ANGM 3366
Game Studies I
Fall 2025

ANGM 3366.002 | Game Studies I

Tuesdays from 4pm to 6:45pm | SLC 1.204

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Office Hours: By appointment only (Online)

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Introduction to Game Studies I

This course is an introduction to critical game studies, including analysis of digital and analog games as cultural artifacts, material technologies, and social practices. Together, we will explore how established concepts and arguments about games and play can help us examine and reflect upon our experiences as players, spectators, and makers of games.

As a multi-hour course, class time will be split between a brief lecture on the course topic, in-class explorations and playthroughs of various games, and group discussions. Through this mixture of prepared lectures, spontaneous discussions, and a good bit of play, we can reflect on and analyze how our gameplay experiences play into or challenge our perspectives of what games are capable of.

Finally, this course presents the fundamentals of academic research practices in game studies. As we engage in the field of game studies, you will be tasked with multiple assignments that will encourage a scholarly approach to your work, as befitting a 3000-level Animation & Games course.

A modern arcade in the UK; Image credit: Mitchell Orr @ Unsplash.com

Learning Objectives

- You will be able to recognize and explain modern theories that view games and play as activities influenced by the culture and technology of their time.

- You will closely examine games and gameplay to uncover deeper meanings, themes, and design choices.

- You will create analytical insights about games and gameplay in a thoughtful and critical manner.

- You will make original work that investigates games and play using evidence and structured arguments to support your insights in a scholarly way.

Some miniatures in combat; Image credit: Clint Bustrillos @ Unsplash.com

Required Materials

To engage with our course content, **weekly access to a computer and the Internet will be needed**. All assigned materials will be available electronically through eLearning.

This syllabus contains a schedule to keep you informed of all assigned materials, due dates, and other resources. It is also a living document that will be adjusted and revised as necessary to take into account student needs, weather, and local events. Therefore, **make sure that you are reading the most up-to-date version of the syllabus by checking eLearning often!**

Finally, **no materials are required for purchase for this course**. While there are assignments that require certain technologies or resources, they can be rented/borrowed from the University. Alternatively, consider asking a peer for assistance, visiting the UTD Library, or dropping by the Games and Media Library.

Wario Land II

Course Expectations

- **We come to class to learn from one another**; therefore, your active presence is expected and shown by being familiar with the assigned materials and participating in class discussions.

- **We have limited opportunities to meet, discuss, and work together**; therefore, your timely completion of all course assignments is expected, and your attendance is highly treasured.

- **We cannot learn from those who are unwilling to engage with the ideas of others**; therefore, your willingness to learn must be demonstrated by being open to new ideas that challenge your assumptions and by earnest, careful, and generous engagements with those who respond in kind.

A Nintendo 2DS; Image credit: Denise Jans @ Unsplash.com

- **We will be a community of scholars, artists, and curious minds.** To facilitate a learning community for us to work together, I've included the following community agreement for our course to guide our interactions. This agreement is adapted and revised from the [Yesterweb's](#) social etiquette guidelines and is open to our collective revision as our course unfolds.

  o Engage in good faith.
    - To engage in "good faith" means to assume that others have sincere, honest, and respectful intentions.

  o Engage in constructive conflict.
    - Conflict is necessary for growth. It can be uncomfortable, but it also fuels change. However, there is a difference between **constructive** and **destructive** conflict. We can only engage in constructive conflict when **all** parties engage in good-faith discussions.

  o Be mindful of participating in a shared, public space.
    - Some students can feel overwhelmed when the conversation is run by a handful of people. Take time to ensure everyone's voices can be heard.

  o Take care of yourself.
    - Few things are worth more than your own well-being. Make sure to nourish yourself with good food, drink plenty of water, and rest frequently.

Grading & Assignments

This class uses the standard grading metric for all assignments (100-90 = A, 89-80 = B, etc.).

