



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

QUEER THEORY & VIDEO GAMES			
Course Number	ENGL 426	Winter 2021	
Faculty / Department	Faculty of Arts / Department of English		
Instructor Name	Dr. Derritt Mason (he/him)	Email	derritt.mason@ucalgary.ca
Instructor Email Policy	Please note that all course communications must occur through your @ucalgary email. I answer email during regular business hours: Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm. Please allow up to 48 hours for a response.		
Office Location	Zoom	Telephone No:	N/A
Office Hours	Tuesdays, 1:30-2:30pm (on Zoom)		
Class Dates/Times/Location	Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11am-12:15pm (on Zoom)		

Course Description:

As Naomi Clark explains in “What *Is* Queerness in Games, Anyway?”: “Games, much like queers, have a long history of being maligned and regarded as frivolous, jejune, or degenerate.” Such resonances have enabled a recent explosion of theoretical work at the intersections of queer theory and gaming, as well as projects like the LGBTQ Game Archive and the Queerness and Games Conference (QGCON), which attracts scholars, gamers, and creators from around the world. Moreover, queer indie game designers like Anna Anthropy and Robert Yang continue to provide gamers and queer theorists with fodder for both play and analysis.

This class will explore a range of recent queer theoretical perspectives on video games, in addition to various manifestations of queerness in games themselves. The class consists of six modules, each of which explores a specific aspect of queerness and games: (1) definitions and core concepts of queer video game studies; (2) indie games and queer game history; (3) intersections of queerness and Indigeneity; (4) the (queer) art of failure; (5) queer space and time, and (6) the queer future of video games.

This course will take place **online** via Desire2Learn (D2L) and Zoom. To best succeed in the course, you are encouraged to participate in the asynchronous learning tasks using the D2L learning environments, and synchronous sessions on Zoom.

Synchronous sessions will be held on **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays** from **11am-12:15pm MST**. The class will be divided in two, and each half will be assigned to **one** weekly synchronous session.

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

1. Define and describe various critical concepts associated with queer theory and video game studies
2. Describe and discuss the different ways theorists imagine the queerness of video games (e.g. queer representation vs. queer gameplay)
3. Apply queer video game theory to analyses of a range of video games
4. Describe and discuss the influence of queer and Indigenous epistemologies on game design
5. Develop and create a term project (game, "Let's Play" video, or essay) that applies and synthesizes course concepts and theories

Primary Texts:

1. Anthropy, Anna. *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters*. Seven Stories Press, 2012.
2. Ruberg, Bonnie. *Video Games Have Always Been Queer*. NYU Press, 2019. (also available via the UCalgary library catalogue)

*** Additional readings will be made available online via D2L. This class will also require the purchase of several games, ranging in price from approx. \$0-15, and all of which are available on a variety of platforms including home consoles, Windows/macOS, iOS/Android, and Steam for Mac and PC. Students should ensure they have access to at least one system capable of running the assigned games. Please see the reading schedule for more information.**

Learning Technologies and Requirements:

There is a D2L site for this course that contains required readings and other relevant class resources and materials (please see d2l.ucalgary.ca).

In order to successfully engage in learning experiences at the University of Calgary, students taking online, remote and blended courses 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;
- A current and updated web browser;
- Webcam (built-in or external);
- Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone;
- Current antivirus and/or firewall software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone.

Assignments and Evaluation (detailed instructions to be distributed separately):

Sidequests (30%, 4 x 7.5%, approx. 500-750 words each)

Using Microsoft Sway, you will keep a Quest Log in which you'll track your completion of four sidequests. One of these sidequests (the first) is required; the remaining three can be selected from ten options and submitted at any point during the term prior to **April 9**. These sidequests are an opportunity to pursue your own research interests, and they are intended to help you acquire valuable knowledge (XP!) that will assist with your term project. In your Quest Log, your focus should be on critical, self-reflexive thinking. Although these log entries are not formal essays, you should not simply raise questions, but rather draw thoughtful connections between sidequest content, your term project topic, and/or any relevant course material.

