Solano Center for
Human Flourishing

An after school course on the psychology of aesthetics

Academic year 2020–2021

A Philosophy of Play and a Narrative of Games
SCHF001 – Fall – 12 ECTS

Course Description
This course invites students to explore enduring philosophical questions and to reflectively evaluate the various answers given them by thinkers from a range of social, historical, and religious contexts. Students will tackle ultimate questions in a range of philosophical domains, including issues such as the nature of self and ultimate reality, morality and human meaning, rationality and the pursuit of truth. The aim of the course is to give students an opportunity to critically examine their own beliefs and commitments in dialogue with each other and with great thinkers past and present.

PROFESSOR

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Office hours:
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ASSISTANT

TBD
TBD
Office hours:
By appointment

Syllabus

Course Aims

Achieve a basic understanding of some of the issues most fundamental to the philosophical tradition as it relates to enduring questions, including, the nature of knowledge, existential questions of existence, luck and the good life, the nature of what we value, the nature and existence of God, and of suffering.

Course Structure

1. Learn what great thinkers have to say in response to enduring philosophical questions and howtheir answers represent philosophically and dialectically distinct answers to such questions. Students will consider a range of philosophical voices and perspectives–including classic texts from Plato and Aristotle, texts from thinkers in the Catholic tradition, and texts by thinkers historically underrepresented in the western canon. In reading and discussing such thinkers and texts students will be encouraged to consider and assess both the philosophical merits and costs of the various views they encounter.
2. Learn to explain, analyze, and evaluate arguments for philosophical answers to ultimate questions. Students will learn to give a close reading of philosophical texts with a view toward being able to explain and analyze the arguments they contain. By the end of the semester, students should be able to (i) identify the key premises, assumptions, and conclusions present the texts they encounter and (ii) explain the content of the arguments premises in a waythat (iii) illumi-

nates how these premises support an inference to the conclusion. Finally, students will learn to evaluate the arguments they encounter by, among other things, assessing them according to logical notions of validity and soundness.

3. Begintoshapetheir ownanswerstoultimatequestions byapplyingdistinctively logical and philosophical ways of thinking to them. To this end, students will learn to raise philosophical questions, to identify unexamined presuppositions, and to reflect on their own assumptions and commitments. Students will also work at philosophically articulating their own views by learning how to offer evidence, arguments, and responses to objections to their own answers to ultimate questions.

4. Learn to articulate their own worldview and practices in dialogue with different answers to ultimate questions. Students will be provided with opportunities to reflect on the way in which their own commitments, values, and practices may overlap with or diverge from the perspectives they encounter in their readings, in lectures, and in dialogue with one another.

Course Materials

The student will need to purchase a "game pass". This game pass is $40. All the readings will be posted by the instructor on Discord.Also, the student will need to purchase the book "Philosophy Through Video Games" by John Cogburn and Mark Silcox.The instructor will provide a link.

Course Evaluation

Evaluation is by a combination of participation, term papers, and exam.

Participation (10%): This is about participation.

Papers (40%): This is about the term papers.

Exam (50%): This is about the exam.

Course Policies

Auditing is possible. Please contact me.

Grading is according to the US scale.

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the Graduate Institute. If you are unsure, please contact the TA.This includes chatgpt or other machine learning/ai software. This is for your own benefit. It is okay to use such methods to find materials, but you must do the reading and writing yourself if you are to learn anything. *Reading* must be done outside of class time. It is best for all participants that this is the case, otherwise you will get nothing from the course and will only be wasting yours and our time.

Import Bibliography

Are you using a bibliography manager like Zotero or Mendeley to manage your PDFs? Click here to get the .bib file of this course to import it into your software of choice!

Course Schedule

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Week 1   (14 Sep): Aesthetics and Video Games, concepts of being

Or What's it like to be a bat?

Required readings

Tavinor, Grant (2010). "Videogames and Aesthetics". *Philosophy Compass*, 5(8), 624–634.; Gualeni, Stefano (2014). "Augmented Ontologies or How to Philosophize with a Digital Hammer". *Philosophy & Technology*, 27(2), 177–199.