All assignments must be submitted by their respective due dates, but I will accept any late submissions within a **24-hour grace period** to account for personal issues and technical difficulties. If you require additional time to complete an assignment, please let me know at least 24 hours in advance. Work submitted after the grace period will not be guaranteed a grade.
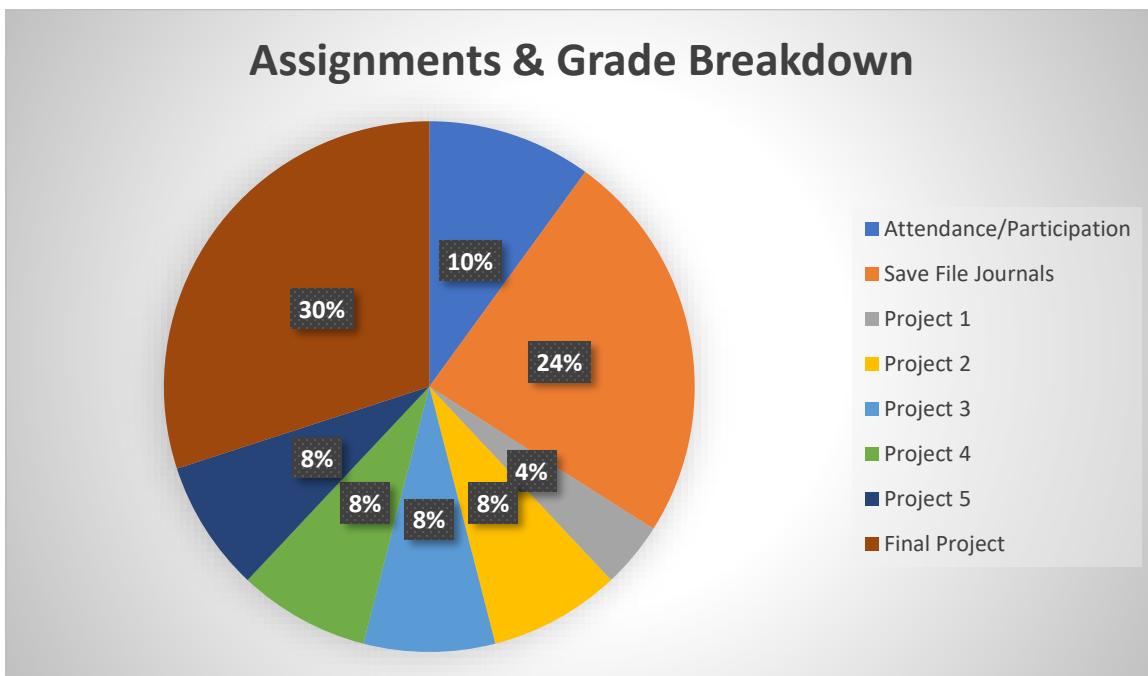
Assignment Breakdown

Attendance/Participation: 10 points possible.

- As this course meets once a week, any absences will deduct a point from your overall attendance grade. Everyone is expected to arrive on time and stay until the end of the class. Failure to do so will negatively impact this grade.
- However, I will excuse two absences by default, no questions asked, in addition to excused absences as described in UTD's general syllabus policies.

Save File Journal: Entries 2 points each, 24 points possible.

