

# Course Outline

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<b>Delivery Method</b>	Lecture
<b>Term</b>	Winter 2025
<b>Credit Value</b>	0.50
<b>Meeting Times</b>	Tuesday, 03:10 PM-06:10 PM, Room ONL, Teams (TMS)
<b>Course Dates</b>	January 9–April 9, 2025
<b>Instructors</b>	<a href="https://canvascloud.ocadu.ca/about/sis_user_id:2303451">Andrew Bailey (https://canvascloud.ocadu.ca/about/sis_user_id:2303451)</a> (abailey@ocadu.ca)
<b>Office Hours</b>	On Teams, available by request during the work week (Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm). Please email me at least a day in advance to book an appointment.

## Description

Games studies views games as complex objects, mapping the game 'object', the player 'subject' and the critical dialogue that delimits game space. This course explores games as cultural artifacts, arising from diverse cultural histories, landscapes and geographies, impacting and impacted by sub-cultures. Students will learn to analyse the mechanics, aesthetics and practices of games via varied analytical approaches addressing their textual, performative, socio-cultural, design and political contexts. As well, the course introduces students to tools and techniques to analyze the cultural impact of the videogame. Students with credit in VISM-2B15 may not take this course for credit.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Study, discuss and play a wide range of videogames through the lens of several significant genres and subgenres of game studies scholarship including the status of videogames as art, the structure of game form, the human drive for play, and the videogame industry. Specific examples of videogame art and design practices along with the discussion of a wide variety of recent game studies texts will enable students to understand the different, often overlapping, contexts of videogames within contemporary culture.
2. Engage in an intensive writing schedule that develops the analytical approach necessary to understand the interdisciplinary nature of game studies.

# Required Readings

You do not need to purchase a textbook for this course. All required readings will be freely available to download as PDFs and browser-based ebooks through the OCAD Library website. I will provide direct links to all readings on the Canvas course page. You will need your OCADU login information to access these readings.

# Supplies

Every week, you must select at least one of the two assigned games to play before the start of class. These games will always be freely available to play and, in most cases, available to access on multiple platforms. However, if you do not have access to the game's required platform, there will also be links to relevant gameplay videos to watch as well.

Additionally, for this course's writing assignments, you should, whenever possible, aim to directly play the videogame(s) that you are choosing to discuss and analyze. Any computer, console, mobile, or web-based game is an equally valid topic for these assignments. However, I also realize that videogames can oftentimes be prohibitively expensive, so, if necessary, you can also use Let's Plays, Twitch streams, and video reviews and/or essays as necessary in your research process.

# Student Preparation / Workload Expectations

You can anticipate that studying and completing class will require at a minimum 2–3 hours of time outside of class per week for every hour of in class time per week.

# Teaching & Learning Methods

Every week, our classes will typically adhere to the following structure: I will begin class with a short introduction and go over any significant course housekeeping notes (reminders, updates, deadlines, etc.). Afterward, I will start a lecture section dedicated to reviewing and discussing that week's assigned readings and games. The lecture will also regularly contain external content, such as relevant video essays and quotes from non-assigned readings. Throughout the lecture, there will also be multiple discussion questions posed to the class that are meant as an opportunity to demonstrate your in-class engagement. The lecture will conclude with a brief summary of the following week's class content and reminders about any upcoming assignment deadlines.

Every week, you will be expected to read at least one of the assigned readings, play/watch at least one of the assigned games, write a post in that week's optional Canvas discussion forum, attend and remain engaged during lectures, and work on any upcoming/pending assignments that are due. All class resources will be made available through the Canvas course page. If you have any technical issues accessing any of the course content, please contact me as soon as possible.

# Class Schedule

OCAD U has a twelve-class semester followed by a two-week assessment period for exams and critiques. Students must be available for the duration of this period.

## January 14: What is Game Studies?

- **Optional Readings:**

- Cullen, Amanda L. L., Rainforest Scully-Blaker, Ian R. Larson, Kat Brewster, Ryan Rose Aceae, and William Dunkel. "Game Studies, Futurity, and Necessity (or the Game Studies Regarded as Still to Come)." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 39, no. 3 (2022): 201–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2022.2080845>.

