Term Information

Effective Term   Summer 2022
Previous Value   *Autumn 2022*

Course Change Information

What change is being proposed? (If more than one, what changes are being proposed?)

Add the option to teach the course on a distance learning model.

What is the rationale for the proposed change(s)?

We have reviewed our curriculum and think that this is a course that students would appreciate a DL version of and that the material is particularly well suited

for a DL learning environment.

What are the programmatic implications of the proposed change(s)?

(e.g. program requirements to be added or removed, changes to be made in available resources, effect on other programs that use the course)?

We anticipate no programmatic implications for this change.

Is approval of the request contingent upon the approval of other course or curricular program request? No

Is this a request to withdraw the course? No

General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area   Philosophy
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org   Philosophy - D0575
College/Academic Group   Arts and Sciences
Level/Career   Undergraduate
Course Number/Catalog   2455
Course Title   Philosophy and Videogames
Transcript Abbreviation   Philo & Videogames
Course Description   Examination of the philosophical issues that accompany the creation, play, and critique of videogames.
Semester Credit Hours/Units   Fixed: 3

Offering Information

Length Of Course   14 Week, 12 Week, 8 Week, 7 Week, 6 Week, 4 Week
Flexibly Scheduled Course   Never
Does any section of this course have a distance   Yes
education component?
Is any section of the course offered   100% at a distance
Previous Value   *No*
Grading Basis   Letter Grade
Repeatable   No
Course Components   Lecture
Grade Roster Component   Lecture
Credit Available by Exam   No
Admission Condition Course   No
Off Campus   Never
Campus of Offering   Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark, Wooster

Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites
Exclusions
Electronically Enforced   No

Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings

Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code   38.0101
Subsidy Level   Baccalaureate Course
Intended Rank   Freshman, Sophomore

Requirement/Elective Designation

General Education course:

   Visual and Performing Arts; Culture and Ideas; Literary, Visual and Performing Arts; Historical and Cultural Studies
The course is an elective (for this or other units) or is a service course for other units

Course Details

Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes	• Cultures and Ideas: Students analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression.
	• Cultures and Ideas: Students evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.
	• Visual and Performing Arts: Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.
	• Visual and Performing Arts: Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.
Content Topic List	• The Nature of Games
	• Videogames as Art
	• Morality and Videogames
Sought Concurrence *Previous Value*	No

Attachments

• PHILOS 2455 asc_distance_approval_cover_sheet FINAL.pdf: ASC Tech Cover Sheet

   (Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Shuster,Amy Lynne)

• PHILOS 2455 in person Syllabus 2017.docx: In Person syllabus

   (Syllabus. Owner: Shuster,Amy Lynne)

• PHILOS 2455 in asc_DL_syllabus_template.docx: DL syllabus

   (Syllabus. Owner: Shuster,Amy Lynne)

Comments

Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Shuster,Amy Lynne	12/20/2021 11:47 AM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Lin,Eden	12/20/2021 03:24 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal	01/06/2022 02:23 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Cody,Emily Kathryn Jenkins,Mary Ellen Bigler Hanlin,Deborah Kay Hilty,Michael Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal Steele,Rachel Lea	01/06/2022 02:23 PM	ASCCAO Approval

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

SYLLABUS
PHILOS/2455

Philosophy and Videogames
Fall 2022 (full term)
3 credit hours
Distance Learning with synchronous meetings: [days and times here]

COURSE OVERVIEW

Instructor

Instructor: TBA

Email address: (preferred contact method)

Phone number:

Office hours:

Prerequisites

None.

Course description

In this course, students explore the philosophical issues that accompany the creation, play, and critique of videogames through the tools provided by analytic philosophy. What are videogames? How, if at all, do videogames fit into the larger art world? How do the interactive and play elements of videogames impact answers to these questions? How do videogames impact society, especially the culture of violence? Students will develop and evaluate their own answers to these questions in light of arguments offered by a diverse range of scholarly viewpoints and their own lived experience playing videogames.

Course learning outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
- use concepts and arguments from analytic philosophy and their own lived experience to explain what videogames are;

- identify, think about, and develop in writing a scholarly position about the aesthetic and moral qualities of videogames; and
- take up their own position in a scholarly conversation about how videogames fit into a larger world.

General education goals and expected learning outcomes

As part of the **Cultures and Ideas** category of the General Education curriculum, this course is designed to prepare students to be able to evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression.
2. evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

How this course cultivates these outcomes: Since the creation of *Tennis for Two* on an oscilloscope in 1958, widely considered the first videogame, games have become a multi-*billion* dollar industry. Moreover, videogames sit at the intersection of numerous social practices, including art, entertainment, design, technology, games and sport, among others. These two features establish videogames as a significant cultural phenomenon. Through reading and discussing the assigned material and completing the assignments, students will analyze and interpret both videogames and scholarly thought about videogames as well as evaluate the impact of videogames on individuals and society, especially the culture of violence.

As part of the **Visual and Performing Arts** category of the General Education curriculum, this course is designed to prepare students to be able to evaluate significant works of art in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.
2. engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.

How this course cultivates these outcomes: During class discussions of assigned material and in their written assignments, students develop arguments about whether and how videogames are a form of art in light of scholarly debate on this topic. In these venues, students also attend to the aesthetic qualities of videogames, and how design choices impact these qualities. Finally, in playing and critically reflecting upon videogames in light of the assigned scholarship in class discussion and their formal writing, students observe these qualities in action in order to develop informed interpretations of their meaning and impact.

Finally, this course is designed in light of the goals the **Literary**, **Visual and Performing Arts** category of the General Education curriculum, which include:

- Successful students will analyze, interpret and evaluate major forms of human thought, cultures and expression, and demonstrate capacities for aesthetic and culturally informed understanding.

- Successful students will experience the arts and reflect on that experience critically and creatively.

Successful students are able to:

1.1 Analyze and interpret significant works of visual, spatial, literary and/or performing arts and design.

1.2 Describe and explain how cultures identify, evaluate, shape and value works of literature, art and design.

1.3 Evaluate how artistic ideas influence and shape human beliefs and the interactions between the arts and human perceptions and behavior.

1.4 Evaluate social and ethical implications in literature, visual and performing arts, and design.

2.1 Engage in informed observation and/or active participation within the visual, spatial, literary, or performing arts and design.

2.2 Critically reflect on and share their own experience of observing or engaging in the visual, spatial, literary, or performing arts and design.

How this course cultivates these outcomes: Through reading and discussing the assigned material and completing the assignments (which include formal and informal writing as well as playing videogames), students will analyze and interpret both videogames and scholarly thought about videogames as well as evaluate the impact of videogames on individuals and society, especially the culture of violence. In playing and critically reflecting upon videogames in light of the assigned scholarship in class discussion and in writing, students observe these qualities in action in order to develop informed interpretations of their meaning and impact.