- Every week, you will create journal entries detailing interesting findings from the readings in addition to recording their experiences of play.
- These journal entries are due every Friday from Week 2 to Week 13, and they can take the form of written journals, podcasts, short videos, and the like.
- For full instructions, see eLearning.
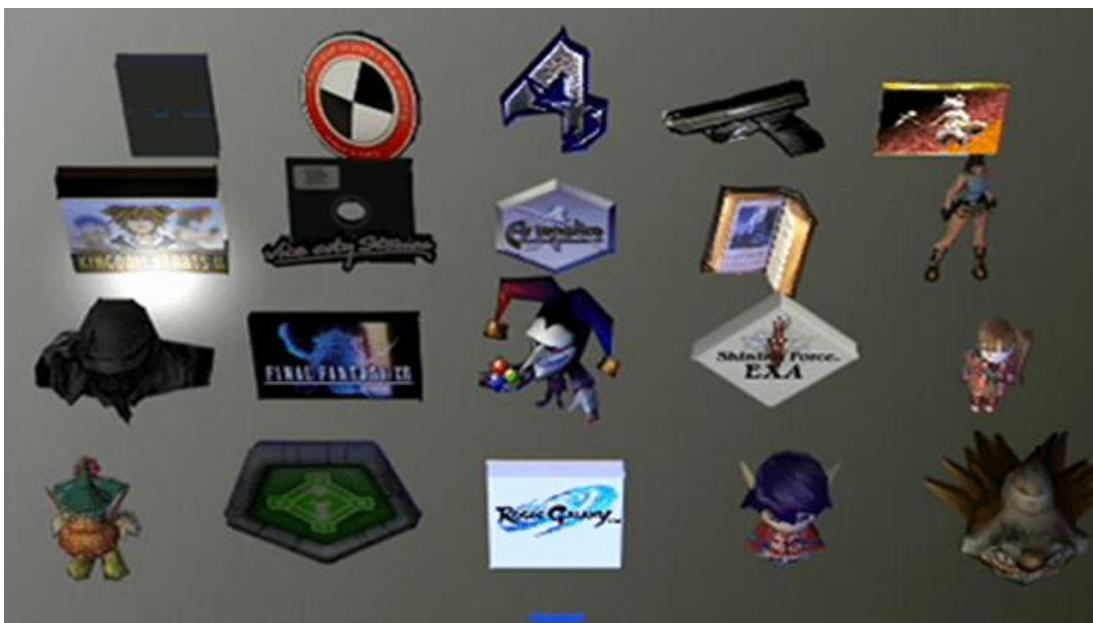
PlayStation 2 save file icons. Can you identify them all?;
image credit: u/READ|between| on r/gaming

Projects: Points vary, 36 points possible.

- Throughout the semester, you'll engage with our readings via projects that task you with using what you've learned in critical and creative ways.
- These projects will typically require you to create an original work, such as an essay, a video, a presentation, and so on. By doing so throughout the semester, you'll practice your critical and creative faculties.
- Each project has its own requirements, so check their respective sections in eLearning for full details.

<u>Final Project</u>: 30 points.

- Your final project will be to create an original work that examines a game of your choice through the tools and critical viewpoints gained throughout the course.
- By default, you'll be tasked with writing a 6-8-page essay or producing a 12–15-minute video essay, but the actual form of your final project is something we can negotiate. You will still need to draw from course readings and additional research that relates to your chosen game or topic.
- By the conclusion of your project, you will have developed an argument backed by strong critical thinking skills, demonstrates your work as a student/scholar, and illustrates the importance of your game as a cultural, technological, and/or social object.
- More information will be available on eLearning.
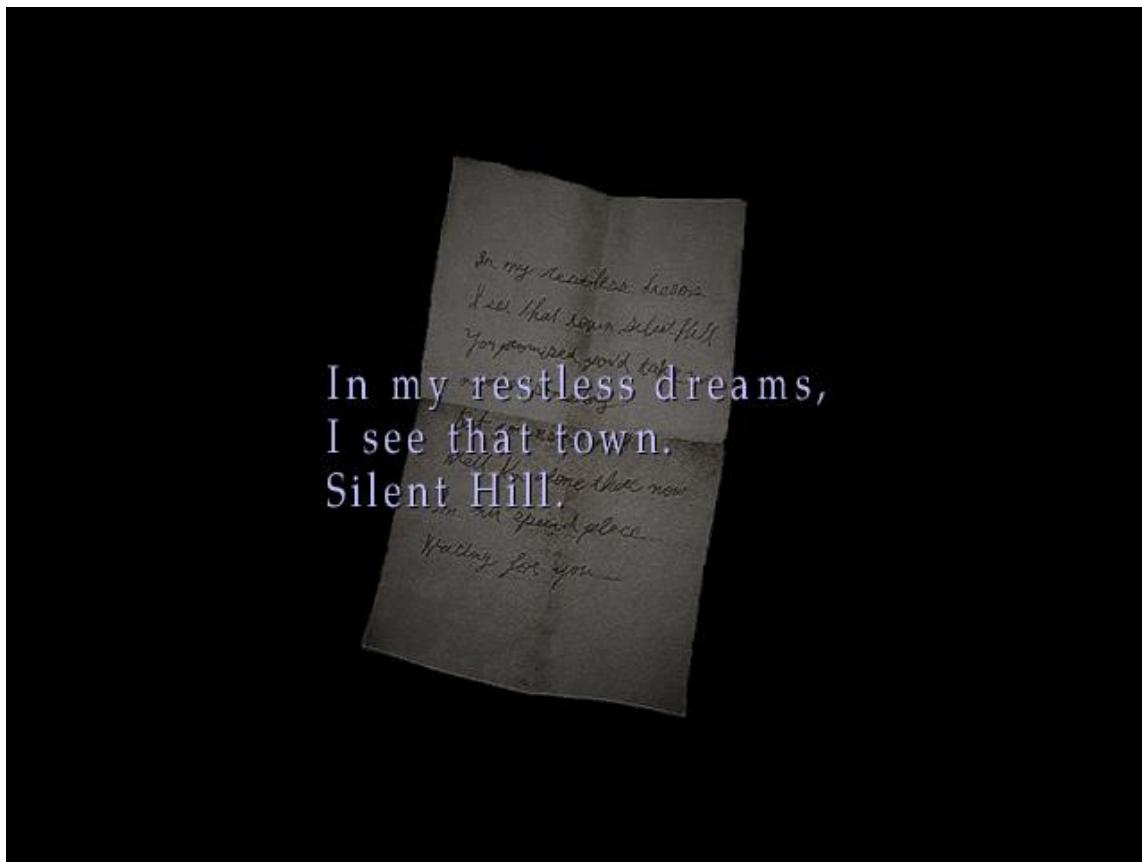
Silent Hill 2

Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation for this class, you are encouraged to register with the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC). Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact ARC for a confidential discussion. The ARC is in the Administration Building, Room 2.224.
The website is https://accessability.utdallas.edu/.
They can be contacted by phone at 972-883-2098 or by email at studentaccess@utdallas.edu.

Navi from *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*

If you do not have formal accommodation but have needs that the course is failing to meet as currently designed, please request a meeting with me to discuss how I can support your learning style. Do not hesitate to reach out to me directly to discuss any difficulties beyond those supported by the ARC that might hinder your full participation in our course, and we can work out an individualized plan to support your learning in this course. For additional student resources to support your learning, please visit
https://www.utdallas.edu/campus-life/student-services-support/.

UTD Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus, which includes information on student conduct and discipline, copyright, and withdrawals. If the policy information you are looking for is not present in this syllabus, please go to http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies for these policies.

Academic Integrity

I value your academic integrity, and I want you to gain the skills necessary for success through honest means. However, academic dishonesty—intentional or accidental—can result in a failing grade and expulsion from the University. In addition, **I do not allow the usage of generative AI services and will not accept work using them**. For other policies on topics like plagiarism and sabotage, please review and abide by the academic integrity guidelines set by the University of Texas at Dallas: https://conduct.utdallas.edu/students/academic-integrity/.

World of Warcraft

A Note on Course Content

Given our course's approach to games and play as situated practices in cultural, technological, and social contexts, the assigned materials and class discussions will necessarily and frequently engage with emotionally, intellectually, and physically challenging content. **If you have concerns about encountering anything that appears or could appear in the course material, please don't hesitate to reach out to me via email and/or before/after class**. I can provide you a heads-up on certain topics or themes ahead of time if asked.

Ultimately, my hope is to facilitate a hospitable learning community for us to learn as individuals and as a collective. Towards that end, all I ask is for you to let me know how to best support your learning experience.

Grounded, with "Arachnophobia Mode"
enabled at maximum settings

YOUR TIME HAS COME, WARRIOR OF LIGHT!

When evil poisoned the land, mankind was infected by oppression and despair. The only hope of revival rests with four warriors of light that will risk everything to free the world from darkness and suffering. The time has come to use magic, draw swords and swing morningstars to save the world from the sinister enemy.

OUT 3rd DECEMBER

FINAL FANTASY I & II: DAWN OF SOULS.
Only on Game Boy Advance.

GAME BOY ADVANCE SP
www.nintendo.co.uk

Schedule

Note: This schedule is not final and may change as necessary to meet the needs of the class and to adapt to unforeseen circumstances as they arise. For full details, including links to required readings and journal questions, see eLearning.

