

RTV 4590

Digital Games in Communication

Course Info

When: Tuesday Period 6-8 (12:50 PM – 3:50 PM)

Where: Weimer Hall 3215 (Aha lab)

Instructor: Dr. Yu-Hao Lee

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Phone: (352) 392-3951

Office hours: Tuesday 11am-12pm or by email appointment

Office: 3051 Weimer Hall

Course Objectives

Play is fundamental to humans and other animal species. Through play, we learn to think, solve problems, and to socialize. Digital games combine human play with the computational affordances of modern technology to create designed experiences that engage and communicate with players.

This class is designed to introduce the field of game studies to students. We will focus on games designed for communication purposes, sometimes known as serious games or persuasive games. The focus is to address questions such as: Why do people play digital games? What makes some games so engaging? And how can we use games to communicate and affect people and society?

In this class, students will:

- Play several digital games that are designed for behavior change in the fields of education, health, corporate training, etc.
- Understand the principles of digital game motivations and engagement.
- Understand the theories that have been applied to studying digital games.
- Analyze digital games using scientific methods.
- Design games for communication

Readings

There are no required textbooks for this class. All the readings will be posted on the Canvas course site (<https://elearning.ufl.edu/>) select “e-Learning in Canvas,” and log in using your Gatorlink ID.

Recommended books to help you learn more about game design and mechanics:

1. Salen, K., Tekinbaş, K. S., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). *Rules of play: Game design fundamentals*. MIT press.
2. Schell, J. (2019). *The Art of Game Design: A book of lenses*. AK Peters/CRC Press.
3. Rogers, S. (2014). *Level Up! The guide to great video game design*. John Wiley & Sons.

Requirements

1) Weekly Reflections (Due each Sunday 11:59pm)

You are expected to read or watch the required readings/videos each week and post your reflections on Canvas. DO NOT summarize the materials. Your reflection should be about what you have learned from the readings, how it relates (or do not relate) to your own experiences, and the implications that you have thought about when reading/watching the materials. Make sure to include questions that you have so we can discuss them in class. In short, the weekly reflections should include: 1) what you have learned from the materials, and 2) questions that you would like to discuss in class.

2) Game playing analysis (Due Mar 21st 11:59pm)

The goal of this assignment is to help you see the unspoken rules and assumptions in games. Here's a nice video that demonstrates what you're about to do:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ax7f3JZJH5w>

If you consider yourself a gamer:

Find someone who does not play digital games and teach the person how to play the most "difficult" game you have played. Spend as many hours as you need with the person and discuss your experiences as you play. Take notes about the experience. The analysis paper will be a documentation of this exercise. Try to be as detailed as possible. The paper will address the following questions:

1. What was your prior experience with games?
2. What was the game about?
3. What questions did the person raise while learning the game?
4. What difficulties did you observe? Why was it difficult? And how did you resolve it?
5. Which aspect of the game was easiest to learn?
6. Were there any aspects of the experience that surprised you? Reflect on why it was surprising to you.
7. Identify the unspoken assumptions and rules you found through this exercise.
8. Propose how you would tweak the game to make it more friendly to someone who has never played it before while retaining the intended experience or message.

If you do not play games regularly:

Like the process above, except you will find someone who you consider to be an "expert" gamer to teach you how to play a difficult game. Address the following questions:

1. What was your prior experience with games?
2. What was the game about?
3. What questions did you have while learning the game?
4. What difficulties did you encounter? Why was it difficult? And how did you resolve it?
5. Which aspect of the game was easiest to learn?
6. Were there any aspects of the experience that surprised you? Reflect on why it was surprising to you.
7. Identify the unspoken assumptions and rules you found through this exercise.
8. Propose how you would tweak the game to make it more friendly to someone who has never played it before, while retaining the intended experience or message.