- **Games we will be playing/discussing in class:**

- Barr, Pippin, and Jonathan Lessard. *Game Studies*. Browser. 2016.
- Boluk, Stephanie, and Patrick LeMieux. *Footnotes*. Windows. 2018.

## January 21: Videogames as Games

- Anable, Aubrey. "Games to Fail With." In *Playing with Feelings*, 103–. United States: University of Minnesota Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt20mvgwg.7>
- Paul, Christopher A. 2024. "EA SPORTS FC and NBA 2K." In *Optimizing Play: Why Theorycrafting Breaks Games and How to Fix It*. The MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/15293.003.0008>.

- **Assigned Games:**

- Oy, Hempuli. *Baba is You (Jam Build)*. Hempuli. Browser. 2017.
- Psyonix. *Rocket League*. PC, Mac, Switch, PS4/PS5, Xbox One/Series S/X. Psyonix. 2018

## January 28: Videogames as Texts

- **Assigned Readings:**

- Jagoda, Patrick, and Ashlyn Sparrow. 2024. "The Procedural Unconscious: Video Games and the Nonsynchronous Contemporaneity of Racial Capitalism." *ROMchip* 6 (2). <https://romchip.org/index.php/romchip-journal/article/view/199>.
- Conley, Miyoko. "Romancing the Night Away: Queering Animate Hierarchies in Hatoful Boyfriend and Tusks." In *Made in Asia/America: Why Video Games Were Never (Really) About Us*, edited by Christopher B. Patterson, Tara Fickle, 232-250. Duke University Press. 2024. <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/89736>

- **Assigned Games:**

- Dead Idle Games. *If On A Winter's Night, Four Travelers*. Windows, SteamOS, Linux. Dead Idle Games. 2021.
- Lei, Brianna. *Butterfly Soup*. Windows, Linux, Classic Mac OS. 2017.

## February 4: Videogames as Digital Media

- Fizek, Sonia. "Automated Play." In *Playing at a Distance*, 51–66. The MIT Press. 2022. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/13605.003.0007>.
- Boluk, Stephanie, and Patrick LeMieux. "Hundred Thousand Billion Fingers: Serial Histories of Super Mario Bros." In *Metagaming*, 173–206. United States: University of Minnesota Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt1n2ttjx.7>
- **Assigned Games:**
  - The Elephant Crew. *I Wanna Maker*. Windows. 2023.
  - Lantz, Frank. *Universal Paperclips*. Web browser. 2017

## February 11: Videogames and/as Art

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Blanco-Fernández, Vitor. 2024. "Gaming Identity in Contemporary Queer Art: The works of Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley and Lu Yang." *Hipertext.net*, (29), 75-87. <https://doi.org/10.31009/hipertext.net.2024.i29.06>
  - Barr, Pippin. "Cinema: The Citizen Kane Of Video Games." In *The Stuff Games Are Made Of* 94–112. United States: MIT Press, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/14495.001.0001>
- **Assigned Games:**
  - [namethemachine] x Arbitrarily Good Productions. *Kid A Mnesia Exhibition*. Windows, PlayStation 5, macOS. Epic Games Publishing. 2021
  - Do, Toby. Emi Schaufeld, and Julia Wang. *Grass Mud Horse*. Windows. 2019.

## February 18: No class — Winter Midterm Break

## February 25: Videogame History

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Swalwell, Melanie. "The Legacy of 1980s Homebrew." In *Homebrew Gaming and the Beginnings of Vernacular Digitlity*. United States: MIT Press, 2021.
  - Nooney, Laine. 2020. "The Uncredited: Work, Women, and the Making of the U.S. Computer Game Industry ." *Feminist Media Histories* 6 (1): 119–146. <https://www.lainenooney.com/blog/the-uncredited>
- **Assigned Games:**
  - Sierra On-Line. *Phantasmagoria*. MSDOS (Emulated version). Sierra On-Line. 1995
  - Walther, Lilith. *Bloodborne PSX*. Windows. LWMedia. 2022.

