



CCT270

THE PRINCIPLES OF GAME DESIGN

**CLASS I : COURSE INTRODUCTION,
OVERVIEW AND DEFINITIONS**

**PROFESSOR STEVE SZIGETI
FALL 2025**

AGENDA

- Course Introduction
- Student introductions
- Activity: The Table
- Play and Games
- Activity: Murder Wink
- Next Class

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

- Class starts at 11:10. Don't be late
- Turn off your phone/watch ringer or alert
- Wait for a break to check your email, reply to a text, etc.
- Stay to end of class (2pm)

ABOUT ME

EDUCATION

- PhD, Human Computer Interaction (U of T)
- MIST, LIS Stream, Book History focus (U of T)
- MA, English Literature & Creative Writing (Concordia)
- BA, English Literature & History Specialist (U of T, UTM)

SELECTED WORK EXPERIENCE

- VP, UX and Product Management (Kaypok, Inc)
- Director, TELETOON Interactive
- Consultant (Saloon Media, TVO, zincRoe, Planned Parenthood)

FAVOURITE GAMES

- Spectator Sport: Soccer
- Board Game: Wingspan
- TRPG: Advanced D&D
- Video game (Independent): Balatro
- Video game (AAA): The Last of Us



COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- Contact Information
- Prof. Steve Szigeti: steve.szigeti@utoronto.ca
- TA: Igor Sokolov igor.sokolov@mail.utoronto.ca
- Must use your UTOR account/email to contact either of us
 - Indicate course code (CCT270) and your full name / student number
 - Office hours: by appointment (in person or Zoom)

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- Read the syllabus (our contract)
- Complete readings **before** class
- Academic integrity VERY important

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Academic Integrity

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without permission of instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On quizzes:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
- Looking at someone else's answers during the quiz.
- Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

