

ATCM 3366  
Game Studies I  
Summer 2023



# ATCM 3366.0W1 | Game Studies I

## Summer 2023 | Online

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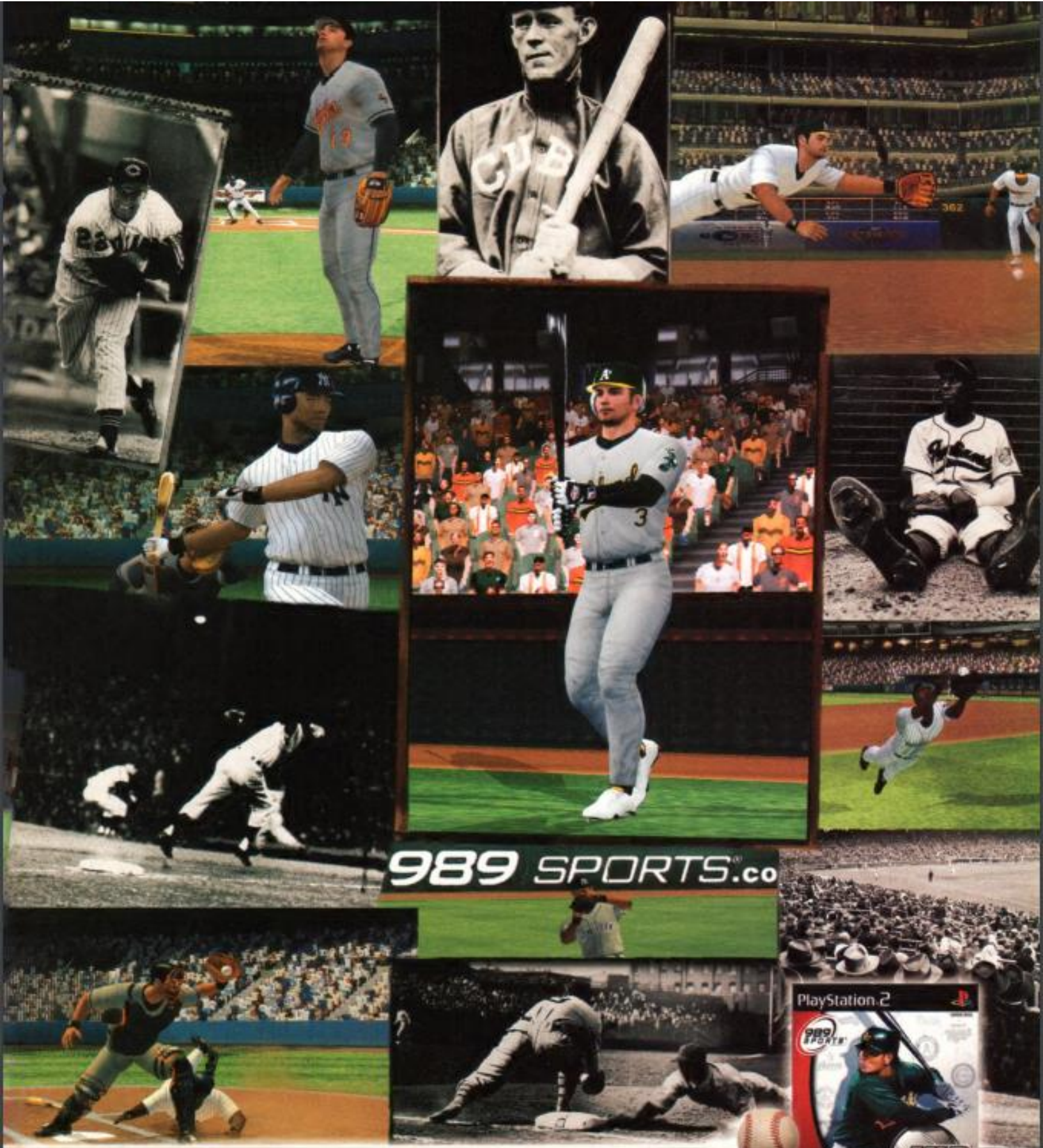
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(The games, not so much)



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PLAY IN OURS.

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# Introduction to Game Studies I

- **What** does it mean to play a game?
- **Can** games play us?
- **How** do games convey meaning?
- **Who** makes games, who plays them, and who is left out?
- **Why** do some gaming spaces encourage toxic behavior?
- **When** does a game become work, and who profits?

**This course is an introduction to basic vocabularies, frameworks, and arguments frequently discussed in game studies.** Together, we will explore how established concepts and arguments about games and play can help us examine and reflect upon our experiences as game watchers/players/makers. At the same time, we will consider how our gameplay experiences can contribute to existing understandings about games and play. By extension, we will practice using these concepts and our experiences as building blocks to analyze the historical, material, and cultural contexts of games as technologies of play.