## March 4: Historical Game Studies

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Mukherjee, Souvik. 2021. "The Cartography of Virtual Empires: Video Game Maps, Paratexts, and Colonialism." In *Paratextualizing Games*, edited by Benjamin Beil, Gundolf S. Freyermuth,

and Hanns Christian Schmidt, 75–96. transcript Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839454213-004>

- Wright, Esther. “Rockstar Games, Red Dead Redemption, and Narratives of ‘Progress.’” *European Journal of American Studies* 16, no. 3 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.17300>.

- **Assigned Games:**

- LaPensée, Elizabeth. *When Rivers Were Trails* (Android, iOS, Microsoft Windows, Macintosh operating systems). Indian Land Tenure Foundation, Michigan State University GEL Lab. 2019.
- Firaxis Games. *Sid Meier's Civilization VI PC Demo*. Windows. 2K Games. 2017.

## March 11: Ecocritical Game Studies

- **Assigned Readings:**

- Stone, Kara. “The Earth’s Prognosis: Doom and Transformation in Game Design.” In *Ecogames: Playful Perspectives on the Climate Crisis*, edited by Laura op de Beke, Joost Raessens, Stefan Werning, and Gerald Farca, 447–62. Amsterdam University Press, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.10819591.24>.
- Murray, Soraya. “Postcoloniality, Ecocriticism and Lessons from the Playable Landscape.” In *Ecogames: Playful Perspectives on the Climate Crisis*, edited by Laura op de Beke, Joost Raessens, Stefan Werning, and Gerald Farca, 145–62. Amsterdam University Press, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.10819591.8>.

- **Assigned Games:**

- Marsh, Nathan O. *South Scrimshaw, Part One*. Windows, SteamOS, Linux. Nathan O. Marsh. 2023.
- Free Lives. *Terra Nil Prototype*. Windows, macOS, Linux. 2019

## March 18: Embodiment and Interface

- **Assigned Readings:**

- Schmalzer, Madison. D. 2020. “Janky Controls and Embodied Play: Disrupting the Cybernetic Gameplay Circuit.” *Game Studies* 20 (3). <http://gamestudies.org/2003/articles/schmalzer>.
- Spöhrer, Markus. “Unpacking the Blackbox of ‘Normal Gaming’: A Sociomaterial Approach to Video Game Controllers and ‘Disability’” In *Playful Materialities: The Stuff That Games Are Made Of* edited by Benjamin Beil, Gundolf S. Freyermuth, Hanns Christian Schmidt and Raven Rusch, 187-222. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839462003-007>

- **Assigned Games:**

- Foddy, Bennett. *QWOP*. Android, iOS, Web browser. 2002.
- Falling Squirrel. *The Vale: Shadow of the Crown Demo*. Windows, Xbox One. Falling Squirrel. 2021

## March 25: Avatars and Identity

- **Assigned Readings**

- Iantorno, Michael, and Mia Consalvo. "Background Checks: Disentangling Class, Race, and Gender in CRPG Character Creators." *Games and Culture*, 2023, 155541202211503—. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120221150342>. Links to an external site.
- Legassie, Treva Michelle. 2022. "Playing, Performing, Policing: Navigating Avatar Expression in Second Life." In *Video Game Art Reader: Volume 2*, edited by Tiffany Funk, 86–99. Ann Arbor, MI: Amherst College Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12471206>.

- **Assigned Games:**

- VRChat. *VRChat*. Meta Quest, Android, HTC Vive, Microsoft Windows, Pico 4. 2014
- Maxis. *The Sims 4*. Electronic Arts. 2014.

## April 1: Livestreaming and Esports

- **Assigned Readings:**

- Fickle, Tara. 2021. "Made in China: Gold Farming as Alternative History of Esports." *ROMChip: A Journal of Game Histories* 3 (1). <https://romchip.org/index.php/romchip-journal/article/view/132>.
- Panneton, Charlotte. 2023. "Cultures of Precarity and 'Grinding' for Audiences on Twitch.Tv." In *Real Life in Real Time*, edited by Johanna Brewer, Bo Ruberg, Amanda L. L. Cullen, and Christopher J. Persaud, 275–88. The MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/14526.003.0026>.