AI Tools

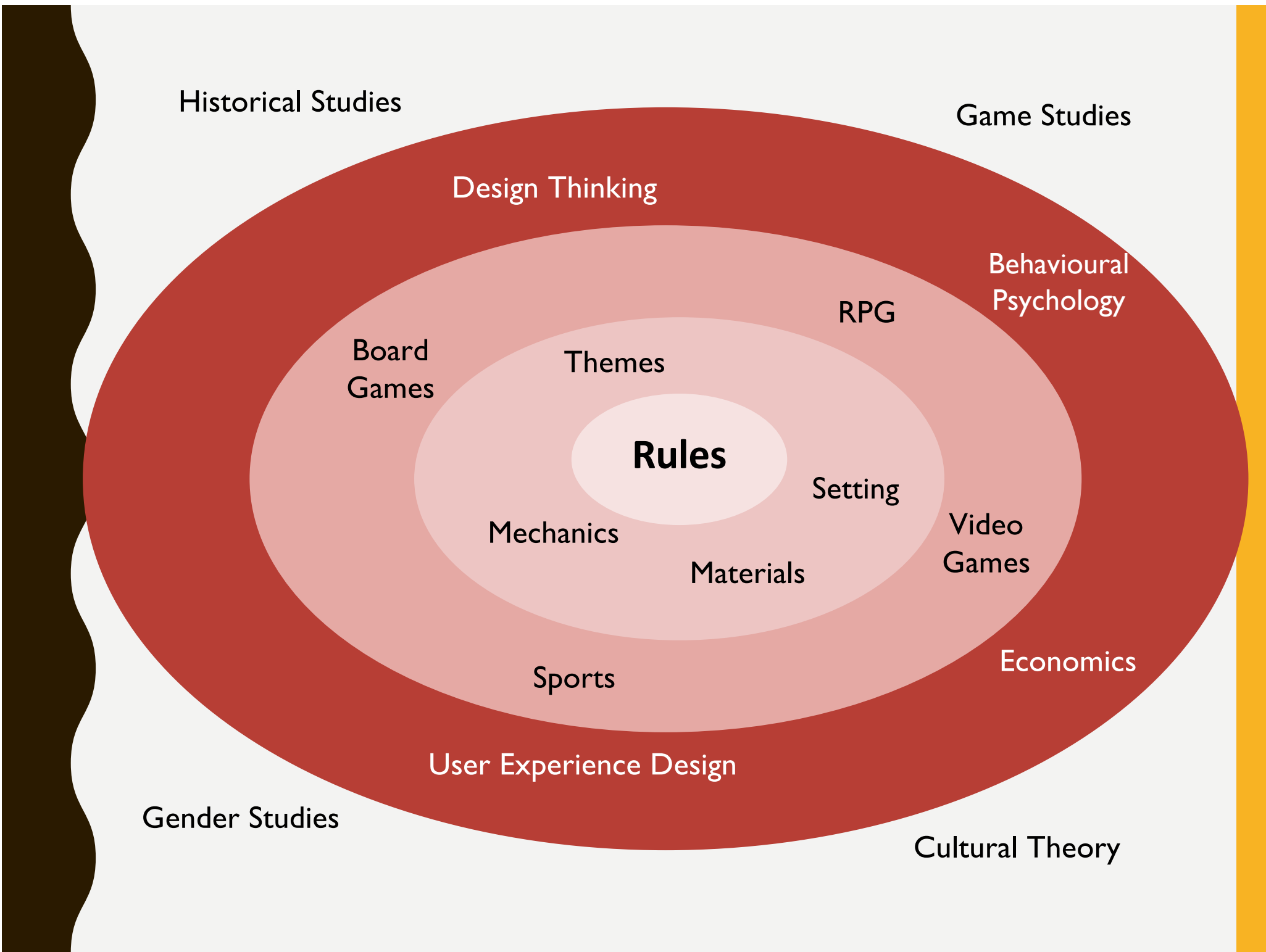
ABOUT YOU

Name

What is your
favourite game?

Why?





ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 2 | History of Games and Play

Required Readings

- Tekinbas, K. S., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). Chapter 22: Defining Play. In Rules of play: game design fundamentals. The MIT Press. pp 465-483
- Williams, A. (2017). Chapter 2: Games as Experiments. In History of Digital Games: Developments in Art, Design and Interaction (1st ed.). Routledge. pp 29-50 <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1201/9781315715377>

Recommended Readings

- Freyermuth, G. S., Czauderna, A., Pozzi, N., & Zimmerman, E. (2015). Games (1st ed.). A Short History. pp 161-164
- Freyermuth, G. S., Czauderna, A., Pozzi, N., & Zimmerman, E. (2015). Games (1st ed.). Games in Modern Era. pp 43-58
- Stahlke, S. & Mirza-Babaei, P. (2022). Chapter 1: Caveman Arcade from The Game Designer's Playbook: An Introduction to Game Interaction Design. Oxford University Press. pp 1-16



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 3 | Rules and Game Mechanics

Guest Lecture: Igor Sokolov

Required reading

- Tekinbas, K. S., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). Chapter 9: The Magic Circle. In Rules of play: game design fundamentals. The MIT Press. pp 118-128
- Tekinbas, K. S., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). Chapter 11: Defining Rules. In Rules of play : game design fundamentals. The MIT Press. pp 176-185
- Tekinbas, K. S., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). Chapter 12: Rules on Three Levels. In Rules of play : game design fundamentals. The MIT Press. pp 187-207
- Tekinbas, K. S., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). Chapter 20: Games as Systems of Conflict. In Rules of play: game design fundamentals. The MIT Press. pp 286-304

Recommended Reading

- Aslam, H., & Brown, J. A. (2020). Chapter 2: Affordance Theory and Game Design. In Affordance theory in game design: a guide toward understanding players. Morgan & Claypool Publishers. pp 21-30
- Tekinbas, K. S., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). Chapter 21: Breaking Rules. In Rules of play: game design fundamentals. The MIT Press. pp 416-446



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 4 | Human Cognition and Behaviour

Required reading

- Hodent, C. (2017). Chapter 2: Overview About the Brain. In *The Gamer's Brain: How Neuroscience and UX Can Impact Video Game Design* (1st ed.). CRC Press. pp 9-18
- Schell, J. (2020). Chapter 11: The player's mind is driven by the players motivation. In *The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses, Third Edition* (3rd ed.). A K Peters/CRC Press. pp 153-163. <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1201/b22101>
- Sylvester, T. (2013). Engines of Experience. In *Designing games: A guide to engineering experiences*. O'Reilly Media, Inc. pp. 7-44