WEEK	Class Topic & Readings
Week 1: Aug 26	Greetings Introductions Syllabus Reading: Jeopardy Edition
Part 1: Studying Games & Play	

Week 2: Sept 2	World At Play
	• From *Play Matters* by Miguel Sicart
	  o "Play Is"
	  o "Toys"
	  o "Playgrounds"
	• Let's Play: Hide & Seek?
	Project 1 introduced

Week 3: Sept 9	Playing/Reading/Critiquing/Making Games • "Searching for the Well-Played Game" – Bernie De Koven • "Reading a Game Deeply" – Tracy Fullerton & Matthew Farber • "Games Criticism Is A Kindness" – Heather Alexandra • Let's Play: The 30-Minute Game Jam Project #1 DUE (end of week)
Week 4: Sept 16	Technologies of Play • "Meeples, Miniatures, and Cubes" – Paul Booth • "Game Elements" - Mary Flanagan, Helen Nissenbaum, and Jonathan Belman. • Let's Play: *Monopoly* Project 2 introduced
Week 5: Sept 23	Constructing Play • "Welcome to the Discourse of the Real: Constituting the Boundaries of Games and Player" – Mia Consalvo & Christopher A. Paul • "Metagaming: Videogames and the Practice of Play" – Stephanie Boluk & Patrick LeMieux • Let's Play(?): *LSD: Revamped* by Figglewatts Project #2 DUE (End of Week)

Week 6: Sept 30	Contesting Play
	• "Critical Computer Games" – Mary Flanagan
	• "No Fun" – Bo Ruberg
	• Let's Play: "Serious" Games
	    ○ *Monuments to Guilt* by louis
	    ○ *We Become What We Behold* by Nicky Case
	    ○ *The Tea Shelf* by K-Ramstack
	Project 3 introduced

Week 7: Oct 7	Negotiating Play • "Gaining Advantage" – Mia Consalvo • "Coding Meritocracy" – Christopher A. Paul • "A Practiced Practice" – Rainforest Scully-Blaker • Let's Play: Blood on the Clocktower Project #3 DUE(end of week)
Part 2: Game Studies Studies Games	
Week 8: Oct 14	The Long Game – Pokémon • "Panic Attacks" – Christine Yano • "It's a Pokémon World" – Jason Bainbridge • "Pokémon Go: Globalization" – Randy Nichols • Choose Your Pokémon ○ Any will do, but for easy access, Pokémon Go, Pokémon Pocket, or Pokémon Showdown. Project #4 introduced
Week 9: Oct 21	The Toxic Game – Esports (*LoL, Overwatch II,* etc.) • "Toxic Behaviors in Esports Games" - Sonam Adinolf and Selen Türkay • "The Hegemony of Play" – Fron et al. • "Of Dickwolves and Killjoys" – Amanda Phillips
Week 10: Oct 28	The Industry Game – Roblox • "Precarious Playbour" – Julian Kücklich • "Investigation: How Roblox is Exploiting Young Game Developers" – People Make Games • "The Videogame Industry Does Not Exist" (Introduction) – Brendan Keogh • Project 4 DUE (end of week)
Week 11: Nov 4	The Dead Game – Flash • "Growing Old on Newgrounds" – Mikhail Fiadotau • "The Game Availability Study" – Video Game History Foundation Project #5 introduced

Week 12: Nov 11	The Neverending Game – Dungeons & Dragons
	• From *Fifty Years of Dungeons & Dragons*
	    o "You're Going to be Amazing"
	    o "Forging Family"
	    o "Hack the Orcs, Loot the Tomb, and Take the Land"
	    o "Soft Communities and Vicarious Deviance"

Week 13: Nov 18	The Next Game - ??? • Who knows what the future holds? Final Project Overview Project #5 DUE (end of week)
Part 3: Final Project	
Week 14: Nov 25	Fall Break
Week 15: Dec 2	Final Project Workshop Save File Journals DUE (by class start)
Week 16: Dec 9	Bonus Workshop (Optional)
Week 17: Dec 16	Final Project DUE