3) Game Design Project (Due Apr. 28th)

The goal of this project is for you to apply what you have learned to design a persuasive game that tackles an important personal or social issue. You will work in teams to design a game that can be played with a group of people (through video chat platforms such as Zoom, Facebook messenger, or Skype) that accomplishes an identified outcome of your choice. Your written design document will need to address several questions:

1. What issue are you going to address with this game? And why is this issue important? (use studies, statistics, and other credible evidence to support your argument)
2. What is the goal of the game? (e.g., raise awareness, increase knowledge, change attitudes or behaviors. Be specific)
3. What key game mechanics are used to communicate your intended messages?
4. What theories are used to support the design choices? Explain why and how the theories inform your design.
5. How will you assess the outcome of the game to determine its effectiveness?
6. What have you learned from the playtests? And how did you address these problems?

The game must be complete by the end of the semester. It does not have to be polished, but it must be fully playable. For the final submission, you will submit a) an instruction manual explaining how to play the game, and b) a design document (10 to 15 pages) addressing the five questions above, including findings from your playtesting and revisions.

Extra Credits

3 extra credits will be offered for research participation through CJC's SONA research management system (<https://ufl-cjc.sona-systems.com>). Please register a SONA account and choose studies to participate in to receive extra credits for this class. Check SONA regularly to see what studies have become available. Typically, it is not until around maybe the third week of the semester that studies will become available. You should NOT wait until the last minute to sign up for participation because people tend to procrastinate, and research opportunities will be limited by the end of the semester. In fact, it is probably wise to participate early in the semester when your course loads are the lightest. Please see this video below for how to set up your SONA account: https://youtu.be/_1OnT2ZU6QQ *If you have any questions, please*

contact the CJC SONA administrator through this email: uf-cjc-sonasystems@jou.ufl.edu

Grading

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| Weekly reflections | 30% |
| Game analysis | 20% |
| Final project | 40% |
| Class participation | 10% |

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| A | 93%-100% | C+ | 75%-79.99% |
| A- | 90% -92.99% | C | 70%-74.99% |
| B+ | 85%-89.99% | D+ | 65%-69.99% |
| B | 80%-84.99% | D | 60%-64.99% |
| | | E | Under 60% |

Class Policy

Attendance: The class will start promptly. If you come in late or have to leave early, please do so quietly without disturbing others.

Electronic devices: Please turn your phone off or to silent mode during class and keep it tucked away unless we are using it to examine mobile games.

Honor Code: As a student at this university, you have accepted a commitment to the Honor Code, and the principles of academic integrity, personal honesty, and responsible citizenship on which it was founded. As an instructor at this university, I am also charged with its enforcement and take that responsibility very seriously.

You can find the complete honor code via this link:

<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

Among the activities that could result in Honor Code violations are plagiarism, cheating, misrepresenting sources, the unauthorized use of others' work, etc. Consult the APA manual for definitions of plagiarism. Consult me if you are uncertain about your Honor Code responsibilities within this course.

Special Needs: According to University policy, students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide appropriate documentation to you, and you should provide this documentation to me when requesting specific accommodation. It is your responsibility to initiate this conversation early in the semester, and you should plan to meet with me during office hours to discuss this.

Teaching Evaluation: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner.](#) Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.](#)

Tentative Schedule

| Date | Topic | Required Materials |
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| Week 1 Jan. 10 | Welcome & Introduction | 1. Gaming can make a better world – McGonigal, 2010. |
| Week 2 Jan. 17 | Why do we play games? Fun as self-determination | 2. The concept of flow - Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002 3. A motivational model of video game engagement- Przybylski, Rigby, & Ryan, 2010. (a video to help you understand self determination theory and games) 4. Effectance, self-efficacy and the motivation to play video games - Klimmt & Hartmann, 2006 *Play a game that you think is really good or really bad, think about your motivation for playing the game, and how the game design promotes flow and intrinsic motivations, or why it does not. |
| Week 3 Jan. 24 | How games communicate | 1. The rhetoric of video games - Bogost, 2008 2. Values at Play in Digital Games Ch.3 (pp.33-72) 3. How does video game AI work? Recommended games: a) The Stanley Parable b) Mini Metro c) Journey d) Papers, Please. |
| Week 4 Jan. 31 | Identity and space | 1. Where everybody knows your (screen) name: Online games as “third places”—Steinkuehler & Williams, 2006. |

