

## 1. General Information

1a. Submitted by the College of: COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Date Submitted: 2/12/2016

1b. Department/Division: Journalism

1c. Contact Person

Name: Zixue Tai

Email: ztai2@uky.edu

Phone: 257-1676

Responsible Faculty ID (if different from Contact)

Name:

Email:

Phone:

1d. Requested Effective Date: Semester following approval

1e. Should this course be a UK Core Course? No

## 2. Designation and Description of Proposed Course

2a. Will this course also be offered through Distance Learning?: No

2b. Prefix and Number: MAS 560

2c. Full Title: VIDEO GAME STUDIES

2d. Transcript Title:

2e. Cross-listing:

2f. Meeting Patterns

LECTURE: 3

2g. Grading System: Letter (A, B, C, etc.)

2h. Number of credit hours: 3

2i. Is this course repeatable for additional credit? No

If Yes: Maximum number of credit hours:

If Yes: Will this course allow multiple registrations during the same semester?

2j. Course Description for Bulletin: This course offers a critical overview of current scholarship and debates surrounding video games and game players. Topics include the video game industry, culture of gameplay, video game narratives, uses and effects of games, controversial issues, the game production pipeline, and career opportunities.

RECEIVED

MAR 31 2016

OFFICE OF THE  
SENATE COUNCIL

2k. Prerequisites, if any: Media Arts & Studies major or minor status or consent of instructor.

2l. Supplementary Teaching Component:

3. Will this course taught off campus? No

If YES, enter the off campus address:

4. Frequency of Course Offering: Spring,

Will the course be offered every year?: Yes

If No, explain:

5. Are facilities and personnel necessary for the proposed new course available?: Yes

If No, explain:

6. What enrollment (per section per semester) may reasonably be expected?: 35

7. Anticipated Student Demand

Will this course serve students primarily within the degree program?: Yes

Will it be of interest to a significant number of students outside the degree pgm?: No

If Yes, explain:

8. Check the category most applicable to this course: Relatively New – Now Being Widely Established,

If No, explain:

9. Course Relationship to Program(s).

a. Is this course part of a proposed new program?: No

If YES, name the proposed new program:

b. Will this course be a new requirement for ANY program?: No

If YES, list affected programs:

10. Information to be Placed on Syllabus.

a. Is the course 400G or 500?: Yes

b. The syllabus, including course description, student learning outcomes, and grading policies (and 400G-/500-level grading differentiation if applicable, from 10.a above) are attached: Yes

## Distance Learning Form

Instructor Name:

Instructor Email:

Internet/Web-based: No

Interactive Video: No

Hybrid: No

1. How does this course provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty and among students? Does the course syllabus conform to University Senate Syllabus Guidelines, specifically the Distance Learning Considerations?

2. How do you ensure that the experience for a DL student is comparable to that of a classroom-based student's experience? Aspects to explore: textbooks, course goals, assessment of student learning outcomes, etc.

3. How is the integrity of student work ensured? Please speak to aspects such as password-protected course portals, proctors for exams at interactive video sites; academic offense policy; etc.

4. Will offering this course via DL result in at least 25% or at least 50% (based on total credit hours required for completion) of a degree program being offered via any form of DL, as defined above?

If yes, which percentage, and which program(s)?

5. How are students taking the course via DL assured of equivalent access to student services, similar to that of a student taking the class in a traditional classroom setting?

6. How do course requirements ensure that students make appropriate use of learning resources?

7. Please explain specifically how access is provided to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the course or program.

8. How are students informed of procedures for resolving technical complaints? Does the syllabus list the entities available to offer technical help with the delivery and/or receipt of the course, such as the Information Technology Customer Service Center (<http://www.uky.edu/UKiIT/>)?

9. Will the course be delivered via services available through the Distance Learning Program (DLP) and the Academic Technology Group (ATL)? NO

If no, explain how student enrolled in DL courses are able to use the technology employed, as well as how students will be provided with assistance in using said technology.

10. Does the syllabus contain all the required components? NO

11. I, the instructor of record, have read and understood all of the university-level statements regarding DL.

Instructor Name:

SIGNATURE|BBARNES|Beth Barnes|MAS 560 NEW Dept Review|20150504

SIGNATURE|MSBEAC2|Megan B Sizemore|MAS 560 NEW College Review|20150904

SIGNATURE|JMETT2|Joanie Ett-Mims|MAS 560 NEW Undergrad Council Review|20160310

SIGNATURE|ZNNIKO0|Roshan N Nikou|MAS 560 NEW Graduate Council Review|20160331

## New Course Form

<https://myuk.uky.edu/sap/bc/soap/rfc?services=>

[Open in full window to print or save](#)

Generate R

Attachments:

Upload File

	ID	Attachment
Delete	6246	MAS 560 Video Game Studies Syllabus Updated.docx

1

(\*denotes required fields)

1. General Information

- a. \* Submitted by the College of:  Submission Date:
- b. \* Department/Division:
- c.
- \* Contact Person Name:  Email:  Phone:
- \* Responsible Faculty ID (if different from Contact)  Email:  Phone:
- d. \* Requested Effective Date:  Semester following approval OR  Specific Term/Year<sup>1</sup>
- e.
- Should this course be a UK Core Course?  Yes  No
- If YES, check the areas that apply:
- Inquiry - Arts & Creativity  Composition & Communications - II
- Inquiry - Humanities  Quantitative Foundations
- Inquiry - Nat/Math/Phys Sci  Statistical Inferential Reasoning
- Inquiry - Social Sciences  U.S. Citizenship, Community, Diversity
- Composition & Communications - I  Global Dynamics