HOW THIS ONLINE COURSE WORKS

Mode of delivery: This course is 100% online. You will find a sequence of materials and activities each week in Carmen, and we will meet for a Zoom session during our scheduled class meeting times. These class sessions will not be recorded because the interactive nature of the class does not support asynchronous participation.

Pace of online activities: This course is divided into **weekly modules** that are released one week ahead of time. Students are expected to keep pace with weekly deadlines but may schedule their efforts freely within that time frame.

Credit hours and work expectations: This is a **3-credit-hour course**. According to Ohio State policy (go.osu.edu/credithours), students should expect around 3 hours per week of time spent on direct instruction (instructor content and Carmen activities, for example) in addition to 6 hours of homework (reading and assignment preparation, for example) to receive a grade of (C) average.

Attendance and participation requirements: Because this is an online course, your attendance is based on your online activity and participation. The following is a summary of students' expected participation:

- **Zoom sessions twice a week**: **REQUIRED**

Students should plan to attend all scheduled class sessions for the course synchronously. Connect via this Zoom Meeting ID: INSERT HERE and Password: INSERT HERE. A page in Carmen provides the full Zoom invitation details; and an initial module includes a link to this page.

- **Participating in online activities for attendance**: **AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK**
  You are expected to log in to the course in Carmen every week. (During most weeks you will probably log in many times.) If you have a situation that might cause you to miss an entire week of class, discuss it with me *as soon as possible.*
- **Instructor office hours on Zoom**: **OPTIONAL**
  You are encouraged to note my office hours in your weekly schedule and attend as you have questions, but these sessions are optional.
- **Participating in Zoom chat**: **2+ TIMES PER WEEK**
  As part of your participation, each week you can expect to post at least twice as part of our substantive class discussion on the week's topics. Many of these posts will occur during a synchronous class meeting in the Zoom chat feature; some of them will occur on a CarmenCanvas discussion board.

COURSE MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGIES

Textbooks

Required

- Suits, Bernard. *The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia*. 3rd Edition. Broadview Press. 2014.
- Tavinor, Grant. *The Art of Videogames.* Wiley-Blackwell. 2009.
- Cogburn, Jon and Mark Silcox. *Philosophy through Videogames.* Routledge: New York. 2009.

Recommended/optional technology

We will be playing games in this course, all of which will be either freely available online, or accessible for play through the library. However, if you wish to play these games more in depth or at your own leisure, owning at least one (if not more) of the following game systems could be beneficial: PS4, Xbox One, gaming PC.

Course technology

Technology support

For help with your password, university email, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the Ohio State IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at ocio.osu.edu/help/hours, and support for urgent issues is available 24/7.

- **Self-Service and Chat support:** ocio.osu.edu/help
- **Phone:** 614-688-4357(HELP)
- **Email:** servicedesk@osu.edu
- **TDD:** 614-688-8743

Technology skills needed for this course

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Carmen (go.osu.edu/canvasstudent)
- CarmenZoom virtual meetings (go.osu.edu/zoom-meetings)
- You are welcome to use the free, Ohio State-themed virtual backgrounds (go.osu.edu/zoom-backgrounds) during CarmenZoom meetings.

Digital Flagship

Digital Flagship is a student success initiative aimed at helping you build digital skills for both college and career. This includes offering an engaging collection of digital tools and supportive learning experiences, university-wide opportunities to learn to code, and a Design Lab to explore digital design and app development. Digital Flagship resources available to help Ohio State students include on-demand tutorials, The Digital Flagship Handbook (your guide for all things tech-related), workshops and events, one-on-one tech consultations with a peer or Digital Flagship staff member, and more. To learn more about how Digital Flagship can help you use technology in your courses and grow your digital skills, visit go.osu.edu/dfresources.

Required equipment

- **Computer**: current Mac (MacOs) or PC (Windows 10) with high-speed internet connection
- **Webcam**: built-in or external webcam, fully installed and tested
- **Microphone**: built-in laptop or tablet mic or external microphone
- **Other**: a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) to use for BuckeyePass authentication

If you do not have access to the technology you need to succeed in this class, review options for technology and internet access at go.osu.edu/student-tech-access.

Required software

- Microsoft Office 365: All Ohio State students are now eligible for free Microsoft Office 365. Full instructions for downloading and installation can be found at go.osu.edu/office365help.

Carmen access

You will need to use BuckeyePass (buckeyepass.osu.edu) multi-factor authentication to access your courses in Carmen. To ensure that you are able to connect to Carmen at all times, it is recommended that you take the following steps:

- Register multiple devices in case something happens to your primary device. Visit the BuckeyePass - Adding a Device help article for step-by-step instructions (go.osu.edu/add-device).
- Request passcodes to keep as a backup authentication option. When you see the Duo login screen on your computer, click **Enter a Passcode** and then click the **Text me new codes** button that appears. This will text you ten passcodes good for 365 days that can each be used once.
- Download the Duo Mobile application (go.osu.edu/install-duo) to all of your registered devices for the ability to generate one-time codes in the event that you lose cell, data, or Wi-Fi service

If none of these options will meet the needs of your situation, you can contact the IT Service Desk at 614-688-4357(HELP) and IT support staff will work out a solution with you.

GRADING AND FACULTY RESPONSE

How your grade is calculated

ASSIGNMENT CATEGORY	POINTS
Reading responses (x4)	20 (5 each)
Games Journal	25
Final Essay	35
Participation	20
Total	**100**

See course schedule below for due dates.

Descriptions of major course assignments

Reading responses

Description: You will write four short (between 400 and 500 word) responses to the assigned reading. Consult the Schedule of Classes for due dates; you will be permitted to turn in one of these within 24 hours *after* synchronous class discussion of the assigned reading, otherwise all responses are due before class begins. These responses will include an explanation of a main idea or argument from the assigned

reading *in your own words as much as possible* (including appropriate in-text citations to the assigned reading), and your genuine question that arises in light of that idea or argument.

Academic integrity and collaboration: Your reading responses should be your own original work. You should follow MLA style to cite the ideas and words of your sources; include citations not only for direct quotations but also paraphrase. You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your response before you turn them in, but no one else should revise or rewrite your work.

Games Journal

Description: You are required to play at least one videogame every week (though you need not complete the game); consult the Schedule of Classes for the specific assignment. You are then to write a brief journal entry (at least 300 words) describing the game and critiquing it in light of ideas and arguments from assigned readings.

Academic integrity and collaboration: Your games journal should be your own original work. You should follow MLA style to cite the ideas and words of your sources; include citations not only for direct quotations but also paraphrase. You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your response before you turn them in, but no one else should revise or rewrite your work. This assignment will be posted on a Carmen discussion board that requires that you post before viewing the work of other students. You are encouraged, but not required, to read the journal entries from other students in order to enrich your sense of how the game in question relates to assigned readings. You are also encouraged to read the journal entries of other students to inform your own future journal entries; if a previous student's entry does wind up informing your own writing, then you should include a citation to or acknowledgment of that student. Standard scholarly practice recognizes the contributions of others to one's own ideas and positions.