- **Assigned Games:**

- Team Eleven. *SC2VN - The eSports Visual Novel*. Linux, Microsoft Windows, macOS. Team Eleven. 2015.
- Riot Games. *Valorant*. PlayStation 5, Microsoft Windows, Xbox Series X/S. Riot Games. 2022.

## April 8: The Videogame Industry

- **Assigned Readings:**

- Keogh, Brendan. 2023. "From Videogame Industry to Videogame Fields." 2023. In *The Videogame Industry Does Not Exist*, 17–48. The MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/14513.003.0004>.
- Joseph, Daniel. "Battle Pass Capitalism." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 21, no. 1 (2021): 68–83.

- **Assigned Games:**

- HoYoverse, miHoYo. *Genshin Impact*. PlayStation 4, Android, Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 5, Nintendo Switch, iOS. 2020.
- Roblox Corporation. *Roblox*. Microsoft Windows, Android, iOS, Xbox One, macOS, PlayStation 5. Roblox Corporation. 2006

## Assignments, Critiques and Exams

### Assessments

Name	Due Date	Weight
Total: 100.0%		

Name	Due Date	Weight
Academic Engagement	Ongoing (weekly)	15.0%
Class Journal	Before the start of five different lectures of your choice throughout the semester	20.0%
Proposal Brainstorming Document	January 21 2024, 11:59pm	5.0%
Formal Project Proposal	February 4 2025, 11:59pm	10.0%
Annotated Bibliography Presentation	March 11 2025, 11:59pm	15.0%
Final Research Project	April 8 2025, 11:59pm	25.0%
Key Term Quiz 1	February 14 2025, 11:59pm	5.0%
Key Term Quiz 2	April 9 2025, 11:59pm	5.0%
		<b>Total: 100.0%</b>

## Late Work

To ensure that the course TA and I can effectively provide everyone with their grade and feedback in a timely manner, all late work will be assessed with a penalty of -5% per day up to a maximum of one week (-35%). Without an extension approved ahead of time or retroactive documentation to indicate some kind of emergency situation, no late work will be accepted more than seven days after the initial due date. Please keep in mind that there will also be an inversely proportional relationship between how late you submit your assignment and the volume of feedback you receive alongside your grade (i.e., the later you hand in your work, the less comments you will receive). Please reach out as soon as possible if you think you will need an extension. I am typically very happy to approve extension requests as long as you have a good reason and they are sent well ahead of time.

## Academic Engagement

Your Academic Engagement grade will primarily correspond to your in-class attendance and willingness to contribute to class discussion. Your attendance will be worth a total of 7.5 points, and you will earn

0.75 points every time that you attend class (you must stay until the end of class to receive the grade). This means that you can miss up to two classes with no lost marks. I will be taking attendance every class after the mid-lecture break.


The remaining 7.5 points of your Academic Engagement grade will be holistically assessed on how you demonstrate your week-to-week engagement with the course through any combination of the following activities.

- Making a post in the “Introduce Yourself” discussion forum on Canvas.
- Asking questions during class about the weekly assigned course material.
- Answering discussion questions posed during the lecture.
- Answering discussion questions via the Canvas discussion forums after the lecture slides have been uploaded.
- Respond to another student’s discussion responses (either verbally or textually via Teams chat or in the Canvas discussion forums).
- Waiting behind after class to speak with me about the course.
- Scheduling time to speak with me about the course during my weekly office hours.
- Reaching out to me via email with questions related to course content.

*\*If, for whatever reason, you have a circumstance that makes engagement in this class difficult for you, please let me know as soon as possible, and we can discuss individualized alternative forms of assessment.*

## Style Guide

You are expected to submit your work for this course according to the conventions of the APA style.

For help with citation and format style, visit the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/)   
(<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>).