2. Designation and Description of Proposed Course.

- a. \* Will this course also be offered through Distance Learning?  Yes<sup>4</sup>  No
- b. \* Prefix and Number:
- c. \* Full Title:
- d. Transcript Title (if full title is more than 40 characters):
- e. To be Cross-Listed<sup>2</sup> with (Prefix and Number):
- f. \* Courses must be described by at least one of the meeting patterns below. Include number of actual contact hours<sup>3</sup> for each meeting pattern type.
- |  |  |                                 |                                 |
|--|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="text" value="3"/> Lecture | <input type="text"/> Laboratory <sup>4</sup>   | <input type="text"/> Recitation | <input type="text"/> Discussion |
| <input type="text"/> Indep. Study      | <input type="text"/> Clinical                  | <input type="text"/> Colloquium | <input type="text"/> Practicum  |
| <input type="text"/> Research          | <input type="text"/> Residency                 | <input type="text"/> Seminar    | <input type="text"/> Studio     |
| <input type="text"/> Other             | If Other, Please explain: <input type="text"/> |                                 |                                 |
- g. \* Identify a grading system:
- Letter (A, B, C, etc.)
- Pass/Fail
- Medicine Numeric Grade (Non-medical students will receive a letter grade)
- Graduate School Grade Scale
- h. \* Number of credits:
- i. \* Is this course repeatable for additional credit?  Yes  No
- If YES: Maximum number of credit hours:
- If YES: Will this course allow multiple registrations during the same semester?  Yes  No

## j. \* Course Description for Bulletin:

This course offers a critical overview of current scholarship and debates surrounding video games and game players. Topics include the video game industry, culture of gameplay, video game narratives, uses and effects of games, controversial issues, the game production pipeline, and career opportunities.

## k. Prerequisites, if any:

Media Arts & Studies major or minor status or consent of instructor.

l. Supplementary teaching component, if any:  Community-Based Experience  Service Learning  Both3. \* Will this course be taught off campus?  Yes  No

If YES, enter the off campus address:

## 4. Frequency of Course Offering.

a. \* Course will be offered (check all that apply):  Fall  Spring  Summer  Winter

b. \* Will the course be offered every year?  Yes  No

If No, explain:

5. \* Are facilities and personnel necessary for the proposed new course available?  Yes  No

If No, explain:

## 6. \* What enrollment (per section per semester) may reasonably be expected? 35

## 7. Anticipated Student Demand.

a. \* Will this course serve students primarily within the degree program?  Yes  No

b. \* Will it be of interest to a significant number of students outside the degree pgm?  Yes  No

If YES, explain:

## 8. \* Check the category most applicable to this course:

Traditional – Offered in Corresponding Departments at Universities Elsewhere

Relatively New – Now Being Widely Established

Not Yet Found in Many (or Any) Other Universities

## 9. Course Relationship to Program(s).

a. \* Is this course part of a proposed new program?  Yes  No

If YES, name the proposed new program:

b. \* Will this course be a new requirement <sup>5</sup> for ANY program?  Yes  No

If YES <sup>5</sup>, list affected programs::

## 10. Information to be Placed on Syllabus.

a. \* Is the course 400G or 500?  Yes  No

If YES, the *differentiation for undergraduate and graduate students must be included* in the information required in 10.b. You must include: (i) identify additional assignments by the graduate students; and/or (ii) establishment of different grading criteria in the course for graduate students. (See SR

b.  \* The syllabus, including course description, student learning outcomes, and grading policies (and 400G-/500-level grading differentiation if apply 10.a above) are attached.

<sup>5</sup> Courses are typically made effective for the semester following approval. No course will be made effective until all approvals are received.  
<sup>6</sup> The chair of the cross-listing department must sign off on the Signature Routing Log.

- In general, undergraduate courses are developed on the principle that one semester hour of credit represents one hour of classroom meeting per week for a semester, exclusive of any laboratory meeting. Laboratory meeting, generally, is two hours per week for a semester for one credit hour. (from SR 5.2.1)
- You must also submit the Distance Learning Form in order for the proposed course to be considered for DL delivery.
- In order to change a program, a program change form must also be submitted.

Rev 8/09

**MAS 560-001: Video Game Studies (3 Credits)****Spring 20XX  
Course Syllabus****School of Journalism and Media  
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY**

Time: 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm, Tue &amp; Thu

Venue: TBD

**Instructor:**

Zixue Tai, Ph.D. &amp; Associate Professor

Phone: 257-1676 (O)

E-mail: [ztai2@uky.edu](mailto:ztai2@uky.edu)**Office Hours:**

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm T|W|Th &amp; By appointment

Office Location: 214 Grehan Building

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course offers a critical overview of current scholarship and debates surrounding video games and game players. Topics include the video game industry, culture of gameplay, video game narratives, uses and effects of games, controversial issues, the game production pipeline, and career opportunities.

As one of the fastest-growing sectors of the entertainment industry worldwide, video games are having a profound impact on the global society far beyond the domains of a technological invention or commercial activity; they are fundamentally transforming contemporary culture from how we view the world to the ways today's youngsters are educated. This course offers a critical, panoramic overview of a variety of current debates and scholarships surrounding video games and gamers.

