

English 299: Games and Literature
Clackamas Community College, Spring 2007
Class Meets: T/TH 1:00- 2:50 Rook 209
Instructor: Trevor Dodge
Office: Rook 224 Hours: T/TH 10:00 - 12:00 or by appointment
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Course Description

This class explores games as important narrative forms with strong ties to the social and historical times in which they are created. Students will develop a critical understanding of a variety of game forms and explore their connections to traditional literary texts.

Course Objectives

- 1) Realize the narrative function of games, as well as arguments for their artistic validity.
- 2) Explore the social-historical contexts for games, particularly how they compare to more traditional art forms.
- 3) Encourage and empower students to think critically about the culture in which they live and the kinds of literature it produces.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- 1) Demonstrate in class discussions and written assignments an understanding of the history of games, and an appreciation for the cultures and contexts in which they are created.
- 2) Apply techniques of literary analysis to specific games and/or gaming culture in written assignments, quizzes and/or exams.
- 3) Demonstrate an artistic appreciation for games by creating interactive texts and/or virtual game spaces for others to inhabit and explore.

Required Texts

available at the CCC Bookstore:

Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan: *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*
Chuck Palahniuk: *Survivor*
Mary W. Shelley: *Frankenstein*
Tim O'Brien: *The Things They Carried*
Joyce Carol Oates (ed): *Tales of H.P. Lovecraft*
Samuel Beckett: *Endgame*

online:

McKenzie Wark: *GAM3R 7H30RY* <<http://www.futureofthebook.org/gamertheory/>>
Lance Olsen: *10:01* <<http://www.lanceolsen.com/1001.html>>
Anthony Lappe and Dan Goldman: *Shooting War* <<http://shootingwar.com>>

Graded Assignments

Reading Quizzes¹ (30 points): This really should go without mentioning, but literature classes by definition are reading-intensive. Our in-class discussions will be made or broken by how prepared you are for class every week, so to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading assignments, a sizeable chunk of your final grade will be comprised of weekly quizzes. Most quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class, and cannot be made up if you are absent or late.

Seminar Essay² (40 points): A 7-10 page analytical essay, focused on a topic of your choice, that is a relevant and logical extension of this course. You will be required to use a minimum of five secondary sources for this essay, and to cite them according to Modern Language Association (MLA) conventions.

Presentations (30 points): An interesting conversation about games and gaming culture right now is the development of a canon for games; in essence: what are the most important games and why are they important in the first place? On two occasions, you will present and demonstrate to the class a game you feel deserves to be included in the conversation.

A Simplified Version of All the Above:

Quizzes:	30 points
Essay:	40 points
Presentations:	30 points
TOTAL:	100 points

This 100-point system reflects traditional letter-grading standards:

100-90 points = "A"
89-80 points = "B"
79-70 points = "C"
69-60 points = "D"
59-0 points = "F"

SPECIAL NOTES:

- 1) Incompletes will be considered on an individual case basis, in which you have completed at least 75% of the assigned coursework up to the point of request.
- 2) If you miss five classes over the duration of the quarter, you will automatically fail the course.
- 3) There is no extra credit.

ADA Notice

Students with documented disabilities should contact the office of Student Disabilities for any accommodations they might require for this course.

Electronic Gizmos

You are welcome to bring electronic devices such as laptops, cellular phones and pagers into the classroom only if said devices are equipped with a silencing function. Please disable any audible ring

¹ You can opt out of the weekly reading quizzes by creating a blog or podcast and posting new content throughout the duration of the course. Details will be covered the first day of class.

² You can opt out of the seminar essay by creating a game of your own design and presenting it to the class during finals week. Details will be covered the first day of class.

function on your cell phone or pager before entering the classroom. If your wireless device does not have a silent or vibrate function, please turn the unit off. Should you need to use your phone during class time, please have the courtesy to quietly leave the room and avoid disrupting the discussion or activity in which the class might be engaged.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

This is my best guess at how the quarter will play out. This is a rough sketch and a tentative schedule, so expect some tweaking. I will inform you of any changes in class; if you miss a class, be sure to double-check with me before the next meeting.

WEEK ONE (4/3, 4/5)

Course Introductions

Reading: Wark, "Agony"; selections³ from *First Person*

WEEK TWO (4/10, 4/12)

Reading: Wark, "Allegory"; Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Presentations begin

WEEK THREE (4/17, 4/19)

Reading: Shelley, *Frankenstein*

WEEK FOUR (4/24, 4/26)

Reading: Beckett, *Endgame*

WEEK FIVE (5/1, 5/3)

Reading: selections from Lovecraft⁴

WEEK SIX (5/8, 5/10)

Reading: Palahniuk, *Survivor*

WEEK SEVEN (5/15, 5/17)

Reading: *Survivor*

WEEK EIGHT (5/22, 5/24)

3 *First Person* essays:

Introduction, xi-xii

Janet Murray, "From Game-Story to Cyberdrama," 2-11

Espen Aarseth, "Genre Trouble," 45-55

Gonzalo Frasca, "Videogames of the Oppressed," 85-93

Henry Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture," 118-130

Eric Zimmerman, "Narrative, Interactivity, Play, and Games," 154-164

Jill Walker, "How I Was Played by *Online Caroline*," 302-309

Nick Montfort, "Interactive Fiction as 'Story'...", 310-317

4 H.P. Lovecraft stories:

"The Call of Cthulhu"

"Shadow Over Innsmouth"

"The Dunwich Horror"

Reading: selections from O'Brien⁵

WEEK NINE (5/29, 5/31)

Reading: Lappe and Goldman, *Shooting War*

WEEK TEN (6/5, 6/7)

Reading: Olsen, *10:01*

WEEK ELEVEN (6/12)

Essay Due; Final Presentations

5 Tim O'Brien stories:
"The Things They Carried"
"How to Tell a True War Story"
"Spin"
"The Man I Killed"
"Ambush"