

An after school course on the psychology of aesthetics

Academic year 2020–2021

A Philosophy of Play and a Narrative of Games

MINT001 – Fall – 12 ECTS

Course Description

Video game worlds, I think, offer what is possibly a more expanded type of representation wherein the playing character does not merely need to follow the reasoning of the creator of the artwork, but can exercise even more agency. The open world, MMO, sandbox nature of the developing video game, space sim Star Citizen is a great example of this. Whereas games like the GTA series make it obvious and explicit that success in the game can only be had by exercising what are typically called vices, Star Citizen lets the player define success and methods of success. A player can choose to be successful by pursuing industry such as transportation, shipping, or mining etc., they can also choose a more exciting method of play such as space piracy.

PROFESSOR

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Office hours:

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ASSISTANT

TBD

TBD

Office hours:

By appointment

Syllabus

Course Aims

Be able to critically analyse and engage with literature by key philosophers in this field. Be able to present arguments clearly and concisely both within a classroom context and in a written essay. Gain transferrable skills in research, analysis and argumentation. Acquire knowledge regarding several major issues in metaphysics (e.g. the existence and nature of fictional characters, conceptual analysis, and truth in fiction), aesthetics (e.g. the nature of art, and emotional responses to art) and computer ethics. Engage closely & critically with cutting-edge literature in these areas. Develop their ability to think & write philosophically.

Course Structure

This course will be conducted solely in the virtual universe of Star Citizen. This includes lectures, discussions, and activities/projects. These will be group exercises and all students will need to attend each session to earn full credit. There will also be a discord chat and voice where the readings will be posted and conversations hosted.

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): The Art of Idleness

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 6 (19 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, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Danto.

– This syllabus is subject to change –