Through a combination of student activities, class discussions and course readings, we will study the historical contours and the current industry landscape of video games, look at important design and usability issues in video game development, and critically review the latest scholarships on a host of social and cultural issues in connection to video gaming in cross-national settings. Additionally, we will survey the game asset pipeline through which video game titles and derivatives are produced, published, distributed, and marketed. Students will also explore a variety of career opportunities in the video game industry, and make initial inquiries into a selective number of areas in view of their particular individual strengths and personal interests. However, please note that *this is NOT a technical course and we will not engage in the coding or production aspects of video game development.*

It is worth highlighting that video game studies are interdisciplinary, and indeed, supradisciplinary in nature, as important questions and issues in the field must, more often than not, be approached from multiple perspectives involving contributions from a range of disciplines including (but certainly not limited to) computer science, mathematics, physics, psychology, anthropology, education, sociology, art, multimedia, business, and (of course) mediated communication. Throughout the semester, class members are advised to develop an individual line of expertise in this broad area called video game studies by paying attention to important conversations outside the confines of their respective disciplinary comfort in their

literature search and readings. The ultimate goal is to develop a line of understanding that best fits your research interest and helps you tackle the specific set of questions that intrigue you.

### **Prerequisites**

Media Arts & Studies major or minor status or consent of instructor.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES/STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop a broad sense of the history of video games as an industry, as an entertainment genre, and as a field of academic inquiry;
- Provide a critical assessment of major controversies and debates in connection to video games, gaming and gamers;
- Demonstrate a general understanding of the societal and individual effects of video gaming;
- Present a sufficient discussion of common types of game genres, rule systems, strategies, play settings in their proper contexts;
- Identify key facets and roles of video gaming as a cultural formation;
- Possess enough information about the video game industry and career opportunities in related areas, and identify potential roles they can play in the field.

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS**

Two texts are required:

- Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S. E., Smith, J. H. & Tosca, S. P. (2012). *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-0415896979.
- Zackariasson, P. & Wilson, P. L. (2014). *The Video Game Industry: Formation, Present State, and Future*. Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-1138803831.

Besides the required texts, supplementary readings may also be assigned from time to time. These may be offline or online publications, and will be announced ahead of schedule in class. These additional readings will be posted on Canvas as pdf documents.

### **MODE OF INSTRUCTION**

Students are expected to perform at an advanced level, and are expected to make significant contributions to the course in the form of class discussions, presentations and debates. The course involves the study of a variety of sophisticated issues, and demands that students keep up with readings. *Readings must have been completed prior to start of class for the week.* Students should come to class prepared to discuss issues related to assigned readings and actively participate in scheduled class activities. *Participation and consistent attendance will be pivotal in the assessment of your final grade.*



Students taking this course for graduate credits must complete a graduate-level research paper. Possible topics and detailed requirements need to be worked out between the students and the instructor early in the semester.

## **COURSE POLICY**

### **Attendance**

Your participation in the class ultimately defines the success or failure of the course. Class attendance is mandatory. Each student is allowed two (2) unexcused absences. Unexcused absences in excess of that number will affect your course grade negatively. Anticipated absences should be pre-arranged with the instructor as soon as possible in the semester (at least one week ahead of the date of absence); emergencies have to be documented and acceptable form of documentation should be provided as soon as possible thereafter (no more than one week after the absence). See the following guidelines on excused absences and their verifications.

### **Excused Absences**

Students need to notify the professor of absences prior to class when possible. *Senate Rules 5.2.4.2* defines the following as acceptable reasons for excused absences: (a) serious illness, (b) illness or death of family member, (c) University-related trips, (d) major religious holidays, and (e) other circumstances found to fit “reasonable cause for nonattendance” by the professor.

Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays no later than the last day in the semester to add a class. Two weeks prior to the absence is reasonable, but should not be given any later. Information regarding major religious holidays may be obtained through the Ombud (859-257-3737, [http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForStudents\\_ExcusedAbsences.php](http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForStudents_ExcusedAbsences.php)).

Students are expected to withdraw from the class if more than 20% of the classes scheduled for the semester are missed (excused) per University policy.

Per *Senate Rule 5.2.4.2*, students missing any graded work due to an excused absence are responsible: for informing the Instructor of Record about their excused absence within one week following the period of the excused absence (except where prior notification is required); and for making up the missed work. The professor must give the student an opportunity to make up the work and/or the exams missed due to an excused absence, and shall do so, if feasible, during the semester in which the absence occurred.

### **Verification of Absences**

Students may be asked to verify their absences in order for them to be considered excused. *Senate Rule 5.2.4.2* states that faculty have the right to request “appropriate verification” when students claim an excused absence because of illness, or death in the family. Appropriate notification of absences due to University-related trips is required prior to the absence when feasible and in no case more than one week after the absence.

**Academic Integrity**

Per University policy, students shall not plagiarize, cheat, or falsify or misuse academic records. Students are expected to adhere to University policy on cheating and plagiarism in all courses. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a zero on the assignment on which the offense occurred. If the offense is considered severe or the student has other academic offenses on their record, more serious penalties, up to suspension from the University may be imposed.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious breaches of academic conduct. Each student is advised to become familiar with the various forms of academic dishonesty as explained in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Complete information can be found at the following website: <http://www.uky.edu/Ombud>. A plea of ignorance is not acceptable as a defense against the charge of academic dishonesty. It is important that you review this information as all ideas borrowed from others need to be properly credited.