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 5 | Themes, Narrative and Storytelling

Required reading

- Aarseth, E. (2023). Ludology. In Wolf, M.J.P., & Perron, B. (Eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies* (2nd ed.). Routledge. Pp. 255-259.
- Rogers, S. (2014). *Writing the Story from Level Up! The guide to great video game design*. John Wiley & Sons. Pp 43-64.
- Shipp, S. (2024). Chapter 1: What is Theme? from *Thematic Integration in Board Game Design* (1st ed.). CRC Press. Pp 3-10.
- Shipp, S. (2024). Chapter 4: Connecting Story to Gameplay from *Thematic Integration in Board Game Design* (1st ed.). CRC Press. Pp 35-51.
- Skolnick, E. (2014). Chapter 2: The Three-Act Structure from *Video game storytelling : what every developer needs to know about narrative techniques* (1st edition.). Watson-Guptill Publications. Pp 12-26.

Recommended Reading

- Burrill, D.A. (2017). Queer Theory, the Body, and Video Games. In Ruberg, B., & Shaw, A. (Eds.). Queer game studies. University of Minnesota Press. Pp 25-33.
- Shipp, S. (2024). Chapter 7: Fleshing Out Characters from Thematic Integration in Board Game Design (1st ed.). CRC Press. Pp 85-99.
- Skolnick, E. (2014). Chapter 3: The Monomyth from Video game storytelling : what every developer needs to know about narrative techniques (1st edition.). Watson-Guptill Publications. Pp 27-37.



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 6 | Role Playing Games

Guests: UTM Against Dragons

Required reading

- Trammel, A. (2014). Misogyny and the Female Body in Dungeons and Dragons. In *Analogue Game Studies*. Pp 23-33
- White, W.J. et al. (2018). Tabletop Role Playing Games. In Zagal, J.P. and Deterding, S. (2018). Definitions of Role Playing Games. In Deterding, S., & Zagal, J. (Eds.). *Role-Playing Game Studies: Transmedia Foundations* (1st ed.). Routledge. Pp 63-86.
- Wizards of the Coast. (2024). Chapter 1: Playing the Game. From *Dungeons and Dragons Players Handbook*. Wizards of the Coast.
- Zagal, J.P. and Deterding, S. (2018). Definitions of Role Playing Games. In Deterding, S., & Zagal, J. (Eds.). *Role-Playing Game Studies: Transmedia Foundations* (1st ed.). Routledge. Pp 19-51.

Related Readings

- D&D Beyond (2024). D&D Free Rules.
<https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/free-rules>
- Wizards of the Coast (2018). DnD Basic Rules.



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 7 | A brief history of video games

Part 1: Guest Lecture: Prof Michael Nixon

Required reading

- Rogers, S. (2014). A Brief History of Video Games. In Level Up! The guide to great video game design. John Wiley & Sons. Pp 10-17.

Part 2: Guest Lecture: Dr Christopher Young

Required Reading

- University of Toronto Libraries (2024). About the Syd Bolton Collection. Retrieved August 25, 2024 from <https://collections.utm.utoronto.ca/collections/syd-bolton-collection>
- Clarkson, A. (2024). Associative Memories: Syd Bolton's Video Game History (a digital exhibit). Retrieved August 25, 2024 from <https://collections.utm.utoronto.ca/exhibits/associative-memories>

Recommended Readings

- Purdue University (2024). Writing a Museum Catalog. Retrieved August 27, 2024 at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_art_history/museum_catalog.html
- University of Toronto Libraries (2024). Research Guides. Art History. Exhibition Catalogues. Retrieved August 27, 2024 at <https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=251039&p=5168228>



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

**Class 8 | Mid Term and The
Bolton Collection**



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 9 | Application of Design Principles (i): Research

Required Readings

- Annander, M. (2023). Chapter 2: Ideation. In *Game Design Toolbox*. CRC Press. pp 21-47
- Adams, E. (2014). Casual Games. In *Fundamentals of Puzzle and Casual Game Design* (1st edition). New Riders. Access via UTL system: <https://learning-oreilly-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/library/view/fundamentals-of-puzzle/9780133812596/ch03.html#ch03lev1sec2>
- Simon, J. (2023). Free-to-Play. In Wolf, M.J.P., & Perron, B. (Eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies* (2nd ed.). Routledge. pp 71-79
- Stahlke, S. & Mirza-Babaei, P. (2022). Chapter 3: The Long Con from *The Game Designer's Playbook: An Introduction to Game Interaction Design*. Oxford University Press. pp 42-68