Final Essay

Description: You will write 2000-3000 word essay that critically engages with one of the major themes discussed in class. Your essay should discuss at least one videogame not already assigned for class and your argument should include at least one scholarly source that you identified through library research outside of synchronous class meetings. You will turn in a proposal for your essay in week 10 and you will workshop a draft of your essay in 3-4 person writing groups in week 13.

Academic integrity and collaboration: Your final essay should be your own original work. You should follow MLA style to cite the ideas and words of your sources; include citations not only for direct quotations but also paraphrase. You are encouraged to exchange drafts of your essay with classmates and writing tutors to receive *verbal* feedback on its style, structure and content but all revisions and edits to the prose should be your own labor.

Participation

Description: This part of your grade will be determined holistically based on your overall display of engagement in the synchronous class meetings over Zoom. You are expected to attend synchronous

class sessions regularly and actively participate in discussions both in the full class and in breakouts. Your participation will also be determined by informal discussion posts written during or directly after synchronous class meetings. Office hour visits provide another venue for you to engage with the course material.

Academic integrity and collaboration: Your discussion posts should be your own work. Since they are written in the moment, you are not permitted to seek or receive feedback on your posts before submitting them. You are encouraged to read the posts of other students at your leisure, and discuss your posts with the course instructor during office hours and other students outside of synchronous class time.

Late assignments

No make-ups for assignments will be granted without either (1) written (and approved) notice beforehand, or (2) written documentation of emergency after the fact. There will be no exceptions to this policy. Please refer to Carmen for due dates.

Grading scale

93–100:   A
90–92.9:   A-
87–89.9:   B+
83–86.9:   B
80–82.9:   B-
77–79.9:   C+
73–76.9:   C
70–72.9:   C-
67–69.9:   D+
60–66.9:   D

Instructor feedback and response time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call **614-688-4357(HELP)** at any time if you have a technical problem.)

- **Grading and feedback:** For reading responses and games journal assignments, you can generally expect feedback within **7 days**.

- **Email (preferred method of contact):** I will reply to emails within **24 hours on days when class is in session at the university**.

- **Class announcements**: I will send all important class-wide messages through the Announcements tool in CarmenCanvas. Please check your notification preferences to ensure you receive these messages.
- **Discussion board:** I will check and reply to messages in the admin Q&A discussion board **once every 24 hours on week days**.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Discussion and communication guidelines

A significant component of our interactions in this class will occur through Zoom videoconferencing. Because this mode of discussion has benefits and challenges that differ from in-person class sessions, I want to share my expectations for how we will meet and communicate. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Technical Issues**: If you encounter a technical issue with Zoom during a session, first make sure you are using the latest version of Zoom. Next, contact the IT Service Desk at go.osu.edu/it(link is external) or 614-688-4357(HELP). If issues continue, contact me after the session to learn how to make up for the missed content either via a recording or other means. I will not be able to address technical issues during a live session.
- **Preparation:** Come to the session having completed any readings or pre-work and be ready to have open, civil, and supportive discussions in video and chat spaces. I ask that you update your Zoom profile with your preferred name and add a picture with your face.
- **Participation:** At the start of our sessions, I will share specific expectations for how to use the chat, how to interact, and how to raise questions or concerns as we go. If you are unsure about expectations or are unsure about raising a question, please follow up with me afterward to make sure your questions are answered. Plan to be present during the entire class session as much as you are able. For some activities, I may ask you to share your faces on camera so that we can see each other and connect. Please feel encouraged to use a non-distracting virtual background(link is external). Many students and instructors prefer not to share their remote spaces for a variety of reasons. Mute your microphone when others are talking to minimize background noise in the meeting. If you have any concerns about participating in class over Zoom in this way, please let me know. My goal is to create a safe environment where we can benefit from seeing each other and connecting, but I want to prioritize your safety and well-being.
- **Writing style**: While there is no need to participate in class discussions as if you were writing a research paper, you should remember to write using good grammar, spelling, and punctuation. A more conversational tone is fine for non-academic topics.
- **Tone and civility**: Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Remember that sarcasm doesn't always come across online.

- **Citing your sources**: When we have academic discussions, please cite your sources to back up what you say. For the textbook or other course materials, list at least the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.
- **Backing up your work**: Consider composing your academic posts in a word processor, where you can save your work, and then copying into the Carmen discussion.

Academic integrity policy

See **Descriptions of major course assignments**, above, for my specific guidelines about collaboration and academic integrity in the context of this online class.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct **http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/**.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by university rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the university's *Code of Student Conduct* (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the university.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- Committee on Academic Misconduct web page (go.osu.edu/coam)
- Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity (go.osu.edu/ten-suggestions)
- Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity (go.osu.edu/cardinal-rules)

Student Services and Advising

University Student Services can be accessed through BuckeyeLink. More information is available here: https://contactbuckeyelink.osu.edu/

Advising resources for students are available here: http://advising.osu.edu

Copyright for instructional materials

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Statement on Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at http://titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu

Commitment to a diverse and inclusive learning environment

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Office of Institutional Equity:

1. Online reporting form at equity.osu.edu,
2. Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,
3. Or email equity@osu.edu

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Office of Institutional Equity to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.
- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the land that The Ohio State University occupies is the ancestral and contemporary territory of the Shawnee, Potawatomi, Delaware, Miami, Peoria, Seneca, Wyandotte, Ojibwe and Cherokee peoples. Specifically, the university resides on land ceded in the 1795 Treaty of Greeneville and the forced removal of tribes through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. I/We want to honor the resiliency of these tribal nations and recognize the historical contexts that has and continues to affect the Indigenous peoples of this land.

More information on OSU's land acknowledgement can be found at: https://mcc.osu.edu/about-us/land-acknowledgement

Your mental health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learn, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. No matter where you are engaged in distance learning, The Ohio State University's Student Life Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) is here to support you. If you find yourself feeling isolated, anxious or overwhelmed, on-demand resources are available at go.osu.edu/ccsondemand. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614- 292-5766, and 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. The Ohio State Wellness app is also a great resource available at go.osu.edu/wellnessapp.

ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Requesting accommodations

The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions, please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

Disability Services Contact Information

- Phone: 614-292-3307
- Website: slds.osu.edu
- Email: slds@osu.edu
- In person: Baker Hall 098, 113 W. 12th Avenue

Accessibility of course technology

This online course requires use of CarmenCanvas (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.

- Canvas accessibility (go.osu.edu/canvas-accessibility);
- Streaming audio and video
- CarmenZoom accessibility (go.osu.edu/zoom-accessibility); the course instructor will observe these recommendations for meeting hosts and students are encouraged to review the associated recommendation for meeting attendees;
- Collaborative course tools
- You are welcome to use the free, Ohio State-themed virtual backgrounds (go.osu.edu/zoom-backgrounds) during CarmenZoom meetings.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

 Refer to the Carmen course for up-to-date assignment due dates.