*Senate Rules 6.3.1* (see <http://www.uky.edu/Faculty/Senate/> for the current set of *Senate Rules*) states that all academic work, written or otherwise, submitted by students to their instructors or other academic supervisors, is expected to be the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. In cases where students feel unsure about a question of plagiarism involving their work, they are obliged to consult their instructors on the matter before submission.

When students submit work purporting to be their own, but which in any way borrows ideas, organization, wording, or content from another source without appropriate acknowledgment of the fact, the students are guilty of plagiarism.

Plagiarism includes reproducing someone else's work (including, but not limited to a published article, a book, a website, computer code, or a paper from a friend) without clear attribution. Plagiarism also includes the practice of employing or allowing another person to alter or revise the work, which a student submits as his/her own, whoever that other person may be. Students may discuss assignments among themselves or with an instructor or tutor, but when the actual work is done, it must be done by the student, and the student alone.

When a student's assignment involves research in outside sources or information, the student must carefully acknowledge exactly what, where and how he/she has employed them. If the words of someone else are used, the student must put quotation marks around the passage in question and add an appropriate indication of its origin. Making simple changes while leaving the organization, content, and phraseology intact is plagiaristic. However, nothing in these Rules shall apply to those ideas, which are so generally and freely circulated as to be a part of the public domain.

Please note: Any assignment you turn in may be submitted to an electronic database to check for plagiarism.

**Accommodations due to disability (boilerplate)**

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during scheduled office hours. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource

Center (DRC). The DRC coordinates campus disability services available to students with disabilities. It is located on the corner of Rose Street and Huguelet Drive in the Multidisciplinary Science Building, Suite 407. You can reach them via phone at (859) 257-2754 and via email at [drc@uky.edu](mailto:drc@uky.edu). Their web address is <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/>.

### **Participation**

*Active* participation in class discussion and other activities is of paramount importance. Being *active* does not simply mean speaking up in class; it entails making intentional efforts to contribute to a positive learning experience for you and other class members. This is a core consideration in assigning your participation grade at the end of this semester.

### **Diversity**

Promoting diversity is integral to the core mission of the University of Kentucky. In this course, we respect and value the various personal experiences, values, and worldviews that individuals bring to the class due to differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, (dis)abilities, and other circumstances. Any type of behavior or conduct that runs counter to this overall mission will not be tolerated.

### **Classroom Decorum and Civility**

Students are expected to act responsibly, politely, and professionally while in the classroom. Be attentive, respectful and courteous when others are speaking. While discussion and debate are essential in making academic discoveries, diversified opinions must be cherished. Reasoned exceptions to opinions voiced by the instructor or other class members are encouraged, and academic discourse will be conducted with respect and civility as expected of the college classroom.

Engaging in non-class-related activities such as texting, checking cell phone messages, browsing the Web is not expected. Coming to class late is a serious interruption to normal class activities, and must be avoided wherever possible.

### **Late Assignments & Assignments Submission**

It is very important that you meet all deadlines and turn in assignments on the dates that they are due. Late assignments may be accepted with a penalty, with the grade being reduced half a letter grade for each passing day. Decision at accepting or rejecting a late assignment is *totally at the discretion of the instructor, and will be determined on a case-by-case basis*.

*All written assignments (research papers, reflection papers, job cover letters) will be submitted to the course Canvas site electronically in a MS Word or PDF format.*

### **GRADING (Undergraduate)**

Student performance in this course is assessed on the breakdown of the following activities:

Attendance & Participation 5%

Mid-term Exam (In-Class)	25%
Final Exam (Take-Home)	25%
Research Paper	20%
<b>Option A</b>	
Class Presentation & Moderating (Group)	(10%)
Group Project Reflection Paper (Individual)	(10%)
<b>Option B</b>	
Team Game Design	(20%)
Job Cover Letter	5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

Each student can choose either Option A or Option B, both of which are group-oriented. The following offers a brief description of these assignments; detailed instructions for each of these assignments can be found in the following pages of the syllabus.

### **Mid-term Exam (25%)**

The mid-term will take place on March 5, and will conform to a close-book, close-note, in-class format.

### **Final Exam (25%)**

The final is a take-home exam, and will be emailed out on Wednesday, May 6. Typed answers will be submitted to the professor electronically by Thursday, May 7.

### **Research Paper (20%)**

Early into the semester, each class member, upon approval by the instructor, will find a topic of their personal interest in the broad area of video gaming for a term research paper. This can be an extensive literature review, an original study, a critical analysis, or an industry report. All methods and approaches are welcome. Refer to the specific instructions for this paper appended at the end of the syllabus. The research paper is due on Thursday, April 23.

### **Option A: Class Presentation and Moderating (10%+10%)**

Each class member is going to sign up for a special topic (to be distributed in class), and team up with two or three other students to prepare for a class session encompassing presenting findings and moderating discussions in class. Each member also needs to write a reflexive paper summarizing main thematic threads in the literature as well as their personal reflections to major points of debate. Specific group and topical information along with presentation schedule will be worked out early in the semester.

**Option B: Team Game Design Project (20%)**

In the second half of the semester, students will work in a group setting (with 3 to 4 members) to design a video game project. This involves working out the game idea, pitch paper, game proposal (guidelines to be specified later in the course) and other necessary documentation. Detailed instructions will be available after the mid-term.

**Job Cover Letter (5%)**

Each student will do a search through one of the numerous online job ads, and find one that best matches his/her credentials and interest, and then write a cover letter for that position. Specific requirements for the job letter can be found at the end of this syllabus.