## Grading Breakdown

Numerical grades may be translated into letter grades based upon the following scale:

### Exceptional

#### **90–100% A+**

Demonstrated an exceptional degree of creative and/or logical thinking, a superior ability to organize, to analyze, and to integrate ideas, thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques, and exceptional skill in their application in satisfying the requirements of the course.

### Excellent



**80–84% = A–**

**85–89% = A**

Demonstrated a high degree of creative and/or logical thinking, a superior ability to organize, to analyze, and to integrate ideas, thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques, and a very high degree of skill in their application in satisfying the requirements of a course.

## Good

**70–73% = B–**

**74–76% = B**

**77–79% = B+**

Demonstrated a good evidence of creative and/or logical thinking, a good ability to organize, to analyze, and to integrate ideas, knowledge of concepts and/or techniques, and considerable skill in their application in satisfying the requirements of a course.

## Satisfactory

**60–63% = C–**

**64–66% = C**

**67–69% = C+**

Demonstrated a satisfactory level of creative and/or logical thinking, a generally adequate grasp of the subject matter, knowledge of concepts and/or techniques and competence in their application in satisfying the requirements of a course.

## Poor

**50–53% = D–**

**54–56% = D**

**57–59% = D+**

Demonstrated barely adequate knowledge and ability in creative and/or logical thinking and the application of concepts and/or techniques in satisfying the requirements of a course.

## Unsatisfactory

**0–49% = F**

Failed to meet minimum acceptable command of knowledge and ability in creative and/or logical thinking and the application of concepts and/or techniques in satisfying the requirements of a course; or failure to complete a course; or by sanction as permitted by the university's academic misconduct policy.

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a shared responsibility held by all members of the OCAD University community. We uphold the integrity of knowledge-making and creativity: this means obtaining and sharing information responsibly, being respectful and transparent in the way that we use and respond to the work and contributions of others and explicitly acknowledging how such work and contributions inform our own. The University is committed to enforcing the policy and all allegations of academic misconduct will therefore be reported and investigated. The most common type of academic misconduct is plagiarism, that is, deliberately misrepresenting someone else's words, ideas or original visual concepts as your own in written or visual work. Other examples of academic misconduct include misuse of written or visual sources ("unintentional plagiarism"), cheating during an examination or test, collaborating on assignments without permission, and submitting any work for evaluation that has previously been submitted in another course without prior approval. Read the [Academic Misconduct policy](http://www.ocadu.ca/students/student-policies/academic-policies.htm) (<http://www.ocadu.ca/students/student-policies/academic-policies.htm>) to ensure you are well informed.

The Academic Misconduct policy is currently undergoing review to include specific guidance (rules/recommendations) around Generative AI (GAI) applications (e.g. Midjourney, ChatGPT). Currently, treat GAI applications like any other source: clearly indicate where and how you have used them and attribute/cite them. It may not always be appropriate to use GAI applications, so consult your assignment instructions for guidance on whether and how these applications may be used. When unclear or in doubt, reach out to your course instructor for clarification.

## Student Feedback on Courses

OCAD University is committed to ensuring excellence in teaching and learning. As you approach the end of the course you will be asked to complete an online course evaluation during class time on your laptop or other web-enabled device. Your feedback is valued by faculty and is an important part of on-going efforts to enhance course design and teaching across the university. If you have immediate concerns about the teaching of your course, please bring them to your course instructor or Chair.

## University Policies

As a student, you are responsible for being familiar with the academic policies, procedures and guidelines. University policies and procedures are subject to change and are not tied to a specific academic year, unless otherwise noted.

Please see the [Policies & Resources](https://canvascloud.ocadu.ca/courses/sis_course_id:21231/external_tools/80) ([https://canvascloud.ocadu.ca/courses/sis\\_course\\_id:21231/external\\_tools/80](https://canvascloud.ocadu.ca/courses/sis_course_id:21231/external_tools/80)) page.

## Commitment to Sustainability

OCAD University is committed to developing decolonial approaches to sustainability that foster environmental justice through interdisciplinary solutions. To address the climate crisis, you are encouraged to approach your art, design, creative and critical practices with an understanding of the