Section 1: Metaphysics & Games
The first section of the course focuses largely on questions of ontology. What is a game? What is a videogame? How important is the dimension of play and interactivity for categorizing such works?

Should so-called "walking simulators" be considered games?

Week 1: *Intro to Philosophy & Games*
Description: Students will learn how to use general philosophical methodology and the Socratic method via Suits' influential discussion and definition of 'game.' Play and discussion will focus on the question, "What is a game?" Students will play *Zork*, a seminal text adventure game, and class time will focus on whether it meets Suits' criteria.
- **READ**: Suits, B. (2014)- Chs. 1-3
- **PLAY:** Zork
- **DUE:** Record your preferred pronunciation of your name in Carmen. Find help on how to use this resource.
- **DUE:** Record a 1-3 minute video on the Intros discussion board where you tell a story about a videogame that you have played. Post a written or video response to at least three videos from other students.

Week 2: *Defining games*
Description: This week focuses on the skills of critical analysis by considering potential objections to Suits' view of games. In particular, we will focus on how well the definition fits into wider beliefs and behavior normally taken towards games. *Frog Fractions*, a faux-educational game, and *Minecraft*, a sandbox building game, will be played as potential counter-examples to Suits' definition.
- **READ**: Suits, B. (2014)- Chs. 4-6
- **PLAY:** Frog Fractions, Minecraft

Week 3: *What are videogames?*
Description: This week focuses on the question of defining videogames as particular instantiations of the broader category of games. Students will learn the philosophical ideas of 'necessary' and 'sufficient' conditions and attempt to apply them in a definition of videogames. *Passage* and *Clicker Heroes* will be played and discussed as indie-games that attempt to push the boundaries of what are considered videogames.
- **READ**: Suits, B. (2014)- Chs. 13-15.
- **READ**: Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 2
- **PLAY:** Passage, Clicker Heroes
- **DUE**: Reading Response 1

Week 4: *Interactivity & play*
Description: This week is devoted to discussing the ideas of 'interactivity' and 'play' that are sometimes forwarded as necessary conditions for videogames. *The Witness* is a first-person puzzle game whose themes exemplify the role of the player and interaction with one's environment as a key component of narrative, within the game but in larger reality as well. *999* is an example of a 'visual novel' game, where interactivity is minimized in game mechanics.
- **READ**: Frasca, G. (2003)- 'Simulation vs Narrative: Introduction to Ludology'
- **READ**: Smuts, A. (2009)- 'What is interactivity?'
- **READ**: Meskin, A. (2016)- 'Videogames as self-involving interactive fictions'
- **PLAY:** The Witness, 999

Section 2: Art & Games

Commented [SA1]: https://teaching.resources.osu.edu/toolsets/carmencanvas/guides/namecoach-instructors

The second section of the course turns from considering videogames as games, to considering them as works of art. We will focus on the relationship between videogames and the larger art world. Are videogames a kind of art? If so, what kind? How can a game be art? Are videogames interactive fictional stories, or something more? Answering these questions involves exploring the relationship between narratives on the one hand, and interactivity and play on the other. To that end, we will also discuss the impact of so-called "ludonarrative dissonance," when game mechanics conflict with the narrative of the game, and how such dissonance influences both game design as well as interpretation of the game itself.

<u>Week 5:</u> *Are videogames art?*
Description: This week students will evaluate how traditional definitions of art can or cannot accommodate videogames. Playing *Braid* will highlight the difficulty of categorizing videogames according to Kendall Walton's traditional criteria due to its genre-crossing mechanics and subversive story. *Journey* is a 3D platformer game held up as an early champion of videogames-as-art. The potential legal and social impact of categorizing videogames as art will also be explored.
- **READ**: Walton, K. (1970)- 'Categories of art'
- **READ**: Smuts, A. (2005)- 'Are video games art?'
- **READ**: Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 9
- **PLAY:** Braid, Journey

<u>Week 6:</u> *Interactivity & Art*
Description: Continuing the discussion of art, this week focuses on the interactive component of videogames and its role in helping or hindering narrative goals of the designer. *Pac-man*, the first mainstream game to use in-game cut-scenes, will be played to highlight early attempts to infuse videogames with greater narrative. *Beginner's Guide* tells the story of a video game designer struggling to communicate his goals through an interactive medium.
- **READ**: Cogburn & Silcox (2009)- Ch. 5 'The Metaphysics of Interactive Art'
- **READ**: Preston, D. (2014)- 'Some ontology of interactive art'
- **READ**: Tavinor, G. (2009)- Chs. 4-5
- **PLAY:** Pac-Man, Beginner's Guide
- **IN-CLASS**: Mid-semester evaluation
- **DUE**: Reading Response 2

<u>Week 7:</u> *Ludonarrative dissonance*
Description: This week focuses on the difficulty of balancing game mechanics with narrative goals. Discussion will focus on videogames where the game mechanics conflict with narrative goals. *Bioshock* will be played as a potential example of ludonarrative dissonance. *Little Big Planet, Super Mario Maker,* and *Project Spark* are games that allow students to design levels themselves and discover the difficulties of telling compelling stories through limited game mechanics.
- **READ**: Hocking, C. (2007)- 'Ludonarrative dissonance in Bioshock'
- **READ**: Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 6
- **PLAY:** Bioshock, Little Big Planet OR Super Mario Maker OR Project Spark

Section 3: Morality & Games
The third section of the course focuses on the moral issues that arise in playing videogames. Do videogames increase violent tendencies in players? Is it wrong to perform (otherwise) morally atrocious

acts in a virtual setting? Does playing and enjoying violent and morally questionable games reflect something about one's character? How should we think about the morality of representations of sex and violence (among others) when "it's just a game, it's not real"? How can we resolve the "gamer's dilemma," wherein people tend to judge violent video games such as *Mortal Kombat* morally acceptable, but find games based around sexual assault, such as the infamous *RapeLay,* morally repugnant?