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 10 | Application of Design Principles (ii): Brainstorm and prototype

Required Readings

- Fullerton, T. (2019). Chapter 6: Conceptualization. In *Game design workshop a playcentric approach to creating innovative games* (4th ed.). CRC Press. pp 169-201
- Rouse, R. (2023). Game Design. In Wolf, M.J.P., & Perron, B. (Eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies* (2nd ed.). Routledge. pp 71-79
- Schell, J. (2020). Chapter 7: The game begins with an idea. In *The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses*, Third Edition (3rd ed.). A K Peters/CRC Press. pp 73-93
- Sylvester, T. (2013). Planning and Iteration. In *Designing games: A guide to engineering experiences*. O'Reilly Media, Inc. pp 277-309

Recommended Readings

- Annander, M. (2023). Chapter 3: Exploration. In *Game Design Toolbox*. CRC Press. pp 49-75
- Fullerton, T. (2019). Chapter 7: Prototyping. In *Game design workshop a playcentric approach to creating innovative games* (4th ed.). CRC. pp 203-240



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 11 | Application of Design Principles (iii): High Level Design Document and The Pitch

Required reading

- Rogers, S. (2014). You Can Design a Game, but Can You Do the Paperwork? In Level Up! The guide to great video game design. John Wiley & Sons. Pp 65-92.
- Toresson, J. (2024). Game Development: How to Pitch a Game to Publishers and Get Accepted (An Insider's Perspective). Retrieved August 26, 2024 from <https://gamedesignskills.com/gamedevelopment/game-pitch/>



ABOUT THE COURSE: TOPICS

Class 12 | Application of Design Principles (iv): Design Pitch presentations

Required Reading

- Martin, J. (2024). Presenting. In *The ludotronics game design methodology : from first ideas to spectacular pitches and proposals*. CRC Press. pp. 237-242
- Stahlke, S. & Mirza-Babaei, P. (2022). Chapter 12: What Comes Next? from *The Game Designer's Playbook: An Introduction to Game Interaction Design*. Oxford University Press. pp 331-351



EVALUATION

October 24

Mid Term Test.

This test will take place at the start of class. Questions will be related to Required Readings, class lectures and tutorial activities from Class 1 to Class 7 inclusive.

Format: Multiple choice and short answer

Weight: 15% (individual grade)



EVALUATION

November 7

Exhibition Catalogue

To understand the principles of game design, it's important to understand the historical context within which we work. You will research and write an exhibition catalogue that presents an interpretation of games history (~1970-2005) for a public audience, analyzing a selection of games and publications from the Syd Bolton Collection at UTM.

Due: Friday, November 7, 11am (before class)

Format: Written document submitted via Quercus (submitted by one member of the two-person group or pair)

Weight: 20% (in pairs)



EVALUATION

November 10 (Monday)

Game Design Research

Research is critical to the design process. This group assignment will be completed in class and is intended to represent design research conducted prior to ideation and brainstorming

Due: Monday, November 10, Noon

Format: Written document submitted via Quercus
(submitted by one member of the group)

Weight: 5% (group)



EVALUATION

November 28

Game Design Pitch

Your team will need to convince the rest of the class of the game's value. Your pitch should include design highlights and the top three or four things that make this game compelling. Present the game, describe its core gameplay and setting, and explain why it is unique and interesting.

Convince the audience (our class) that this is going to be a great game. Not all members of the group are required to speak, but all members of the group should be available to answer questions. The class will conclude with a confidential vote for the top idea.

Due: Friday, November 28, 11am (during class. We will predetermine presentation order)

Format: Oral presentation

Weight: 10% (group)



EVALUATION

December 1

Game Design Document.

Teams will work together to write a High Level Design Document (HLDD) to communicate an idea for a game. The HLDD needs to reference (i) the intended audience, (ii) prior research summary, (iii) a description of the core concept and core gameplay, (iv) a setting, (v) a brief description of gameplay, and (vi) a callout of the game's innovative and/or unique aspects.

