Course Description and Objectives

This course examines the culture, technology, and art of gaming. We will explore the industry, aesthetics, storytelling, rewards, and risks in the world of video games. Topics include mobile, open world, RPG, casual, and serious game genres; we will discuss esports, vloggers, online communities, Twitch celebrities, and a case study of Rockstar Games, producer of the *Grand Theft Auto* series. Two midterms and a final paper are required along with brief assessments, participation in in-class multimedia activities, and debates.

Required Texts Available at University Bookstore


SJMC Learning Outcomes

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. You can find more information about these learning outcomes here: [http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment](http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment). We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.

This course contributes to these learning outcomes in the following areas:

- Media Law and Ethics (Learning Objective 4.)
- Media Literacy
- Multiculturalism
- Media History

Policies:
• **Please stay focused:** power down phones, laptops and any other electronic devices. Come to class on time and remain for the full class period. Do not pack your bags until class is over.

• **Attendance policy:** Each unexcused absence after two results in a loss of 20 points (4% of grade). It is your responsibility to sign upon arrival the attendance sheet at the front of the room. Official documentation (MyChart from UI Clinics is valid, not self-signed or roommate signed forms) prior to or within 24 hours of the absence is required for absences to be excused.

• **Missed exams and assignments** without forewarning automatically fail. If a calamitous event occurs that prevents you from taking an exam at the scheduled time, please contact me *before the exam; documentation must be provided 48 hours after the exam*. A record of your clinic visit on MyChart will be acceptable, not self-signed or roommate signed forms.

• **It is the student’s responsibility to obtain the content of classes missed through classmates who were in attendance.** Exchange contact information with a partner who will agree to give you the class notes in case you are absent.

• **No email submissions.** Submit your written assignment to Canvas only

**Maintaining a Professional Environment**

• Be courteous and professional in your correspondence for this course, using proper grammar and proper modes of address.

• Come prepared and be ready to contribute. Do not skip class meetings. Focus on the material when in class. Power down devices unless they are required for the activity.

Media scholarship is founded upon the use of evidence and logic to formulate forceful and convincing claims. Insights and comments will be judged strictly on the merit of their content and use of textual support without regard to the individual who asserts it. The assertion of any personal, or “editorial” values beyond the scope of the course content is not required, and should be made only at the student’s discretion.

In addition to respecting one and other in class, students will approach the course’s readings and films as academic material for active study rather than passive entertainment. The study of journalism and mass communication, like the work of anthropology, involves examining texts to discover how a culture thinks about itself. In an exciting, safe classroom environment, in which the student’s social class, ethnic background, gender orientation or other personal attributes will not come under scrutiny or judgment, satisfaction will derive from finding profound meaning in the world of mass communication. It is in this spirit of mutual respect for classmates, professor, and subject matter that we begin our intellectual journey.

**Assignments and Grades**
- Participation: 60 points
- 7 Knowledge Checks: 20 points each/140 total
- 2 Midterms: 100 points each/200 total
- Final Paper: 100 points

Total: 500 points

**7 Knowledge Checks** I will assess your preparation through a series of Knowledge Checks on key concepts drawn from the reading material. KCs, as we call them, will occur on Tuesdays and consist of 2-5 items you will be asked to identify and discuss in writing. Each of the 7 KCs is worth 20 points for a total of 140 points possible.

**Two midterms** will be in-class. A review sheet will be available for you to construct on a Google Doc before each exam. *Many questions cover material presented in class only that does not appear in the reading.* Each midterm is worth 100 points.

**Final Paper** In lieu of an in-class final exam, students will complete a 7-10 page paper that draws upon course concepts to examine an element of digital and gaming culture of your choice. Selecting from topic areas of YouTube celebrities, online youth culture, digital communities, and video games, you will explore a specific form of media applicable to what has been covered in the course. The purpose is to provide an account of your selected topic’s significance to digital and/or gaming culture. Your paper is due on the last regular meeting of class. This final project is worth 100 points.