Week 8: *Do videogames make us violent?*
Description: This week focuses on the potential ethical ramifications of playing violent videogames; in particular, we will discuss the possibility that increased virtual violence and aggression could lead to increased real world violence and aggression. *Mortal Kombat* and *Doom*, early examples of videogames cited as contributing to real world violence, will be played, as well as *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. The impact of this violence on players will be discussed.
- **READ**: Cogburn & Silcox (2009)- Ch. 3 ''Realistic Blood and Gore': Do violent games make violent gamers?'
- **READ**: Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 8
- **WATCH:** how to find sources on JStor video posted to this week's module in CarmenCanvas.
- **PLAY:** Mortal Kombat, Doom, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

Week 9: *The Gamer's Dilemma*
Description: This week focuses on the possibility that playing video games depicting morally repugnant acts could be intrinsically morally wrong, independent of further real world consequences. *Tomb Raider* will be played for its depiction of violence towards a female protagonist. This will also prepare for the following week's discussion of sex and gender ethics.
- **READ**: Luck, M. (2009)- The Gamer's Dilemma
- **READ**: Bartel, C. (2012)- 'Resolving the Gamer's Dilemma'
- **READ**: Patridge, S. (2013)- 'Pornography, ethics, and videogames'
- **PLAY:** Tomb Raider
- **DUE**: Reading Response 3

Week 10: *Sex and Gender Ethics*
Description: This week focuses on the representation of sex and gender in videogames. Videogames have historically been criticized for objectifying women, playing to the male gaze, and poorly representing diverse sexual orientations. The potential negative impacts of these depictions will be discussed, and *Gone Home* will be played and discussed for its representation of contemporary homosexual relationships.
- **READ**: Patridge, S. (2011)- 'The incorrigible social meaning of video games imagery'
- **READ**: Belamire, J. (2016)- 'My first virtual reality groping'
- **READ**: MacCallum-Stewart, E. (2014)- 'Take that bitches! Reconfiguring Lara Croft in feminist game narratives'
- **PLAY:** Gone Home
- **DUE:** final essay proposal.

Section 4: Philosophy & Games
The final section of the course uses videogames as a springboard to critically engage with broader philosophical problems. For example, questions of personal identity and self-identification are wide

ranging philosophical problems, but they arise in a particularly peculiar fashion when thinking about the relationship between a player and her in game avatar. MMOs like *World of Warcraft*, *The Old Republic*, and even *Second Life* allow players to live out virtual lives that are extremely different from those they live in the real world. What impact does this have on our views of personal identity? Games such as *Half-Life 2* include complex AIs with which players can interact. Can the design of such characters tell us anything about the plausibility of computational theories of mind? Why do we feel such intense emotions when consuming art, even when we know that it isn't real? What is free will? Do we have it? Do we perform free (or less free) actions when acting within the constraints of a videogame?

Week 11: *Emotions & Art*
Description: This week discusses how and why it is that we have deep emotional responses to fictional entities. The role that such emotional attachment plays in creating a meaningful artistic experience will be analyzed. Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons will be played for its use of unique game mechanics to heighten emotional investment in the work.
- **READ**: Walton, K. (1978)- 'Fearing fictions'
- **READ**: Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 7
- **READ**: Gendler, T. (2000)- 'The puzzle of imaginative resistance'
- **PLAY:** Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons

Week 12: *Free Will*
Description: This week will discuss arguments regarding what is necessary for free will and moral responsibility. These arguments will be explored in two ways through videogames: first, as a recurring theme in the stories of videogames such as *Undertale*, and second, through choice mechanics in games like *The Stanley Parable*.
- **READ**: Pink, T. (2004)- Excerpts from 'Free Will: A very short introduction'
- **READ**: Bartel, C. (2015). 'Free will and moral responsibility in video games'
- **PLAY:** Undertale, The Stanley Parable
- Reading Response Essay 4 Due

Week 13: *Philosophy of Mind*
Description: This week evaluates the extent to which in game AIs can illuminate questions in the philosophy of mind. Computational theories of mind draw on principles used in the creation of AI characters such as Alyx Vance and Trico, who accompany and interact with the player in *Half-Life 2* and *The Last Guardian*, respectively.
- **READ**: Cogburn & Silcox (2009)- Ch. 2 'The game inside the mind, the mind inside the game'; Ch. 6 'Artificial and human intelligence'
- **PLAY:** Half-Life 2, The Last Guardian
- **DUE:** bring a draft of your final essay to class for writing group workshops.

Week 14: *Personal Identity*
Description: This week focuses on problems of identity raised by the possibility of virtual avatars. Massively multiplayer online (MMO) games allow the player to create a virtual identity and interact with others, reflecting values very different from those the player hold in the real world. Theories that expand the concept of self to accommodate virtual identities will be discussed, and students will create and play their own online avatars to illustrate the problems discussed this week.
- **READ**: Cogburn & Silcox (2009)- Ch. 1 'I, Player: The Puzzle of Personal Identity'

- **READ**: Maile, A. (2015)- 'Personal identity in a Second Life'
- **PLAY**: FTP MMO (WOW, DC Universe Online, Second Life, The Old Republic, etc.)

Final Exams:
- **DUE**: Final Essay at Registrar scheduled exam time, upload to Carmen > Assignments.

PHILOS 2455- Philosophy and Videogames
The Ohio State University,
Autumn 2017

Instructor
Andrew Kissel
214 University Hall
kissel.23@osu.edu

   Since the creation of *Tennis for Two* on an oscilloscope in 1958, widely considered the first videogame, games have become a multi-*billion* dollar industry and a genuine cultural phenomenon. Videogames sit at the intersection of numerous categories: art, entertainment, design, technology, and games and sport, among others. The philosophical problems they give rise to thus have an impact on numerous domains.

   In this course, students will explore the philosophical issues that accompany the creation, play, and critique of videogames through the tools provided by analytic philosophy. They will learn and analyze theories about what games are. They will think about and discuss the aesthetic qualities of videogames and critically engage with attempts to fit videogames into the larger art world, focusing particularly on the unique interactive and play elements of videogames. Some of the games played will allow students to put these lessons into practice in the context of designing in-game levels. Students will engage with moral issues that arise from creating and consuming violent and morally problematic videogames, and discuss the potential impact these forms of expression can have on society. Finally, students will learn how to think critically about and interpret larger philosophical problems raised by videogames and their themes. The diverse viewpoints represented in the readings and games played will challenge students to evaluate their own views towards videogames as well as the larger metaphysical, ethical, and other philosophical issues raised by videogames.

   The course will explore these issues by reading selections from three main texts, as well as a diverse collection of articles and papers. Active engagement with and reflection upon specific games throughout the course will highlight and challenge the points made in our readings. The games played in this course include classic examples from history that have pushed the medium forward, as well as significant modern works. Firsthand experience of games is a must in order to fully appreciate their significance and the philosophical problems they give rise to. Weekly games journals and a final paper will develop students' abilities to write about and critically reflect upon their experiences while participating in videogame play.

GE Information
PHILOS 2455 satisfies the GE *Cultures and Ideas* requirements.
Goals: Students evaluate cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation.

Expected Learning Outcomes:
1. Students analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression
2. Students evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

PHILOS 2455 satisfies the GE *Visual and Performing Arts* requirements.

Goals: Students evaluate significant works of art in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience.

Expected Learning Outcomes:
1. Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.
2. Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.

Textbooks and Materials
- Required
  - Suits, Bernard. *The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia*. 3rd Edition. Broadview Press. 2014.
  - Tavinor, Grant. *The Art of Videogames*. Wiley-Blackwell. 2009.
  - Cogburn, Jon and Mark Silcox. *Philosophy through Videogames*. Routledge: New York. 2009.
- Suggested
  - We will be playing games in this course, all of which will be either freely available online, or accessible for play through the library. However, if you wish to play these games more in depth or at your own leisure, owning at least one (if not more) of the following game systems could be beneficial: PS4, Xbox One, gaming PC.