Term Project Proposal & Research Overview (15%, max. 1250 words)

In this assignment, you will propose a term project idea and describe **two peer-reviewed sources** related to this project. This is *not* an annotated bibliography, in which you would focus on summarizing these texts. Instead, I'm asking you to put these sources into conversation with one another, thinking about how they fit (or don't fit) together and shed (or don't shed) new light on your term project topic. What are the key themes and issues described in these sources? Do they seem to agree or disagree with one another? How do they engage (or invite engagement) with your term project topic? Have they altered the way you read and understand this topic? If so, how?

Term Project (40%)

You have three options:

1. **CREATE** a game using software of your choice (e.g. Bitsy, Twine). Then write a short, 750-1000 word overview explaining how the course and your own research influenced your game design.
2. **PLAY** a game of your choice. Record and edit your gameplay to create a 10-15 minute "Let's Play"-style video essay in which you draw on course material and your own research to unpack and analyze the game's queerness. Submit your script/notes along with the video.
3. **WRITE** an essay about queer theory and video games. Kick it old school. Max. 2500 words.

Participation Self-Assessment (15%)

At the end of term, you will assess your own participation in and engagement with the class. Your self-assessment will be based on four factors: what percentage of the course readings you have completed, what percentage of the synchronous sessions you have attended, the level of participation and engagement you've demonstrated in the synchronous sessions, and your participation in any asynchronous discussions.

Assignment Policies:

Because these are difficult times and emergencies can easily arise, you are allowed to turn in any one assignment up to two days late. However, you do need to let me know you are taking the extension at least 24 hours before the original due date. Otherwise, late assignments will result in a 5% grade deduction for every day late. You cannot split up the extension and use it for more than one assignment.

There will be no assignments given for extra credit. Students must complete the term project in order to qualify for a passing grade in this course.

There is no final exam in this course. All assignments will be submitted online via D2L. Assignments submitted via email will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

Conduct:

When participating in class, please keep in mind that we all bring a diversity of knowledge, lived experiences, and blind spots to the table. Engaging in lively discussion and debate is one of the most rewarding parts of the university experience; please remain collegial at all times when interacting with your fellow students and instructors, even if you find yourselves disagreeing. Racist, sexist, homo/queer/transphobic, or otherwise inflammatory remarks will not be tolerated in the classroom.

Students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment. As members of the University community, students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Internet and Email Use:

Students are responsible for being aware of the University's Internet and email use policy, which can be found <https://ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-electronic-resources-and-information-policy>

Guidelines for Online Sessions:

Zoom is a video conferencing program that will allow us to meet at specific times for a live video conference, so that we can have the opportunity to gather virtually and discuss relevant course topics as a learning community.

To help ensure sessions are private, please do not share conferencing links or passwords with others, or on any social media platforms. Course links and passwords are only intended for students registered in the class. Zoom recordings and materials presented on Zoom and D2L, including any teaching materials, must not be shared, distributed or published without the instructor's permission.

The use of video conferencing programs relies on participants to act ethically, honestly and with integrity, and in accordance with the principles of fairness, good faith, and respect (as per the [Code of Conduct](#)). When entering video conferencing sessions, you play a role in helping create an effective, safe and respectful learning environment. Please be mindful of how your behaviour in these sessions may affect others. Participants are required to use names officially associated with their UCID (legal or preferred names listed in the Student Centre) when engaging in these activities.

Instructors/moderators can remove those whose names do not appear on class rosters. Non-compliance may be investigated under relevant University of Calgary conduct policies (e.g. [Student Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#)). If participants have difficulties complying with this requirement, they should email the instructor of the class explaining why, so the instructor may consider whether to grant an exception, and on what terms. For more information on how to get the most out of your Zoom sessions visit: <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/guidelines-for-zoom/>.

Please be prepared, as best as you are able, to join class in a quiet space that will allow you to be fully present and engaged in Zoom sessions. Students will be advised by their instructor when they are expected to turn on their webcam (for group work, presentations, etc.).

The instructor may record online class sessions for the purposes of supporting student learning in this class – such as making the recording available for review of the session or for students who miss a session. Students will be advised before the instructor initiates a recording of a Zoom session. These recordings will be used to support student learning only and will not be shared or used for any other purpose.