Due: Monday, December 1 (11:59pm)

Format: Written document submitted via Quercus (by one member of the group)

Weight: 25% (group)



EVALUATION

December 2

Engagement, Participation and Peer Evaluation

This grade is determined through a combination of tutorial attendance and participation and the peer review document. Failure to submit the peer review will negatively impact the grade.

Due: Tuesday, December 2 (11:59pm)

Format: Form submitted via Quercus

Weight: 15% (individual grade)



EVALUATION: LATE POLICY

- a penalty for lateness of 10% deducted per day
- work not handed in one week after due date will not be accepted

Special Consideration Requests - Extensions on Assignments

- Complete a "Special Consideration Request" (SCR) form online.
- Please review the ICCIT special consideration request policy here and follow the procedures:
<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/iccit/students/special-consideration-request>





ABOUT YOUR TABLE

The handout has 27 activities

Talk with people at your table
to see who has completed the
activities listed

List their name next to the
activity





GAMES PLAY

DEFINITIONS



PLAY

We have only to watch young dogs to see that all the essentials of human play are present in their merry gambols. They invite one another to play by a certain ceremoniousness of attitude and gesture. They keep to the rule that you shall not bite, or not bite hard, your brother's ear. They pretend to get terribly angry. And—what is most important—in all these doings they plainly experience tremendous fun and enjoyment. Such rompings of young dogs are only one of the simpler forms of animal play. There are other, much more highly developed forms: regular contests and beautiful performances before an admiring public.

“All play means something” Johann Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*

FIRST PLAY...

... then games

- Play is that which takes us out of ourselves: from the ordinary to the extraordinary
- Theatre, ritual, games are all cultural expressions of this impulse
- Play requires...fun. And fun is not necessarily rational.



DEFINING GAMES

A rule-based formal system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable.

- Jesper Juul

DEFINING GAMES

A system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome.

- Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman

DEFINING GAMES

To play a game is to engage in activity directed towards bringing about a specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by rules, where the rules prohibit more efficient in favour of less efficient means, and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity.

Bernard Suits.
The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia.

GOAL



DEFINING GAMES

To play a game is to engage in activity directed towards **bringing about a specific state of affairs**, using only means permitted by rules, where the rules prohibit more efficient in favour of less efficient means, and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity.

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RULES

Bernard Suits.

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GOAL

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RULES

**NATURE
OF
RULES**

Bernard Suits.

The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia.

GOAL

DEFINING GAMES

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The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia.

**NATURE
OF
RULES**

RULES

ATTITUDE

MURDER WINK

Set up

1. select enough cards for the people at your table
2. ensure you have a KILLER and a DETECTIVE card
3. shuffle and distribute cards.
4. Look at your card without showing anyone (be discrete)
5. Person with the **D** is the detective
6. Person with the **K** card is the killer



MURDER WINK

Game Play

7. Person with **D** card let's everyone know they are the detective
8. Person with killer (**K**) card does NOT reveal themselves
9. Everyone looks at each other
10. If the killer winks at you, you must 'act dead' (put your head on the table?).
11. Detective has **two** guesses at who the killer is in the group



MURDER WINK

Rules

- 12. You cannot reveal who "murdered" you or anyone at the table
- 13. You cannot give the detective any hints or clues
- 14. The killer cannot "kill" the detective
- 15. The detective wins if they guess correctly (remember they have two guesses)
- 16. The killer wins if they eliminate all but ONE other player (in addition to the detective – who they cannot kill)



