

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 401.64 (L01): Digital Games

WINTER 2021: January 14-April 15 (excluding Feb. 15-20)

Video Conference: Thursdays 14:00-15:15 PM (Synchronous)

These sessions will be recorded for later review

Lectures will be posted Weekly on Tuesdays check D2L for link

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR WINTER 2021:

This WINTER 2021 course will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please read the outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate at the usual scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time). Synchronous course sessions will normally be hosted on Zoom, a video-conferencing program. To access scheduled Zoom course sessions, go to D2L, click on the COMMUNICATION tab, and select Zoom 5 or 10 minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

If you will not be able to participate in scheduled synchronous class sessions owing to time differences, then you should arrange to take this course when it is offered in person in the future.

Note that the time indicated on course outlines for all timed quizzes and exams in CMCL, COMS, and FILM courses includes 50% extra time to allow for technical difficulties.

Instructor:	Dr. Aiden Buckland
Email:	Aiden.buckland@ucalgary.ca
	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Available for thirty minutes before or after Zoom meetings for face-to-face meetings, responding to email weekdays at 9am within 48 hours

Course Description

Explores the emerging area of digital game studies as it relates to the field of communication. The course will introduce students to the emerging approaches to studying digital and video gaming cultures currently being used by game studies scholars. We will explore the contexts in which these approaches arose, identify their major strengths and weaknesses, and consider how game studies engages the social world through research on video gaming culture. Areas to be covered include: history of video gaming, meaning making in games, games and narrative, player communities, networked gaming, the embodiment of gaming, gaming and identity, the political economy of video gaming and challenges of game design.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline and on D2L. Readings and lectures will be provided in advance for asynchronous consumption. Students are expected to have completed all readings or lectures for a given week before the synchronous Zoom session.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Some of the materials and topics presented in class may include explicit sexual or violent content and course language. If these materials make you uncomfortable, you are encouraged to speak with the professor. You will not be exempt from any assigned work but we will work together to accommodate your concerns. This class respects difference and diversity while welcoming thoughtful, critical discussions about mass mediated representations and discourses. Responsibility for attending and fulfilling the requirements for all aspects of this course resides with the student.

Objectives of the Course

Through readings, lectures, discussions and additional materials, by the end of the course students should be able to

- Identify major themes in the area of digital gaming research
- Produce well-reasoned written work based on digital gaming research methods
- Understand the contributions of the various approaches to digital game studies and situate them within the broader field communication.

Textbooks and Readings

All reading material will be available through U of C library website.

Learning Technologies and Requirements & Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

This is an online course. In order to complete online (or blended) courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone. If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact the university's IT department. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Instructors may arrange to record synchronous zoom class sessions for lesson capture; however, students are not to share recordings with others. Please carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
20%	Participation- Students will be assessed based on their contributions to both synchronous Zoom meetings and asynchronous discussion forums. Contributions add to the discussion, raise interesting questions or present well-supported claims that further our understanding of the course material. Participation in both synchronous and asynchronous activities is required to excel in this assignment.	Ongoing
15%	Case study presentations- Student will present an example or analysis of a concept or reading relevant to a particular week's material. Presentations will take place during weekly Zoom meetings and should not exceed five minutes. Presentation slides are not required for this presentation, but any visual aids you feel are necessary for your presentation will be accepted. Sign up will be available in the first week.	Sign-up Week 1
20%	Reader response discussion- Students will be expected to contribute three 150-250 word contributions to the class blog, as well as six comments on the work of their classmates. A posting schedule can be found at the end of this document and further details about expectations will be posted on the blog and handed out during the first week of class.	Wednesdays 9 am
30%	Digital Gaming Content Analysis or Autoethnography Paper: Using a digital game that you have access to, you will choose a game (console or computer) and provide a thorough analysis of the text utilizing approaches that have been covered in the course (content analysis or ethnography). The instructor will approve your choice of game after your proposal has been graded. If you are having trouble finding a game to study please email me and we will find a reasonable subject for your analysis. Your finished product will be a report detailing your analysis of the game or of your own play. The paper should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced not including works cited or title page. You will be required to do research beyond the parameters of the course material. Further details about how to conduct your research will be provided in class.	Proposal 5% Due Feb 23 Paper 25% Due March 17 th
15%	Final Exam The exam will consist of a combination of short and long answer questions and will cover material from the entire course. The exam is a take-home exam and you can use any material you have gathered for the course in the construction of your answers. Students will be expected to synthesize and apply what they've learned from the course to this final assignment. The exam will be distributed during the March 25 th synchronous meeting. You are free to discuss your answers with your peers, at your discretion, but submissions will be graded individually.	Due April 20