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| | | <p>2. Doors to another me: Identity construction through digital game play—Konijn & Bijvank, 2009.</p> <p>Recommended games:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> This War of Mine Alba: a wildlife adventure Monument Valley |
| <p>Week 5 Feb. 7</p> | <p>Avatars and presence</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What makes a game immersive? Defining presence -- Lombard & Jones, 2015. Virtual doppelgangers: Psychological effects of avatars who ignore their owners – Bailenson & Segovia, 2010. The Proteus effect—Yee & Bailenson, 2007 <p>*Design an avatar or take a screenshot of your avatar in a game that you play. Bring it to class and we'll discuss how the avatar was created and how it affected your game experience.</p> |
| <p>Week 6 Feb. 14</p> | <p>Video games and emotions</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How games move us (Ch.1 & 2) – Isbister How do video games have an emotional impact on us? <p>Recommended games:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Florence</u> <u>To the moon</u> <u>That Dragon, Cancer</u> <u>Bury me, my love</u> |
| <p>Week 7 Feb. 21</p> | <p>Digital game and morality</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Raney, A. A., & Baldwin, J. A. (2021). The role of morality in emotional responses to entertainment. In <i>Routledge International Handbook of Emotions and Media</i> (pp. 112-128). Routledge. How players manage moral concerns to make video game violence enjoyable – Klimmt et al. 2006 Morality in the mechanics – Game Maker's Toolkit Are morality systems making us less moral? <p>*Think about ways that video games are designed to elicit moral responses.</p> |
| <p>Week 8</p> | | |

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| Feb. 28 | Gender and race | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you identify as a gamer? Gender, race, sexuality, and gamer identity – Shaw, 2010. 2. Should your avatar's skin color match yours? – NPR. 3. Don't hate the player, hate the game: The racialization of labor in World of Warcraft – Nakamura, 2009. |
| Week 9 Mar. 7 | Game community and culture | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is video game culture? Cultural studies and game studies – Shaw, 2010 2. Gaining advantage: How videogame players define and negotiate – Consalvo 3. Power gamers just want to have fun – Taylor 4. Twitch and the work of play -- Taylor, 2018 5. Anger, Fear, and Games: GamerGate -- Mortenson |
| Week 10 Mar. 14 | [SPRING BREAK] | |
| Week 11 Mar. 21 | Games and education | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital game-based learning-Van Eck, 2006 2. Good video games and good learning—Gee, 2005 3. From content to context: videogames as designed experience—Squire, 2006 <p>*Conceptually tweak a game to make it educational using the principles mentioned in the readings.</p> |
| Week 11 Mar. 28 | Serious games (for advertising, health, and social change) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four decades of advergaming 2. Video games in health care: Closing the gap – Kato, 2010. 3. Serious games and social change: Why they (should) work -- Klimmt |
| Week 12 Apr. 4 | Gamification | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From game design elements to gamefulness: defining "gamification"—Deterding et al., 2011 2. Nicholson, S. (2015). A recipe for meaningful gamification. In Gamification in education and business (pp. 1-20). Springer, Cham. 3. Gamification to improve our world – Yu-Kai Chou TED talk 4. De-Gamification |
| Week 13 Apr. 11 | | |

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| | Virtual reality, augmented reality, and other games | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why I love bees: A case study in collective intelligence gaming—McGonigal, 2007 2. How VR could change your life |
| Week 14 Apr. 18 | Final Playtests | |
| Week 15 Apr. 25 | Final Presentation | |

Resources:

Games for health, <http://www.gamesforhealth.org>

Games for change, <http://www.gamesforchange.org>

Gamification: <http://www.gamification.co/blog/>

Games4Sustainability: <https://games4sustainability.org/gamepedia/>

Health Games Research, <http://www.healthgamesresearch.org/database>

Newsgaming: <http://www.newsgaming.com/>

Persuasive games, <http://www.persuasivegames.com>

Persuasive Technology Lab, <http://captology.stanford.edu>

Serious game initiative, <http://www.seriousgames.org/index2.html>

Serious games summit, <http://www.seriousgamessummit.com/>