DEFINING GAMES

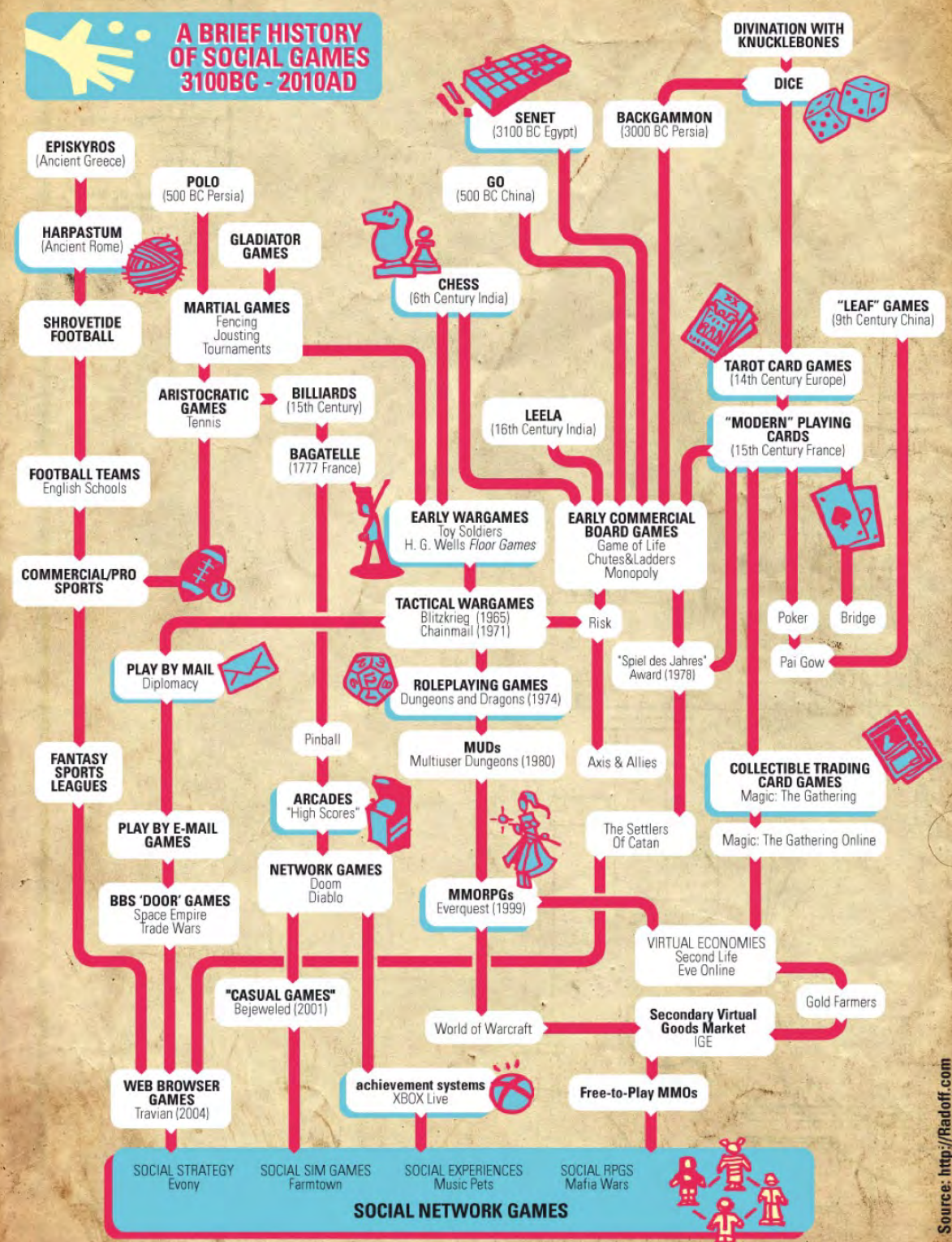
To play a game is to engage in activity directed towards bringing about a specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by rules, where the rules prohibit more efficient in favour of less efficient means, and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity.

Bernard Suits.

The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia.



The Evolution of Games



NEXT CLASS: HISTORY OF GAMES AND PLAY

Required Readings

- Tekinbas, K. S., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). Chapter 22: Defining Play. In Rules of play: game design fundamentals. The MIT Press. pp 465-483
- Williams, A. (2017). Chapter 2: Games as Experiments. In History of Digital Games: Developments in Art, Design and Interaction (1st ed.). Routledge. pp 29-50

Recommended Readings

- Freyermuth, G. S., Czauderna, A., Pozzi, N., & Zimmerman, E. (2015). Games (1st ed.). A Short History. pp 161-164
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- Stahlke, S. & Mirza-Babaei, P. (2022). Chapter 1: Caveman Arcade from The Game Designer's Playbook: An Introduction to Game Interaction Design. Oxford University Press. pp 1-16