*A collection of board and card game pieces; Image by Thomas Buchholz @ Unsplash.com*

**To do so, each week we will read texts, watch videos, and/or play games to approach and analyze the phenomena of play, analog and digital gaming cultures, games industries, and more through different thematic lenses.** Through these lenses, we will reflect on and analyze how our gameplay experiences intertwine with and/or interject in existing arguments in the field of game studies. Based on our discussions throughout the semester, students will compose two essays analyzing a game of one's choice through the thematic lenses introduced in our course.

A note on the intention and position of this course in your overall learning trajectory at AHT: **This course is intended to be a companion to Game Design I, as the process and practice of dissecting and analyzing play as situated cultural practice and games as technologies will feed into your ability to become responsible, attentive, and intentional game designers.** At the same time, experience creating games will provide you with the ability to better perceive the logic of specific design choices made within the games discussed throughout this course.

## **Together, we will learn...**

- ...about contemporary discussions about game playing as situated cultural practices from various thematic and theoretical approaches.
- ...how to practice critiquing games and constructing analyses of game playing by situating these technologies and practices within historical, material, and cultural contexts.
- ...to develop analytical writing skills for participating in the collective scholarly study of games and play.



Image  
Source: Clint  
Bustrillos @  
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# Course Expectations

- **We learn from one another;** therefore, your participation in the course is expected and expressed by being familiar with the assigned materials and participating in class discussions.
- **We have limited time to work together as a class;** therefore, your timely completion of all course assignments is expected.
- **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*



*Spyro the Dragon from  
Spyro: Reignited Trilogy*

- **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 was adapted and revised from the 2020 Allied Media Conference Community Agreement<sup>1</sup>, and this community agreement is open to our collective revision as our course unfolds.
  - Take good care of yourself and others you live with outside the bounds of our course. Make sure to nourish yourself with good food and rest frequently as you march on through the semester.
  - Ask questions before assuming. The best way to understand the choices, actions, or intentions of one another is by asking.
  - Default to direct communication with the instructor before a public confrontation with others in the course. For any concerns you've encountered with others in our course, please email me or talk to me before or after class.
  - Please do not screenshot and share anyone's information and contributions to our course discussion outside of class without notification and consent. Stay curious, flexible, and patient as we embark on another semester of learning.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://amc.alliedmedia.org/how-to-virtual-amc/community-agreements>



# Operating Online

As Game Studies I will be hosted online this semester, we must take additional precautions and considerations to ensure a stress-free and conducive space for learning.

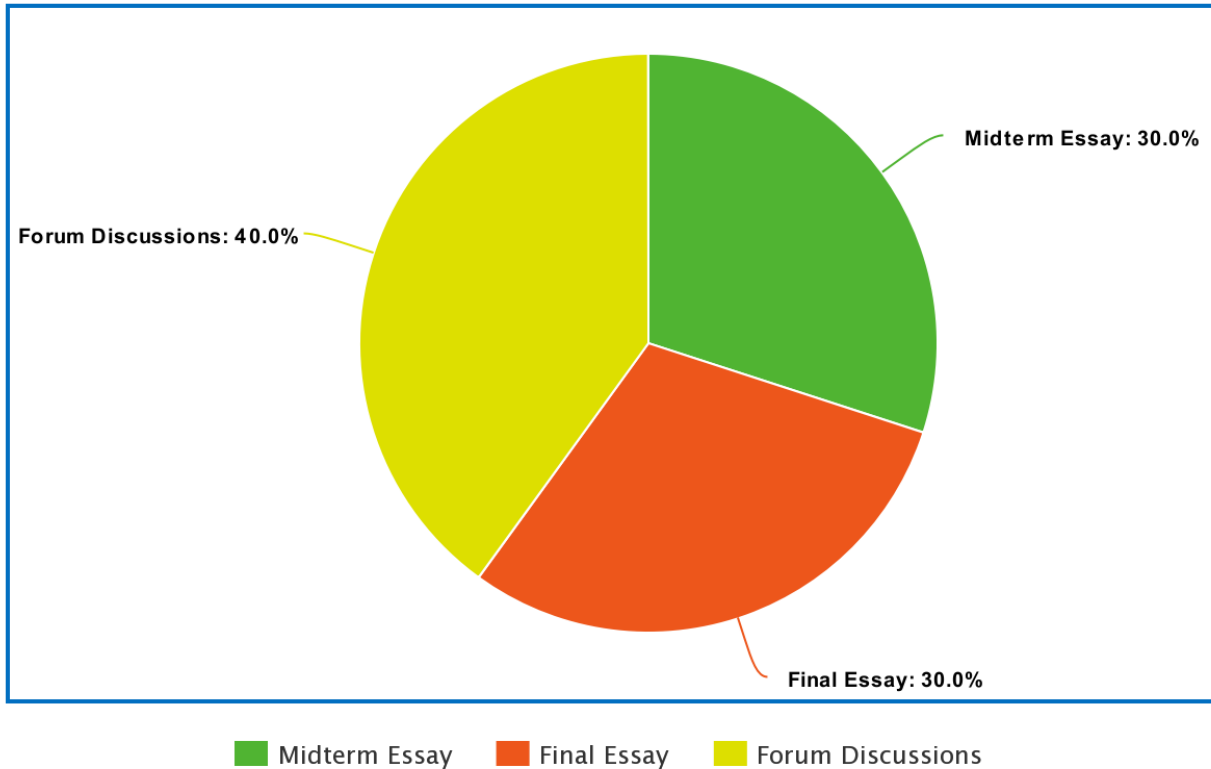
- **This course is designed to embolden your critical thinking skills and apply that knowledge to the games you play every day;** therefore, you will not be asked to download any proctoring software.
- **It can be difficult to keep up with so many new names with only their assignments to relay your personality;** therefore, you will be expected to update your eLearning profile with a picture of yourself, of something that can identify you, or just something that expresses your creative energy (a favorite game character, perhaps).
- **eLearning is not designed to facilitate social interaction;** therefore, you are encouraged to use email or other communication methods to discuss course materials with your peers.
- **With that said, it is easy to forget that there is a person on the other side of the screen;** therefore, you are required to treat one another with respect and care, both on eLearning and through any alternative channels.