Grading scale (undergraduate):

- 90 – 100% = A
- 80 – 89% = B
- 70 – 79% = C
- 60 – 69% = D
- Below 60% = E

Mid-term grades will be posted in myUK by the deadline established in the Academic Calendar (<http://www.uky.edu/registrar/calendar>).

**GRADING (Graduate)**

Students enrolled for graduate credit will be evaluated differently, based on the following the following activities:

Attendance & Participation	5%
Mid-term Exam (In-Class)	25%
Final Exam (Take-Home)	25%
Research Paper	30%
Book Report & Presentation	15%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

Graduate students must work on a research paper on a topic of their interest, contingent upon approval by the instructor. Additionally, each graduate student must also choose one book from the list provided by the instructor, and turn in a five-page book report and deliver a 20-minute oral presentation in class for the book. Specific format of the presentation needs to be worked out in consultation with the instructor.

**Grading scale for graduate students:**

- 90-100% = A
- 80 – 89% = B
- 70 – 79% = C
- Below 70%= E

**Course Schedule  
(Subject to Change)**

<b>Wk</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>WK 1</b>	Thu	1/15	Course Introduction & Logistics	
<b>WK 2</b>	Tue	1/20	Video game studies: Laying the ground work & Defining video games	Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., Ch. 1 & 3
	Thu	1/22		
<b>WK 3</b>	Tue	1/27	Historical Perspectives	Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., Ch. 4
	Thu	1/29		
<b>WK 4</b>	Tue	2/3	The Video Game Industry	Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., Ch. 2; Zackariasson & Wilson, Introduction, Ch. 1 & 2
	Thu	2/5		
<b>WK 5</b>	Tue	2/10	Culture of Video Games	Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., Ch. 5 & 6; Zackariasson & Wilson, Ch. 4
	Thu	2/12		
<b>WK 6</b>	Tue	2/17	Games As Narratives	Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., Ch. 7;
	Thu	2/19		
<b>WK 7</b>	Tue	2/24	Serious Games; Impact and Effects of Gameplay	Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., Ch. 8 & 9
	Thu	2/26		
<b>WK 8</b>	Tue	3/3	Impact and Effects (con't)	
	Thu	3/5	<b>Midterm</b>	
<b>WK 9</b>	Tue	3/10	The Global Landscape	Zackariasson & Wilson, Ch. 5, 6 & 7
	Thu	3/12		

Wk	Day	Date	Topic	Readings
WK 10	Tue	3/17	<i>Spring Break. No Class.</i>	
	Thu	3/19		
WK 11	Tue	3/24	Gamification	Zackariasson & Wilson, Ch. 10
	Thu	3/26		
WK 12	Tue	3/31	Effects of the Industry; Future Prospects	Zackariasson & Wilson, Ch. 8, 9, 11, & 12
	Thu	4/2		
WK 13	Tue	4/7	Group Presentation	
	Thu	4/9		
WK 14	Tue	4/14	Group Presentation Group Project Paper Due (for Option B) on April 16	
	Thu	4/16		
K 15	Tue	4/21	Marketing of Video Games & The Game Production Process <b><i>Individual Research Paper due on April 23</i></b>	Zackariasson & Wilson, Ch. 3
	Thu	4/23		
WK 16	Tue	4/28	Looking into game careers	TBD
	Thu	4/30	Game Careers & Course Wrap-up	TBD
Finals Week	<i>Take-home final due by 5:00 pm, 5/7, Thursday. Electronic submission is accepted.</i>			

## Research Paper

As is mapped out in the syllabus, each member of this class is required to do a research paper as part of the overall course requirements. Individual students need to pick a topic within parameters of their personal interest for the research paper from a wide range of issues in the broad domain of video game studies. A useful frame of reference is the extensive list of topical areas we have covered in the first half of the semester. Your particular choice, however, is certainly not limited to these issues only.

Upon deliberation, *each student should email their topic of choice to the instructor for consultation/approval*. Once you have decided upon a topic, you need to conduct an extensive literature review on extant research concerning this issue, and summarize major theoretical perspectives and findings from the available body of published research. Then you need to make an original contribution to this line of scholarship by presenting your own insight or research findings. This paper can be a conceptual piece in organizing related issues under a particular theoretical framework, or it can be an empirical study in raising your own questions and making your own discoveries on the topic. Any established methodological approach is acceptable. Since this is an academic paper, issues and points must be presented within an appropriate theoretical framework or a set of lenses encased in a well-developed conceptual perspective. *Purely opinionated discussion of issues is not appropriate for this assignment.*

It is recommended that you develop the paper by providing answers to the following questions:

1. **Introduction:** What is the focus of the paper? Why is this significant? What are you trying to accomplish in the paper?
2. **Literature review:** What are the major existing theoretical perspectives in relation to this issue? What has been the major focus of academic research on this topic? What are the main findings? Are there deficiencies or flaws in the current body of research?
3. **Research questions/the focus of your research paper:** In the context of the above discussion (#2), what *specific* research question(s) are you trying to address here?
4. **Procedure/Methodology:** What methodological approach are you adopting to address the above question(s)? What kinds of data were collected? How did you collect the data? Etc.
5. **Data Analysis/Findings (if applicable):** What are the major discoveries? It is desirable to relate your discussion here to the larger context (e.g., existing theoretical lines and past findings by other people). *This is the "cream-of-the-crop" section of your paper.*
6. **Discussion/Conclusion:** What are the implications of your findings in particular and your paper in general to the field? In what ways can your paper promote our understanding of the topic under discussion? What are the limitations of your study? What can other researchers do in future research to carry the field forward?
7. **References:** Provide a complete list of materials you have cited in the paper.