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: You must complete all assignments and exams or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments electronically by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox (unless instructed otherwise in the assignment guidelines). Include your name and ID number on all assignments. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted

assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Arrangements for extended submission dates will only be entertained before the assignment due date.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, *grades will be reported in percentages based on the CMF grade scale included below.*

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://success.ucalgary.ca/home.htm>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

The only accepted research subject for this course are videogame texts or your own play. Interviews with other people, surveys or other research that would include human participants (other than yourself) are beyond the scope of this course.

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Week 1: Introduction to the field (Jan 11-17th)

Zoom Meeting Jan 14th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Jan 11, best before Jan 14th

Required Reading:

Roig, A., San Cornelio, G., Ardāvol, E., Alsina, P., & Pagās, R. (2009). Videogame as Media Practice: An Exploration of the Intersections Between Play and Audiovisual Culture. *Convergence*, 15(1), 89–103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856508097019>

Carter, M., Gibbs, M., & Harrop, M. (2012). Metagames, paragames and orthogames. *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games - FDG '12*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2282338.2282346>

Williams, D., & Williams, D. (2006). Gamers Don't Bowl Alone. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412005281774>

Week 2: History of gaming (Jan 18-24th)

Zoom Meeting Jan 21st, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Jan 11, best before Jan 21st

Required Reading:

Picard, M. (2013) The Foundation of Geemu: A Brief History of Early Japanese video games. *Game Studies*, 13(2)

Trammell, A., & Sinnreich, A. (2014). Visualizing Game Studies : Materiality and Sociality from Chessboard to Circuit Board, 1(1), 1–11.

Week 3: The gaming industries (Jan 25-31st)

Zoom Meeting Jan 28th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Jan 18th, best before Jan 28th

Dyer-witford, N. (2004). Mapping the Canadian Video and Computer Game Industry. *Business*.

Parker, F. & Jenson, J. (2017), Canadian Indie Games Between the Global and the Local. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 4(5) (2017)

Week 4: Gaming Aesthetics (Feb 1-7)

Zoom Meeting Feb 4th, 14:00-15:15

Asynchronous Content available Jan 25th, best before Feb 3rd

Required Reading:

Giddings, S., & Kennedy, H. W. (2008). Little jesuses and fuck- off robots: on aesthetics, cybernetics, and not being very good at Lego Star Wars. In: Swalwell, M. and Wilson, J., eds. (2008). *The Pleasures of Computer Gaming: Essays on Cultural History, Theory and Aesthetics*, 13–32. Retrieved from <http://eprints/uwe.ac.uk/8360>

Taylor, T. L. (2009). The assemblage of play. *Games and Culture*, 4(4), 331–339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/155541200934357>

Week 5: Gaming Research methods (Feb 8-14th)

Zoom Meeting Feb 11th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Feb 1st, best before Feb 11th

Required Reading:

Consalvo, M., & Dutton, N. (2006). Game analysis : Developing a methodological toolkit for the qualitative study of games. *Game Studies*, 6(1), 1–15.

Boellstorff, T, Nardi, B, Pearce, C & Taylor, T. L. (2012) *Ethnography and virtual worlds: a handbook of method*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Read Chapter 2: Three Brief Histories

Full text available through the library website

Reading Week Feb 14-20th

Week 6: Gaming and Narrative (Feb 22-28)

Zoom Meeting Feb 25th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Feb 8th, best before Feb 24th

Digital gaming paper proposal Due Feb 23rd

Required Reading:

Bizzocchi, J. (n.d.). Games and Narrative: An Analytical Framework, *Loading... The journal of the Canadian Game Studies Association* 1(1), 1–10.