Grading System:

In this course, assignments will receive a numerical grade, to be converted using the following scale:

90 + %	A+	4.0
85 – 89 %	A	4.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7
67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
64 – 66 %	C	2.0
60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
50 – 54 %	D	1.0
0 – 49 %	F	0

Please note that, according to the University Calendar (F.1), instructors may use their discretion when rounding upwards or downwards when the average of term work and exams is between two letter grades. **My policy: I round grades upwards if they are within 0.50% of a higher grade. Please do not contact me to request an adjustment to your final grade unless (1) you suspect I have made an error, or (2) you are planning to formally appeal your results.**

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the 4-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

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 possible suspension or expulsion from the university.

“Plagiarism” occurs when a Student presents the ideas, expression of ideas or work of another individual as the Student’s own. Work may include algorithms, code, composition, data, methods, design, formulae, images, indigenous oral teachings, art and ceremonies, organization of ideas, and scientific and mathematical concepts.

<https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-academic-misconduct-policy.pdf>

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events

<http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>.

Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/english>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. **Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version.** For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support:

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Library and Research Support:

Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: maboym@ucalgary.ca.

Find The English Pages research guide here:

https://library.ucalgary.ca/sb.php?subject_id=52619

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:



Academic regulations and schedules:

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/welcome.html>

Grade appeals:

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152 or email adveng@ucalgary.ca. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Student Accommodations:**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

The student accommodation policy can be found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-1.html>

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6.html>

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available

at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-2.html>

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students' Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at

ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at

<http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

***RESEARCH ETHICS (if applicable)**

If a student is interested in undertaking an assignment that will involve collecting information from members of the public, they should speak with the course instructor and consult the CFREB Ethics (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/researchers/ethics-compliance/cfreb>) before beginning the assignment.

***INSTRUCTOR'S INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

Course materials created by instructors (including 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 course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

***FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY**

Student information will be collected in accordance with typical (or usual) classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

***COPYRIGHT LEGISLATION**

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright-policy.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 unauthorised 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 <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>.

***MEDIA RECORDING (if applicable)**

Please refer to the following statement on media recording of students: https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Media-Recording-in-Learning-Environments-OSP_FINAL.pdf

***Media recording for lesson capture**

The instructor may use media recordings to capture the delivery of a lecture. These recordings are intended to be used for lecture capture only and will not be used for any other purpose. Although the recording device will be fixed on the Instructor, in the event that incidental student participation is recorded, the instructor will ensure that any identifiable content (video or audio) is masked, or will seek consent to include the identifiable student content to making the content available on University approved platforms.

***Media recording for self-assessment of teaching practices**

The instructor may use media recordings as a tool for self-assessment of their teaching practices. Although the recording device will be fixed on the instructor, it is possible that student participation in the course may be inadvertently captured. These recordings will be used for instructor self-assessment only and will not be used for any other purpose.

***Media recording for the assessment of student learning**

The instructor may use media recordings as part of the assessment of students. This may include but is not limited to classroom discussions, presentations, clinical practice, or skills testing that occur during the course. These recordings will be used for student assessment purposes only and will not be shared or used for any other purpose.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY

The University recognizes that all members of the University Community should be able to learn, work, teach and live in an environment where they are free from harassment, discrimination, and violence. The University of Calgary's sexual violence policy guides us in how we respond to incidents of sexual violence, including supports available to those who have experienced or witnessed sexual violence, or those who are alleged to have committed sexual violence. It provides clear response procedures and timelines, defines complex concepts, and addresses incidents that occur off-campus in certain circumstances. Please see the policy available at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/sexual-violence-policy.pdf>

***OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Please visit the Registrar's website at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for additional important information on the following:

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success
- Student Ombuds Office
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference – please participate in USRI Surveys."

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:
 - a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
 - b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
 - c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
 - d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of documentation be provided. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar

“The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, . . . , to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community”. The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a “positive and productive learning and working environment.” This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that “seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff”. Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.