The above list of sections is a rough guideline, and is not meant to be an unyielding blueprint for all papers. Depending on the particular issue you are addressing and the specific methodological approach you are using, the actual organization of your materials can be accomplished in an appropriate manner in accordance with the methodological approach and topical matter. It is



possible to do an extensive literature review, and offer a critical/evaluative summary of a particular field in connection to video game studies.

Among the list of reference you have consulted, *at least six* of them have to be *conventional print sources* (i.e., books, journal articles, trade publications). Feel free to use Web sites and online-only resources, but they are on top of the SIX required references.

The paper must be double-spaced and typed, and should be approximately 10 to 12 pages in length. Both *content* and *presentation* will be evaluated in the grading. It must be turned in as a hard copy, and is due at the end of class on *Thursday, April 23*. *No late submissions shall be accepted.*

## Class Presentation & Moderating (Option A)

Each student will sign up for a particular topic of their interest, and will work with a team of three to four for an in-class presentation and discussion moderation. The group will work together to conduct extensive, in-depth research in relation to the assigned topic by searching for the most current literature (in both trade and scholarly publications) and cutting-edge developments, and then summarize the group's findings into a 30-minute PPT presentation in class. The main areas to be covered in the presentation include the following:

- Introduction
- The current state of development of this type of game genre;
- A historical overview of the game genre from its early inception to now;
- Major landmark game titles (both old and new) and the stories of their success (in other words, most popular titles and what makes them popular among players);
- Main focal points of academic research in relation to this genre (in terms of games, gamers and gaming), noticeable findings, major debates & controversies, and unanswered questions (this is most likely the most important part of your group work, and needs to stay the focus of your research & presentation);
- Personal encounters and perspectives from group members concerning this game genre;
- Future outlook (concerning both industrial and academic prospects)
- Concluding remarks

These are suggested topical areas. You can certainly expand your discussion to include other issues/topics your group feels warranted. The moderation consists of leading the rest of class through discussions, deliberations and debates. Toward that end, the group needs to prepare a short list of discussion questions, and engage other members in sharing their insight on these questions. Key criteria of a successful moderation are that interesting questions have been raised and enlightening insight has been aired.

There are two portions to this assignment: *a group component* encompassing the presentation and moderation, and *an individual portion* manifesting in a paper built on personal digest of the literature and individual reflection of the readings. While team members have to collaborate on the group portion, each member will work *individually* on the reflexive paper. Points of discussion/reflection must be premised on an integrated review of the relevant literature. It is possible to share the literature among group members, but *the preparation and writing of the paper must be done individually*. No collaboration is expected or allowed for the individual portion of the assignment.

Although it is virtually impossible to conduct an exhaustive review of all relevant literature, the literature search should be extensive and update to date, and it should cover major debates and prominent research breakthroughs. It is hard to specify the quantity of the literature to be included in the review, but a general rule of thumb is that the search should include at least one scholarly book, and a minimum of five journal articles (on top of any number of online resources you may want to consult).

The grade of the group work will be evaluated based on the PPT slides the group presents to the class, the presentation itself, and the moderating of discussion. Group members should work with one another to coordinate these activities to streamline the process. Full participation of each member is expected in all aspects of the preparation. This is not to suggest, however, that all group members will be awarded the same grade for the group work. In cases where unmotivated/uninvolved individuals try to get free rides from fellow group members, the instructor may exercise his discretion in issuing varying grades to each individual of the group based on commitment and contribution to the group project.

Each individual student has also to submit an individual paper (hardcopy) that runs about six to seven double-spaced pages long (plus the bibliography) to be awarded credit for the individual portion. Wherever possible, you should make proper references to the literature being discussed in the paper, and the writing should follow a standard style of citation (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago). If you are not sure about how to cite properly, converse with the instructor for assistance.

*Both the group PPT slides and the individual paper are due on the day of the scheduled presentation/moderation.*

## Game Development Proposal (Option B)

A game proposal is a halfway step between the pitch paper and the game design document, and allows the designer to flesh out the gameplay elements in detail and at the same time enables marketing and sales staff to study the likelihood of the new game's succeeding in the marketplace. While a pitch paper is typically two to three pages long, a proposal is much longer. However, the size and structure of a specific game will vary depending on the subject and how much the designer has to explain to the reader. For starters, a useful target is 15 to 20 pages for an average game project. Whereas the purpose of the pitch paper (also called the high concept paper) is to get management (either in one's own or another company) hooked on the central premise of the game and thus give the green light for further development of the idea, the focus of the game proposal is on an overview of gameplay – more specifically, why the game will be fun to play and how the game will actually play.

Generally, a game proposal can be structured in the following sections:

### Introduction

The first few paragraphs should encapsulate the basic concept of the game and give a sense of what is new and exciting about this game in a nutshell. It will contain the following information:

- The basic concept of the game (including game genre);
- A succinct summary of the background or history (if applicable);
- The main gameplay elements;
- The target platform, and audience (ESRB rating, if applicable).

There is a good chance that the reader may stop reading after the first few sentences or paragraphs. So it is critical that the essence of the game be conveyed to the reader, and that he or she will be persuaded to read on.