*Quadrilateral Cowboy*

# Grading Policy

Your final grade for this class will be based on the following:



meta-chart.com

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

Essays must be submitted by the due date, but I will accept any late submissions within a **24-hour grace period**. After this grace period, no further submissions will be accepted.

Forum Participation will be graded as follows:

- Each forum assignment is worth 5 points.
  - 3 points for the initial post.
  - 1 point each for the replies (max. 2).
  - With 8 total forum assignments, the point maximum is 40.
- Points will be deducted if the post/replies do not meet the minimum word count, exceed the maximum word count, or do not thoroughly engage with the topic.
- Forum posts are due on Wednesdays; Replies are due on Fridays.
- Due to the abridged nature of the summer semester, forum assignments must be completed by their requisite week. Late work will not be accepted after midnight on the Friday of that week. Plan accordingly.

# 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), part of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. 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. They can be contacted by phone at 972-883-2098 or by email at [studentaccess@utdallas.edu](mailto: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 set up a meeting with me to discuss how I can support your learning style. Do not hesitate to reach out 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. Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

## Academic Integrity

Your academic integrity is highly valued, and academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade. Please review and abide by the academic integrity guidelines set by the University of Texas at Dallas: <https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/integrity/>.

In addition, this course's assignments are designed to encourage your own thoughts and ideas. Those found supplementing their work via AI or additional authors will have their work graded accordingly. (Ex. 75% AI = You receive 25% of the total grade.)

*A Non-Player Character from World of Warcraft*



# Schedule

**Note:** This schedule is not final and may change as necessary to meet the needs of the class.

Week	Topic	Readings	Forum
<b>Week 1</b>	Introductions & Information		Introduce Yourself!
<b>Week 2</b>	Play Grounds	Sicart: "Play Is," "Playgrounds"	Playing Around
<b>Week 3</b>	Defining Game	Consalvo: "There Is No Magic Circle"  Molleindustria: "The Definition of Game"	What is a Game?
<b>Week 4</b>	Gaming Values	Flanagan & Nissenbaum: "Game Elements"  <i>Moral Machine</i>  <i>Will You Press the Button?</i>	The Trouble with Trolleys
<b>Week 5</b>	Critical Play	Flanagan: "Introduction to Critical Play"  Selected Examples	More Than Entertainment
<b>Week 6</b>	Midterm		

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Forum</b>
<b>Week 7</b>	Hegemony of Play	Fron et al, "The Hegemony of Play"  <i>GTFO: Get the F**k Out</i>	Toxic Gaming
<b>Week 8</b>	Meritocracy	Paul, "Coding Meritocracy"  <i>State of Play</i>	Winning a Losing Game
<b>Week 9</b>	Representation	Shaw, "Diversity Without Defense"  Narcisse, "The Natural"  <i>Hair Nah</i> by Momo Pixel	Representation Matters.
<b>Week 10</b>	Global Games	Patterson, "Global Game"  Riot Games	Going Global
<b>Week 11</b>	Peer Review		
<b>Week 12</b>	Final Essay		