Requirements & Expectations
- It is expected that students do all reading prior to each class and come prepared to discuss the readings. Part of learning philosophy is learning how to discuss positions coherently.
  - I understand that speaking up in class is more difficult for some people than for others, so I think it is important to provide alternative ways for engaging with the material. If you speak less in class, than I will expect more visits during office hours and more discussion posts from you.
- I expect students to play the assigned videogames and complete all assignments pertaining to them.
- I expect students to attend class regularly. I have a policy of not sharing my own notes with students, so if you miss class, it will be expected that you talk to one of your colleagues about any material you missed.
- Here's what you can expect from me:
  - I will make myself as available as possible to help you with the material. I am always happy to discuss any material during my office hours; please come with questions.
  - I will do my best to grade and return assignments in a timely manner (generally, about a week)
  - I will maintain open lines of communication via email and Canvas to inform you

of any changes to the course material in a timely manner.

Grading Criteria
- *4 Reading Response Essays (5% each; 20% Total)*
  During the semester you will write four short essays (between 400 and 500 words) responding to an article we have read for class.
- *Games Journal (25%):*
  You are required to play at least one videogame every week (though you need not complete the game). You are then to write a brief journal entry (around 300 words) describing the game and critiquing it, with an eye to the themes discussed in that week's readings.
- *Final Paper (35%):*
  You must complete a final paper of 4-7 pages that critically engages with one of the major themes discussed in class. The paper should draw on additional outside research and involve discussion of at least one videogame not already assigned for class.
- *Participation (20%)*:
  This part of your grade will be determined holistically based on your overall display of engagement with the course. You are expected to attend class regularly and actively participate in discussions. Optional discussion posts and office hour visits provide other venues for participation.

Grading Policy
Grades will be determined based only on factors internal to the course, i.e. the above criteria. Factors external to the course—i.e. GPA requirements for scholarships, law school applications, considerations of GE credits, and the like—*cannot* and *will not* be considered when determining grades. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

Attendance Policy
Attendance will be taken by a sign in sheet at the beginning of each class and saved on the Canvas Roll Call system. Students receive 3 free absences, NO QUESTIONS ASKED, without penalty. Absences in addition to these 3 will be penalized, as per the Roll Call system, as a fraction of the total number of classes.

Policy on Make-Ups
No make-ups for assignments will be granted without either (1) written (and approved) notice beforehand, or (2) written documentation of emergency after the fact. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

Disability Services
Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone

614- 292-3307, slds@osu.edu; slds.osu.edu

Statement on Academic Misconduct
It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct: http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/

Statements on Sexual Misconduct/ Relationship Violence and Diversity
This class will deal with a variety of philosophical, ethical, and social issues. Discussion of such issues can sometimes lead to tension. Students are expected to remain respectful, civil, and open minded throughout all of these discussions. The following policies are affirmed by The Ohio State University as well as the Department of Philosophy and should be kept in mind at all times:

- Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at http://titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu
- The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

Tentative Schedule
The following is a *tentative* schedule of topics and important dates. Any part of this schedule is subject to change for any reason, though if any of the paper dates are changed, you will be notified sufficiently ahead of time. More detailed information pertaining to the readings will be provided as we go

Section 1: Metaphysics & Games
The first section of the course focuses largely on questions of ontology. What is a game? What

is a videogame? How important is the dimension of play and interactivity for categorizing such works? Should so-called "walking simulators" be considered games?

Week 1: *Intro to Philosophy & Games*
- Suits, B. (2014)- Chs. 1-3
- **PLAY:** Zork

Description: Students will learn how to use general philosophical methodology and the Socratic method via Suits' influential discussion and definition of 'game.' Play and discussion will focus on the question, "What is a game?" Students will play *Zork*, a seminal text adventure game, and class time will focus on whether it meets Suits' criteria.

Week 2: *Defining games*
- Suits, B. (2014)- Chs. 4-6
- **PLAY:** Frog Fractions, Minecraft

Description: This week focuses on the skills of critical analysis by considering potential objections to Suits' view of games. In particular, we will focus on how well the definition fits into wider beliefs and behavior normally taken towards games. *Frog Fractions*, a faux-educational game, and *Minecraft*, a sandbox building game, will be played as potential counter-examples to Suits' definition.

Week 3: *What are videogames?*
- Suits, B. (2014)- Chs. 13-15
- Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 2
- **PLAY:** Passage, Clicker Heroes
- Reading Response Essay 1 Due

Description: This week focuses on the question of defining videogames as particular instantiations of the broader category of games. Students will learn the philosophical ideas of 'necessary' and 'sufficient' conditions and attempt to apply them in a definition of videogames. *Passage* and *Clicker Heroes* will be played and discussed as indie-games that attempt to push the boundaries of what are considered videogames.

Week 4: *Interactivity & play*
- Frasca, G. (2003)- 'Simulation vs Narrative: Introduction to Ludology'
- Smuts, A. (2009)- 'What is interactivity?'
- Meskin, A. (2016)- 'Videogames as self-involving interactive fictions'
- **PLAY:** The Witness, 999

Description: This week is devoted to discussing the ideas of 'interactivity' and 'play' that are sometimes forwarded as necessary conditions for videogames. *The Witness* is a first-person puzzle game whose themes exemplify the role of the player and interaction with one's environment as a key component of narrative, within the game but in larger reality as well. *999* is an example of a 'visual novel' game, where interactivity is minimized in game mechanics.

Section 2: Art & Games
The second section of the course turns from considering videogames as games, to considering them as works of art. We will focus on the relationship between videogames and the larger art world. Are videogames a kind of art? If so, what kind? How can a game be art? Are

videogames interactive fictional stories, or something more? Answering these questions involves exploring the relationship between narratives on the one hand, and interactivity and play on the other. To that end, we will also discuss the impact of so-called "ludonarrative dissonance," when game mechanics conflict with the narrative of the game, and how such dissonance influences both game design as well as interpretation of the game itself.

Week 5: *Are videogames art?*
- Walton, K. (1970)- 'Categories of art'
- Smuts, A. (2005)- 'Are video games art?'
- Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 9
- **PLAY:** Braid, Journey

Description: This week students will evaluate how traditional definitions of art can or cannot accommodate videogames. Playing *Braid* will highlight the difficulty of categorizing videogames according to Kendall Walton's traditional criteria due to its genre-crossing mechanics and subversive story. *Journey* is a 3D platformer game held up as an early champion of videogames-as-art. The potential legal and social impact of categorizing videogames as art will also be explored.