Franco, G. E. (2016). Videogames as a Therapeutic Tool in the Context of Narrative Therapy. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 7(1657). doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01657

Week 7: Gaming and rhetoric (March 1-7)

Zoom Meeting March 4th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Feb 15th, best before March 3rd

Required Reading:

Grimes, S. M., & Feenberg, A. (2009). Rationalizing play: A critical theory of digital gaming. *Information Society*, 25(2), 105–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972240802701643>

Harper, T. (2011). Rules Rhetoric and Genre : Procedural Rhetoric in Persona 3. *Games and Culture* 6(5) pp. 395-415 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412011402675>

Week 8: Serious Games (March 8-14th)

Zoom Meeting March 11th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Feb 22th, best before Mar 10th

Required Reading:

Deterding, S., Sicart, M., Nacke, L., O'Hara, K., & Dixon, D. (2011). Gamification. using game-design elements in non-gaming contexts. *Proceedings of the 2011 annual conference extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems - CHIEA '11*, 2425. doi:10.1145/1979742.1979575

Seixas, R., Sandro, A., & Jos, I. (2016). Effectiveness of gamification in the engagement of students *Computers in Human Behavior*, 58, 48–63.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.11.021>

Week 9: Gaming and education (March 15-21st)

Zoom Meeting March 18th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available March 1st, best before Mar 17th

Digital Gaming Paper Due March 15th

Required Reading:

Kafai, Y. B. (2006). Playing and making games for learning: Instructionist and constructionist perspectives for game studies. *Games and Culture*, 1(1), 36–40.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412005281767>

Squire, K. D., DeVane, B., & Durga, S. (2008). Designing centers of expertise for academic learning through video games. *Theory into Practice*, 47(3), 240–251.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840802153973>

Week 10: Serious gamers play and professionalization (March 22-28th)

Zoom Meeting March 25th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available March 8th, best before Mar 24th

Required Reading:

Lowood, H. (2006). High-performance play: The making of machinima. *Journal of Media Practice*, 7(1), 25–42. <https://doi.org/10.1386/jmpr.7.1.25/1>

Witkowski, E. (2012). On the digital playing field: How we “do sport” with networked computer games. *Games and Culture*, 7(5), 349–374.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412012454222>

Week 11: Gaming as media participation (March 29-April 4th)

Zoom Meeting April 1st, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Mar 15th, best before Mar 30th

Required Reading:

Carpentier, N. (2016). Beyond the ladder of participation: An analytical toolkit for the critical analysis of participatory media processes. *Javnost*, 23(1), 70–88.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2016.1149760>

Livingstone, S. (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies. *Communication Review*, 7(1), 3–14.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420490280152>

Week 12: Gaming and representation (April 5-11)

Zoom Meeting April 8th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Mar 22nd, best before Apr 7th

Required Reading:

Kafai, Y. B., Cook, M. S., & Fields, D. A. (2010). “Blacks deserve bodies too!”: Design and discussion about diversity and race in a tween virtual world. *Games and Culture*, 5(1), 43–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412009351261>

Stang, S., & Trammell, A. (2020). The Ludic Bestiary : Misogynistic Tropes of Female Monstrosity in Dungeons & Dragons, 15(6), 730–747.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019850059>

Week 13: Gaming and socialization (April 12-18)

Zoom Meeting April 15th, 14:00-15:15 (MST)

Asynchronous Content available Mar 29th, best before Apr 14th

Final Exam Due April 20th

Required Reading:

Chee, F. (Simon F. U. (2006). The games we play online and offline: Making Wang-tta in Korea. *Popular Communication*, 4(3), 225–239.
<https://doi.org/10.1207/s15405710pc0403>

Chess, S., & Shaw, A. (2015). A Conspiracy of Fishes, or , How We Learned to Stop Worrying About # GamerGate and Embrace Hegemonic Masculinity, 59(1), 208–220.
<http://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2014.999917>

Reader Response Schedule

Due date	Topic	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3
13-Jan	Week 1: Introduction to the field	Introduction		Introduction		Introduction
20-Jan	Week 2: History of gaming	Contribution		Break		Break
27-Jan	Week 3: The gaming industries	Break		Contribution		Comment
03-Feb	Week 4: Gaming Aesthetics	Comment		Break		Contribution
10-Feb	Week 5: Gaming Research methods	Bonus		Bonus		Bonus

24-Feb	Week 6 Gaming and narrative	Contribution		Comment		Break
03-Mar	Week 7: Gaming and rhetoric	Break		Comment		Contribution
10-Mar	Week 8: Serious Games	Comment		Contribution		Break
17-Mar	Week 9: Gaming and education	Contribution		Break		Comment
24-Mar	Week 10: Serious gamers play and professionalization	Break		Comment		Contribution
30-Mar	Week 11: Gaming as media participation	Comment		Contribution		Break
07-Apr	Week 12: Gaming and representation	Break		Break		Comment
14-Apr	Week 13: Gaming and socialization	Bonus		Bonus		Bonus