to learn about the University's guidelines and policies on academic honesty and plagiarism:

<https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/teaching-learning/academic-integrity.html>

Plagiarism is committed when you fail to indicate clearly your use of other

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people's ideas, facts, research, information etc. You must acknowledge sources. Anything that is the work of another student, a lecturer, a published author, on the Internet, in the newspaper etc., must be fully referenced.

The University of Auckland regards plagiarism as a serious form of cheating. Such academic misconduct may result in **a mark of zero** and the assignment being withheld. The most serious cases may result in **suspension or expulsion from the University and/or a fine**. All students in this course are required to submit their coursework assignments through turnitin.com, software designed to reveal the direct and paraphrased use of published material.

All cases of plagiarism will be brought before the Department's Disciplinary Committee. Cases of plagiarism will remain in the Department's records and may be passed on to other departments at the University of Auckland.

SUBMISSION OF COURSEWORK

Electronic submission of assignments via **Canvas** is the only way student work will be officially received, dated and recorded.

Please make note of the **deadline** (a time and a date are both specified). Assignments received after the specified time **will be treated as late**.

Please **check** to ensure that you have successfully submitted your assignment, and **retain copies** of any work submitted. You must not submit assignments to a GTA or lecturer.

DEADLINES, EXTENSIONS AND LATE PENALTIES

Deadlines for coursework are non-negotiable. In extreme circumstances, such as illness, you may seek an extension but you will require a doctor's certificate. Extensions must be personally negotiated with your Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) **at least two days** before the assignment is due. Extensions must be registered with your GTA and an extension form attached to the front of your assignment. **All late assignments will be penalised ONE MARK PER DAY.**

VERY LATE ASSIGNMENTS

An assignment handed in after the marked assignments have been returned to students, but before the end of the teaching semester will **not** be marked. However, it may be used for consideration of final marks. It is better to hand in a late assignment by the end of the teaching semester (**Friday 1 June**) than no assignment at all.

AEGROTAT AND COMPASSIONATE CONSIDERATION

Information regarding the granting of aegrotat passes or compassionate consideration of grades is contained in the University Calendar under 'Examination Regulations'. Applications are not usually approved unless the student has completed both pieces of coursework and passed them both with a C+ or higher. **You must contact the Examinations Office (not the Department)** if you need to apply for an aegrotat pass.