Week 6: *Interactivity & Art*
- Cogburn & Silcox (2009)- Ch. 5 'The Metaphysics of Interactive Art'
- Preston, D. (2014)- 'Some ontology of interactive art'
- Tavinor, G. (2009)- Chs. 4-5
- **PLAY:** Pac-Man, Beginner's Guide
- Reading Response Essay 2 Due

Description: Continuing the discussion of art, this week focuses on the interactive component of videogames and its role in helping or hindering narrative goals of the designer. *Pac-man*, the first mainstream game to use in-game cut-scenes, will be played to highlight early attempts to infuse videogames with greater narrative. *Beginner's Guide* tells the story of a video game designer struggling to communicate his goals through an interactive medium.

Week 7: *Ludonarrative dissonance*
- Hocking, C. (2007)- 'Ludonarrative dissonance in Bioshock'
- Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 6
- **PLAY:** Bioshock, Little Big Planet OR Super Mario Maker OR Project Spark

Description: This week focuses on the difficulty of balancing game mechanics with narrative goals. Discussion will focus on videogames where the game mechanics conflict with narrative goals. *Bioshock* will be played as a potential example of ludonarrative dissonance. *Little Big Planet, Super Mario Maker,* and *Project Spark* are games that allow students to design levels themselves and discover the difficulties of telling compelling stories through limited game mechanics.

Section 3: Morality & Games
The third section of the course focuses on the moral issues that arise in playing videogames. Do videogames increase violent tendencies in players? Is it wrong to perform (otherwise) morally atrocious acts in a virtual setting? Does playing and enjoying violent and morally questionable games reflect something about one's character? How should we think about the morality of

representations of sex and violence (among others) when "it's just a game, it's not real"? How can we resolve the "gamer's dilemma," wherein people tend to judge violent video games such as *Mortal Kombat* morally acceptable, but find games based around sexual assault, such as the infamous *RapeLay,* morally repugnant?

Week 8: *Do videogames make us violent?*
- Cogburn & Silcox (2009)- Ch. 3 ''Realistic Blood and Gore': Do violent games make violent gamers?'
- Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 8
- **PLAY:** Mortal Kombat, Doom, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

Description: This week focuses on the potential ethical ramifications of playing violent videogames; in particular, we will discuss the possibility that increased virtual violence and aggression could lead to increased real world violence and aggression. *Mortal Kombat* and *Doom*, early examples of videogames cited as contributing to real world violence, will be played, as well as *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. The impact of this violence on players will be discussed.

Week 9: *The Gamer's Dilemma*
- Luck, M. (2009)- The Gamer's Dilemma
- Bartel, C. (2012)- 'Resolving the Gamer's Dilemma'
- Patridge, S. (2013)- 'Pornography, ethics, and videogames'
- **PLAY:** Tomb Raider
- Reading Response Essay 3 Due

Description: This week focuses on the possibility that playing video games depicting morally repugnant acts could be intrinsically morally wrong, independent of further real world consequences. *Tomb Raider* will be played for its depiction of violence towards a female protagonist. This will also prepare for the following week's discussion of sex and gender ethics.

Week 10: *Sex and Gender Ethics*
- Patridge, S. (2011)- 'The incorrigible social meaning of video games imagery'
- Belamire, J. (2016)- 'My first virtual reality groping'
- MacCallum-Stewart, E. (2014)- 'Take that bitches! Reconfiguring Lara Croft in feminist game narratives'
- **PLAY:** Gone Home

Description: This week focuses on the representation of sex and gender in videogames. Videogames have historically been criticized for objectifying women, playing to the male gaze, and poorly representing diverse sexual orientations. The potential negative impacts of these depictions will be discussed, and *Gone Home* will be played and discussed for its representation of contemporary homosexual relationships.

Section 4: Philosophy & Games
The final section of the course uses videogames as a springboard to critically engage with broader philosophical problems. For example, questions of personal identity and self-identification are wide ranging philosophical problems, but they arise in a particularly peculiar fashion when thinking about the relationship between a player and her in game avatar. MMOs like *World of Warcraft*, *The Old Republic*, and even *Second Life* allow players to live out virtual

lives that are extremely different from those they live in the real world. What impact does this have on our views of personal identity? Games such as *Half-Life 2* include complex AIs with which players can interact. Can the design of such characters tell us anything about the plausibility of computational theories of mind? Why do we feel such intense emotions when consuming art, even when we know that it isn't real? What is free will? Do we have it? Do we perform free (or less free) actions when acting within the constraints of a videogame?

Week 11: Emotions & Art
- Walton, K. (1978)- 'Fearing fictions'
- Tavinor, G. (2009)- Ch. 7
- Gendler, T. (2000)- 'The puzzle of imaginative resistance'
- **PLAY:** Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons

Description: This week discusses how and why it is that we have deep emotional responses to fictional entities. The role that such emotional attachment plays in creating a meaningful artistic experience will be analyzed. Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons will be played for its use of unique game mechanics to heighten emotional investment in the work.

Week 12: Free Will
- Pink, T. (2004)- Excerpts from 'Free Will: A very short introduction'
- Bartel, C. (2015). 'Free will and moral responsibility in video games'
- **PLAY:** Undertale, The Stanley Parable
- Reading Response Essay 4 Due

Description: This week will discuss arguments regarding what is necessary for free will and moral responsibility. These arguments will be explored in two ways through videogames: first, as a recurring theme in the stories of videogames such as *Undertale*, and second, through choice mechanics in games like *The Stanley Parable*.

Week 13: Philosophy of Mind
- Cogburn & Silcox (2009)- Ch. 2 'The game inside the mind, the mind inside the game'; Ch. 6 'Artificial and human intelligence'
- **PLAY:** Half-Life 2, The Last Guardian

Description: This week evaluates the extent to which in game AIs can illuminate questions in the philosophy of mind. Computational theories of mind draw on principles used in the creation of AI characters such as Alyx Vance and Trico, who accompany and interact with the player in *Half-Life 2* and *The Last Guardian*, respectively.

Week 14: Personal Identity
- Cogburn & Silcox (2009)- Ch. 1 'I, Player: The Puzzle of Personal Identity'
- Maile, A. (2015)- 'Personal identity in a Second Life'
- **PLAY**: FTP MMO (WOW, DC Universe Online, Second Life, The Old Republic, etc.)

Description: This week focuses on problems of identity raised by the possibility of virtual avatars. Massively multiplayer online (MMO) games allow the player to create a virtual identity and interact with others, reflecting values very different from those the player hold in the real world. Theories that expand the concept of self to accommodate virtual identities will be discussed, and students will create and play their own online avatars to illustrate the problems discussed this week.

*Final Paper due during exam week

Distance Approval Cover Sheet

For Permanent DL/DH Approval | College of Arts and Sciences

> **Course Number and Title:** **PHILOS 2455: Philosophy and Videogames**

Carmen Use

Please consider using ASC's distance learning course template. For more on use of Carmen: https://teaching.resources.osu.edu/teaching-topics/carmen-common-sense-best-practices

> A Carmen site will be created for the course, including a syllabus and gradebook at minimum. YES
>
> If no: Enter additional details if you responded no...