### Background Fiction/History

This section gives a capsule summary of the situation at the start of play and of what the player will discover during the course of play. It may be useful to break this section into two parts: *backstory* and *game plot*. *Backstory* refers to the events that lead up to the start of the game (which are often shown as an introductory animated sequence). *Game plot* is a summary of what the player discovers as s/he travels around the world and interacts with other characters. For a reality-based project (e.g., war-game or real-time strategy game), this section should give the history of the situation or explain what parts of reality the situation is trying to imitate.

If possible, it is useful to describe the different types of characters in the game in this section, and the respective roles these characters play. These typically include the *antagonist* (i.e., the main villain setting up the conflict, and can be more than one), the *protagonist* (i.e., the player character), and *non-player-characters* (NPCs).

The background material is intended to convince management that the designer knows the topic well enough to design a game about it, but it should not run too long (typically, one page or no

more than two should do the job). The proposal should primarily focus on the fun elements of the game, not on its story lines.

### **Objective/Goal**

The next section should explain the game's goal. How does the player win the game (or lose it)? If it is as simple as "score as many points as possible," then it can be stated in a sentence or two. But if the goal is more complicated, then the proposal may need to go into more explanation about what the player should expect from playing the game.

### **Gameplay Elements**

Simply put, this section discusses how the player reaches the abovementioned goal. It is often the case that the designer needs to discuss several gameplay elements in detail, so this section is usually the longest. At this stage, the specific design is still to be worked out, so the proposal should focus on the major gameplay elements, and should not try to include every variation of the theme.

The materials should be organized such that the most interesting gameplay features will be presented first, with less interesting play elements receiving secondary emphasis. Keep in mind that the purpose of the proposal is to sell a basic game concept, and highlighting the fun elements is key to achieving that.

Gameplay consists of two components in game design: the *challenges* that the player must face to reach the goal of the game; the *actions* that the player is permitted to take to address these challenges. The role of the designer is to hammer out the different scenarios of these challenge/action relationships. A few points that can be elaborated are: Are there unique features that make this game different from other similar titles? Are there different versions of play (multiplayer vs. solitaire)? If yes, what is most interesting about each version? How difficult is the game? Can players customize the difficulty level? Are there different levels in the gameplay? What is to be accomplished in each level? How much replay value does the game have, and why would players want to play the game again and again (not just once or twice)? If applicable, the designer can also discuss how the gameplay elements relate to (e.g., differ from & resemble) well-known situations as found in a movie or television show or fictional settings.

### **Game Controls**

This section should cover the first approximation of how the controls will work and what will appear on the major interface screens. The controls can be presented in a simple diagram or chart, with each key or button corresponding to a game action. The designer can also include a simple schematic of the most important playfield interface screens to explain the main function for each screen. Toward that end, a simple flowchart or diagram may be included to demonstrate how the various screens will interface to one another during gameplay. But remember there is no need to go into excruciating details at this stage, as the specific mechanics will be worked out later once the proposal is approved.

### **Audio-visual Specifications**

Graphics and audio are becoming increasingly important features of video games, as they are critical to help immerse the player into the game world. The section should start with a discussion of the general style of the graphics envisioned for the game. Then it should mention the overall look and feel of the game environment with regard to graphics: Is it cartoonish, realistic, cyberpunk, or horrific? It may be desirable to include 2D concept art in the proposal to provide a sense of the desired art style. A staff artist can create raw concept materials, or the designer can find examples of similar graphics elsewhere (including other existing game products). Materials from copyrighted sources can be used for the proposal at this point as long as it is not intended for external distribution. The designer should also include descriptions (rough sketches or computer-created versions) of the major characters appearing in the game as well as the major game scenes (locations). However, resist the temptation of including almost every piece of material in this section, and make careful selections of only the major materials to offer enough of a glimpse of the overall graphic style and structure.

The next section here should discuss the general style of the music and sound in the game. The designer can refer the reader to other well-known music of a similar style, either in existing games or by well-known composer(s). The sound specification covers both audio effects and voiceovers, and the designer should discuss how the proposed sound effects reinforce the mood of the gameplay as well as how voice cast accomplishes the same goal.

### **Estimated Schedule and Budget**

The designer should work with team members (and preferably people with experience in those areas) to come up with a semipractical schedule for the project. Ideally, it should also include major milestones and deliverables (attached to approximate dates). In addition, this section should include a rough first budget for the game based on estimated manpower and equipment requirements. But nothing can be set in a fixed module at this stage, and specific schedule and budget are up to negotiation pending interest from the producer. The goal, however, is to come up with a *reasonable* estimate in both schedule and budget.

### **Marketing Analysis**

The publisher's management needs to be convinced that the game is commercially practical before they make any commitment. The designer should provide preliminary information about the marketplace in order for the publisher to make a rough sales forecast and make a reasonable prediction on how retailers will respond to the game title. Given enough interest in the proposal, the publisher may work with independent marketing and sales departments to arrive at a more reliable estimate. This section should include the following information:

- **Target Market:** The target market is defined by the game genre, the platform, and the intended audience. The document should define each of these components of the market in some detail and point out similar (competing) titles that have sold well.
- **Top Performers:** The proposal should list current top performers in the market that have target audiences similar to those of the game title. It should also discuss if there is any potential for the game title to cross into other media platforms (e.g., comics, toys, movies).

- **Feature Comparison:** The designer should carefully study the selling features of the top sellers, and compare them to those in the proposed title. The purpose, of course, is to show that this new game title should perform better in the marketplace in most of not all of those areas.
- **Competitors:** The proposal should describe, to the extent possible, upcoming releases by other publishers that might compete with the new title. This may be hard in many cases, but the designer needs to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and expertise in this area.
- **Revenue Model:** Will this game be sold online? For how much? Or will it be distributed online for free play? If that is the case, where is the source of revenue? Why adopt this particular model?