Activity

First Meeting Preparation and Course Introduction

Read and follow directions from CIG, Star Citizen (2024, August 29). *Getting Started in the 'Verse*. Roberts Space Industries Knowledge Base. article.

Use the instructor referral code as doing so will give you slight bonus items.

Set your spawn point to New Babbage. You'll wake in your habitation unit. You will likely be wearing whatever you wore previously.

If this is your first time logging into SC, then it will likely be a white flight suit and generic helmet.

Follow signs to the elevator, box with "F" floating above it. Take this down to the main floor, we will meet right outside the elevator doors and walk as a group to the transportation platform where we'll take a maglift to the space port.

Week 2   (21 Sep): Personal Identity in Video Games

Required readings

Cogburn, Jon, & Silcox, Mark (2009). *Philosophy through video games* (1. publ). Routledge., selections from ch. 1

Activity

For today's activity, we will be picking up virtual items discarded by other players and discarding them. This helps the servers.

Watch

Cleaning Up the Garbage In Star Citizen PES

Week 3   (28 Sep): The Art of Agency

Required Readings

Nguyen, C. Thi (2019). "Games and the Art of Agency". *The Philosophical Review*, 128(4), 423–462.

Activity

Looking at careers. Today we will try our hand at performing a mission. This mission will be fairly easy as we will only select a hauling contract, rent a ship large enough for all of us, and then work to complete the contract.

For this, set your spawn location to Area18. As before, we will meet in the lobby outside the elevators and collectively walk to the transportation platform, take the maglift to Riker's Memorial Space Port etc.

Week 4   (5 Oct): Games and God's Goodness.

Cogburn, Jon, & Silcox, Mark (2009). *Philosophy through video games* (1. publ). Routledge., ch. 4

Activity

Spawn location will stay the same. This time we will choose a slightly more difficult mission in our own aurora starter ships. We are going to attempt to bring about some Godly justice to a wrong-doer. Each person will take an elevator to their own hanger and spawn their own aurora (Re-read CIG, Star Citizen (2024, August 29). *Getting Started in the 'Verse*. Roberts Space Industries Knowledge Base. if your do not remember how to do this). I will share the mission information and we will all quantum leap at the same time to the mission location.

Week 5   (12 Oct): Piracy and Betrayal.

Butler, Judith (2004). "Betrayal's Felicity". *Diacritics*, 34(1), 82–87.

Activity

Reverse Piracy

We probably won't be able to pull this off.

You see the C2, first on radar, and then growing in the cockpit glass as you close the distance. You fire up your weapons, (a full complement of distortions) and proceed to disable the C2. You board the ship and subdue the captain - no permanent harm. You secure him while he 'naps' and proceed to … FILL THE EMPTY CARGO SLOTS IN HIS HOLD WITH HIGH VALUE CARGO. Once the hold is fully stocked, you hop into your Mobi and wire the captain enough funds to top off his fuel, repair any damage you may have done, and include a nice tip in the amount.

Week 6   (19 Oct): The Art of Idleness and the Nature of Work

Russell, Bertrand (1932). *In Praise of Idleness, by Bertrand Russell*. Harper's Magazine.

Activity

We are going to take another tour of the verse. This time we will focus on finding the more aesthetic features of the game. For instance the sovietesque artwork in the subways of Lorreville, and look for the themes by Pedro Macedo Camacho. These will typically be found orbiting various planetary bodies throughout the verse.

Week 7   (26 Oct): The Era of Artistic Excellence

Danto, Arthur Coleman, & Goehr, Lydia (2014). "INTRODUCTION: Modern, Postmodern, and Contemporary". In *After the end of art: Contemporary art and the pale of history* (First Princeton classics edition). Princeton University Press.

Activity

Guest Speaker: Steve Snyder

This time we will show Steven Snyder around the verse while he talks to us about the end of art, Nietzche, Heidegger, and Danto.

<p align="center">– This syllabus is subject to change –</p>