Syllabus

> Proposed syllabus uses the ASC distance learning syllabus template, includes boilerplate language where required, as well as a clear description of the technical and academic support services offered, and how learners can obtain them. YESSelect
>
> Syllabus is consistent and is easy to understand from the student perspective. YESSelect
>
> Syllabus includes a schedule with dates and/or a description of what constitutes the beginning an end of a week or module. YESSelect
>
> If there are required synchronous sessions, the syllabus clearly states when they will happen and how to access them. YESSelect
>
> Additional comments (optional):
> See top of page 4 for reference to Zoom room connection details.

Instructor Presence

For more on instructor presence: https://teaching.resources.osu.edu/teaching-topics/online-instructor-presence

> Students should have opportunities for regular and substantive academic interactions with the course instructor. Some ways to achieve this objective:
>
> ☒ Regular instructor communications with the class via announcements or weekly check-ins
>
> ☒ Instructional content, such as video, audio, or interactive lessons, that is visibly created or mediated by the instructor
>
> ☒ Regular participation in class discussion, such as in Carmen discussions or synchronous sessions
>
> ☒ Regular opportunities for students to receive personal instructor feedback on assignments

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Please comment on this dimension of the proposed course (or select/explain methods above):
Students will meet for synchronous class sessions with instructor and receive feedback on Reading Responses and Games Journal. Students also have the option to attend office hours over Zoom.

Delivery Well-Suited to DL/DH Environment

Technology questions adapted from the Quality Matters rubric. For information about Ohio State learning technologies: https://teaching.resources.osu.edu/toolsets

The tools used in the course support the learning outcomes and competencies. YESSelect

Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning. YESSelect

Technologies required in the course are current and readily obtainable. YESSelect

Links are provided to privacy policies for all external tools required in the course. YESSelect

Additional technology comments:
Students are encouraged to purchase a game console.

Which components of this course are planned for synchronous delivery and which for asynchronous delivery? (For DH, address what is planned for in-person meetings as well.)
Class meetings are synchronous. Class readings and writing assignments will be completed asynchronously.

If you believe further explanation would be helpful, please comment on how course activities have been adjusted for distance learning:
Students will build rapport in initial video introductions due in the first week of the semester. Small groups will meet in breakout groups and work toward completing knowledge checks/applications that will be delivered to course instructor.

Workload Estimation

For more information about calculating online instruction time: ODEE Credit Hour Estimation

Course credit hours align with estimated average weekly time to complete the course successfully. YES Select

Course includes direct (equivalent of "in-class") and indirect (equivalent of "out-of-class") instruction at a ratio of about 1:2. YESSelect

Provide a brief outline of a typical course week, categorizing course activities and estimating the approximate time to complete them or participate:
Students will attend class for three hours, and either complete readings or write for 6 hours.

In the case of course delivery change requests, the course demonstrates comparable rigor in meeting course learning outcomes. YESSelect

Accessibility

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For more information or a further conversation, contact the <u>accessibility coordinator</u> for the College of Arts and Sciences. For tools and training on accessibility: <u>Digital Accessibility Services</u>

Instructor(s) teaching the course will have taken Digital Accessibility training (starting in 2022) and will ensure all course materials and activities meet requirements for diverse learners, including alternate means of accessing course materials when appropriate. YESSelect

Information is provided about the accessibility of all technologies required in the course. All third-party tools (tools without campus-wide license agreements) have their accessibility statements included. YES Select

Description of any anticipated accommodation requests and how they have been/will be addressed. Instructor will turn on Live Transcription in Zoom to support multilingual learners and anyone else who can benefit from it.

Additional comments:
Enter any additional comments about accessibility...

Academic Integrity

For more information: https://go.osu.edu/teaching-resources-academic-integrity

The course syllabus includes online-specific policies about academic integrity, including specific parameters for each major assignment: YESSelect

Assignments are designed to deter cheating and plagiarism and/or course technologies such as online proctoring or plagiarism check or other strategies are in place to deter cheating: YESSelect

Additional comments:
Assignments require original engagement and commentary on personal experience.

Frequent, Varied Assignments/Assessments

For more information: https://teaching.resources.osu.edu/teaching-topics/designing-assessments-student

Student success in online courses is maximized when there are frequent, varied learning activities. Possible approaches:

☒ Opportunities for students to receive course information through a variety of different sources, including indirect sources, such as textbooks and lectures, and direct sources, such as scholarly resources and field observation

☒ Variety of assignment formats to provide students with multiple means of demonstrating learning

☒ Opportunities for students to apply course knowledge and skills to authentic, real-world tasks in assignments

Comment briefly on the frequency and variety of assignment types and assessment approaches used in this course (or select methods above):
Students are assigned to play particular videogames that are excellent examples of the philosophical problems that serve as the focus of each week's readings/theme. This element of the course design offers the opportunity to apply scholarly ideas.

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Community Building

For more information: https://teaching.resources.osu.edu/teaching-topics/student-interaction-online

Students engage more fully in courses when they have an opportunity to interact with their peers and feel they are part of a community of learners. Possible approaches:

☒ Opportunities for students to interact academically with classmates through regular class discussion or group assignments

☒ Opportunities for students to interact socially with classmates, such as through video conference sessions or a course Q&A forum

☒ Attention is paid to other ways to minimize transactional distance (psychological and communicative gaps between students and their peers, instructor, course content, and institution)

Please comment on this dimension of the proposed course (or select methods above):
In the first week of the semester, students complete a video introduction of themselves and comment upon the intros of other students.

Transparency and Metacognitive Explanations

For more information: https://teaching.resources.osu.edu/teaching-topics/supporting-student-learning-your

Students have successful, meaningful experiences when they understand how the components of a course connect together, when they have guidance on how to study, and when they are encouraged to take ownership of their learning. Possible approaches:

☒ Instructor explanations about the learning goals and overall design or organization of the course

☒ Context or rationale to explain the purpose and relevance of major tasks and assignments

☒ Guidance or resources for ancillary skills necessary to complete assignments, such as conducting library research or using technology tools

☒ Opportunities for students to take ownership or leadership in their learning, such as by choosing topics of interest for an assignment or leading a group discussion or meeting

☐ Opportunities for students to reflect on their learning process, including their goals, study strategies, and progress

☒ Opportunities for students to provide feedback on the course

Please comment on this dimension of the proposed course (or select methods above):
Context and rationale for assignments will be supplied on the Carmen site. Asynchronous videos with explanations on how to access core library research for final essay on Carmen site in week 8. Students complete an anonymous mid-semester eval in week 6.

Additional Considerations

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This syllabus includes all required syllabus elements and provides a complete and comprehensive overview of the course expectations.

Syllabus and cover sheet reviewed by ___*Jeremie Smith*___ on 12/20/2021.

Additional resources and examples can be found on ASC's Office of Distance Education website.

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