### **Conclusion**

The proposal should end with an upbeat note to recap the key elements that the designer believes will make the game a success. The purpose of this part is to help the reader come away after reading the above presentation with the idea that this project is worth pursuing.

### **FOR THE GROUP PROJECT**

The above offers some rough guidelines for the game project proposal each group is going to complete for this class. Depending on the particularities of the project, you may decide, as a group, to place more emphasis on some areas than others. But the above lists the major areas that should be covered in the proposal. *Keep in mind that this project is a casual game assignment, and the proposal content has to be tailored specifically for that.* Considering the lack of experience in budgeting and scheduling game projects, you don't need to spend a lot of time working that part out, and some preliminary is sufficient for the purpose of this class.

The final document (including flow charts, graphical sketches, etc.) should be approximately 12-15 double-spaced pages. The materials should be laid out in a well-organized manner, with appropriate titles and subtitles for each section.

The due date for the group project proposal is *April 16*. Each group is also going to present to the whole class in the week of April 14 & 16. During the presentation, you need to prepare PowerPoint slides with appropriate supplementary materials for the presentation. Specific schedule of the presentation will be handed out later.

Each group will consist of 3-4 members. The project will be graded on both the presentation and the written proposal. All group members need to participate in all stages of the project, and each team needs to coordinate particular activities and individual schedules among members so as to complete all requirements for this assignment. At the end of the project, there will be an evaluation of each individual (by fellow team members) for their input, and the evaluation results will be weighed in by the instructor when assigning the individual grade.

## Job Letter Assignment (Due May 4)

The video/online game industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the U.S. job market for recent years. This in no way can be taken to mean, however, that jobs are easily available for grabs by avid college graduates. It is still a fiercely competitive job market in the video game business, and ambitious college students who are eyeing a career in this industry have to prepare themselves *really well* in order to land a job there. This assignment is an exercise for you to get familiar with the process and the prospect of securing a job opportunity in this fast-changing field.

For this assignment, you need to conduct some extensive search with currently-posted job openings in one of the areas in connection to the video game industry, and find one job ad whose description matches well both your interest and your strengths (e.g., academic training, personality, experience). Then you will write a cover letter customized to that job ad (that you can effectually send out to the employer if you intend to apply for that job). The job letter should accomplish these following tasks:

- explain why you are writing this letter;
- how you learned about the job opening and the company;
- call attention to relevant elements of your background (e.g., your academic background, related experience) in the context of this job;
- convince the reader of the letter to go on to review your resume (assuming you have a professionally-worked-out resume, which you don't have to produce for this assignment);
- highlight your attitude, work ethic, personality, character, enthusiasm, communication skills, etc., or anything else you are proud of yourself for;
- discuss and refer to any other information that is specifically requested/mentioned in the job ad.

The letter should be *professionally prepared*, and may run about 1-2 single-spaced pages long. The letter is due on *May 4*, and can be turned in either as a hard copy or as an electronic copy in MS Word or PDF format.

Alongside the letter, you will also need to turn in a copy of the original job description (also please indicate where you found this information) as well as a short rationalization paper (no longer than one single-spaced page) explaining why you chose this job for this assignment.



## **Book Report & Presentation Guidelines (Graduate Students Only)**

This assignment is designed to help you gain an in-depth understanding of a particular issue discussed in a book from the list provided by the instructor. You are going to sign on a book that interests you, and read the book, and finish a written book report. In addition, you will make a 20-minute presentation in class in relation to the content of the book.

In the book report, you will write about the following aspects:

1. Brief description of the book. What are the major aims and purposes of the book? Are those accomplished successfully? What issues does the book try to tackle? What new ground does the book break? What is your overall evaluation of the book?
2. The main ideas/theoretical perspectives of the book. Summarize the main argument(s) in the book in your own words. Explain the key terms concepts used in the book. Are these ideas/perspectives developed well?
3. Relevance of the book to today's video game research. How are the issues discussed in the book relevant to current debates? How can the book help us understand things better? Also try to relate the book to larger issues under discussion in this course and other readings. If the book was written a while ago, what persistent themes do you see between ideas in the book and video games today? Are there any points in the book that are not valid anymore?
4. What are the most striking or provocative lessons/points you have learned from the book? It does not have to be in line with the author's main purpose(s) of writing the book. In other words, what impresses you the most about this book?
5. Your critical evaluation of the book. How do you like the book? Do you agree with the points presented in the book? Give your reasons. Are there any deficiencies with any viewpoints, issues or methods in the book?

The report should be about 4-5 typed, double-space pages. Additionally, you will also make a presentation to the class based on the reading of the book. The presentation should focus on a few key issues that you think have high relevance to the topics of this course. Try to relate issues/points to current debates on video games. Although it is possible for you to look for presentation ideas from the book report, the presentation does not have to be limited by the report's content and format. The audience is your classmates who most likely have not read the book, so try your best to make the points interesting and understandable to them. You should prepare some PPT slides to aid the presentation. Each presentation should last approximately 20 minutes.

Please email your PPT slides to the instructor prior to class, so copies can be made for class members. The book report is due on the day for which your presentation is scheduled. A specific schedule will be handed out early in the semester in order to give you enough time to prepare.