**Grading Scale**
Whole number percentages; no rounding:A = 93% and above (461 points and up); A- = 90-92% (450-460 points); B+ = 87-89% (435-449 points); B = 83-86% (415-434 points); B- = 80-82% (400-414 points); C+ = 77-79% (385-399 points); C = 73-76% (365-384 points); C- = 70-72% (350-364 points); D+ = 67-69% (335-349 points); D = 63-66% (315-334 points); D- = 60-62% (300-314 points); F = 59% and below (299 points and under)

**COURSE CALENDAR**

| I. DIGITAL CULTURES |

**Week 1 — INTRODUCTION: IMMERSIVE MEDIA TECHNOLOGY**

| Jan. 15 | Welcome and course overview |
| Jan. 17 | **Reading:** Rothman, J. (2018) “As Real as it Gets: Are We Already Living in Virtual Reality?” On Canvas |

**Week 2 — THE STREAMING INDUSTRY**
Jan. 22  **Knowledge Check (KC1); Reading:** Clark, T. (2017) “Revenue Streaming” On Canvas

Jan. 24

**Week 3 — AUDIENCE**

Jan. 31

**Week 4 — COMMUNITY: FORTNITE**

Feb. 5  **KC2; Reading:** Paumgarten, N. (2018) “Weaponized” On Canvas
Feb. 7

Supplementary Reading:
- Vlogger Anita Sarkeesian and #GamerGate
  http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/anita-sarkeesian-gamergate-interview-20141017

Feb. 12  **KC3; Reading:** Participatory Culture in a Networked Era, Ch. 2.
Feb. 14

**Week 5 — PARTICIPATORY CULTURE**

Feb. 19  **Reading:** Participatory Culture, Ch. 5.
Feb. 21

**II. GAMING CULTURES**

**Week 7 — VIDEO GAME AESTHETICS**

Feb. 26  **Midterm I (100 points)**
Feb. 28  **Reading:** Understanding Video Games, Ch. 5
  http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/05/18/world-without-end-raffi-khatchadourian

**Week 8 — VIDEO GAMES IN CULTURE**

March 5  **Reading:** Understanding Video Games, Ch. 6
March 7
Week 9 — NARRATIVE

March 12  KC4; Reading: Understanding Video Games, Ch. 7
March 14
• Supplementary Reading: Bogost, I. (2017) Video Games are Better Without Stories

Spring Break, March 17-24

Week 10 — SERIOUS GAMES: WHEN ENTERTAINMENT IS NOT ENOUGH

March 26  KC5; Reading: Understanding Video Games, Ch. 8
March 28

Week 11 — VIDEO GAMES AND RISKS

April 2  KC6; Reading: Understanding Video Games, Ch. 9
April 4

Week 12 — THE GAME INDUSTRY

April 9  Midterm II (100 points)
April 11  Reading: Understanding Video Games, Ch. 2
• Watch Digital Nation,
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuHLyUZPzCo

Week 13 — ROCKSTAR GAMES

April 16  KC7; Reading: Kushner, D. (2012). Jacked: The Outlaw Story of Grand Theft Auto, prologue-Ch. 12
April 18

Week 14 — ROCKSTAR GAMES II

April 25

Week 15 — DEBATE WEEK

April 30  Prepare video game debate
May 2  Debate (factored into participation grade); Final Papers Due on CANVAS at midnight

CLAS Teaching Policies & Resources

Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its
Electronic Communication
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student should then discuss accommodations with the course instructor (https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/).

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (diversity.uiowa.edu).

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code).

CLAS Final Examination Policies
The final exam schedule for each semester is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this final exam information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals (https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies).

Making a Complaint
Students with a complaint should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the departmental executive officer (DEO), also known as the Chair. Students may then bring the concern to CLAS (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities).

Understanding Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, definitions, and the full University policy, see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.