

Course Syllabus

ITLS 3500 Introduction to Game Studies Syllabus

Course Description

Playing games can be fun, but at the same time, playing games can also be challenging. Expect to feel the same about this course. Game Studies is an interdisciplinary field and scholars have approached it from various perspectives (e.g., media studies, humanities, social sciences). The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of the field of game studies with a focus on Video Games. Students will be asked to engage critically with their own experiences with video games as well as perspectives drawn from disciplinary research. This course offers an interdisciplinary survey of video game studies. Each week you will be required to play a video game and complete a reading. You will also engage in a semester long project where you analyze a video game of your choice.

Games are both object and process; they can't be read as texts or listened to as music, they must be played. Playing is integral, not coincidental like the appreciative reader or listener. -- Espen Aarseth, Editor-in-Chief, Gamesstudies.org (Links to an external site.)

Fees

Expect to spend around \$25-\$30 on games we play in the course. You may need to spend additional money on the game you choose to analyze for your course project. Please contact the instructor ASAP (jody.clarke@usu.edu) if you need financial support for this course.

Course Objectives

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

1. Explain the major theories and schools of thought used to study video games.
2. Explain the aesthetics of game design, including rules, graphics, audio, and time.
3. Explain the narrative strategies and genre approaches used in video games.

Instructor

Jody Clarke-Midura, jody.clarke@usu.edu, Office hours by appointment. This is an online course. Most assignments are due on Thursday and Saturday.

TA: Daelynn Hunter, daelynnh@gmail.com, Office hours by appointment.

Course Resources

Required readings are available via course canvas site.

Games for the class can be purchased via STEAM: <https://store.steampowered.com> ([Links to an external site.](#)). Information regarding games and game play are available in the course canvas site.

Course Requirements

Each student will:

1. Complete weekly readings
2. Complete weekly notes and quotes on the readings
3. Play a game each week
4. Participate in the class discussions around games (most weeks)
5. Complete a course project on analyzing a game of choice.

Evaluation Methods and Criteria

All assignments are available in canvas and have a rubric that explains point breakdown. The assignments are grouped into 4 categories:

1. Game autobiography (1% of course grade)
2. Notes and quotes on the readings (33% of course grade)
3. Game Play Discussions (33% of course grade)
4. Course project on analyzing a game of choice (33% of grade)

Grade Scheme

The following grading standards will be used in this class:

Grade	Range
A	100 % to 93.0%
A-	< 93.0 % to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 % to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 % to 83.0%
B-	< 83.0 % to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 % to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 % to 73.0%
C-	< 73.0 % to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 % to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 % to 60.0%
F	< 59.0 % to 0.0%

Course Schedule/Outline

This course is completely online. First discussion post is usually due on Thursday and second by Sunday night. Notes and quotes on the readings are usually due on Saturday night. Here is a course schedule that includes games we will play and assignments due. Please note the game play is subject to change and this does not include the readings. Please see the modules for details for each level.

Level	Date	Course Topic	Games to Play	Quotes & Notes on Reading	Game Discussion of Game play	Course Project Parts Due
1	19-- Jan	Studying Video Games	Star dew valley	X	send screenshot to show you played	
2	25-Jan	The Game Industry	Stardew Valley	X	X	
3	1-Feb	What is a game?	Minecraft Clasic	X	X	
4	8-Feb	History	Fable: The Lost Chapters	X	send screenshot to show you played	identify game and why
5	15-Feb	Video Game Aesthetics	Fable: The Lost Chapters	X	X	
6	22-Feb	Video Games in Culture	Braid (demo is free on steam)	X	X	game reflective play
7	1-Mar	Narrative	The Awesome Adventures of Captain Spirit (free on STEAM)	X	X	
8	8-Mar	Metagames	Hearthstone (free)	X	send screenshot to show you played	Game Context
9	15-Mar	Esports	Hearthstone (free)	X	X	
10	22-Mar	Choices, Cheats, and Ethos: You choose	Animal Crossing Pocket Camp (free on smart phones)	X	X	Game Overview
11	29-Mar	Players Choice (Gender, Race, & Diversity)	Runescape (free)	X	send screenshot to show you played	
12	5-Apr	Serious Games, When learning is not enough	Runescape (free)	X	X	Formal Elements
13	12-Apr	Side Quest: Read game analysis examples	Among Us (free on mobile)	X	X	
14	19-Apr	Bonus Level: Read game analysis examples	TBD	X	TBD	
15	26-Apr	Game Over				Final Write up

Attendance and Excused Absences Policy

This course is online. If you are unable to complete the assignments for a particular week please contact the instructor, Jody Clarke-Midura: jody.clarke@usu.edu.

Library Services

All USU students attending classes in Logan, at our Regional Campuses, or online can access all databases, e-journals, and e-books regardless of location. Additionally, the library will mail printed books to students, at no charge to them. Students can also borrow books from any Utah academic library. Take advantage of all library services and learn more at libguides.usu.edu/rc. ([Links to an external site.](#))

Classroom Civility

Utah State University supports the principle of freedom of expression for both faculty and students. The University respects the rights of faculty to teach and students to learn. Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede the learning process. Disruptive classroom behavior will not be tolerated. An individual engaging in such behavior may be subject to disciplinary action. Read [Student Code Article V Section V-3 \(Links to an external site.\)](#) for more information.

University Policies & Procedures

COVID-19 Classroom Protocols

In order to continue to provide a high standard of instruction at USU, and to limit the spread of COVID-19 during the pandemic, students are asked to follow certain classroom protocols. These protocols are in place not only for your safety but also the safety of the rest of the campus community. You will be asked to clean your desk area at the start of each class, sit in designated seats, wear face coverings, and follow dismissal instructions. There may be individual medical circumstances that prevent some students from using face coverings. These circumstances will be rare, but if they do exist, we ask that everyone be respectful. It is imperative that we each do our part so that on-campus instruction can continue.

Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibilities

Academic freedom is the right to teach, study, discuss, investigate, discover, create, and publish freely. Academic freedom protects the rights of faculty members in teaching and of students in learning. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in teaching, research, and creative activities, subject to the limitations imposed by professional responsibility. [Faculty Code Policy #403 \(Links to an external site.\)](#) further defines academic freedom and professional responsibilities.

Academic Integrity – "The Honor System"

Each student has the right and duty to pursue his or her academic experience free of dishonesty. To enhance the learning environment at Utah State University and to develop student academic integrity, each student agrees to the following Honor Pledge:

"I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity."

A student who lives by the Honor Pledge is a student who does more than not cheat, falsify, or plagiarize. A student who lives by the Honor Pledge:

- Espouses academic integrity as an underlying and essential principle of the Utah State University community;

- Understands that each act of academic dishonesty devalues every degree that is awarded by this institution; and
- Is a welcomed and valued member of Utah State University.

Academic Dishonesty

The instructor of this course will take appropriate actions in response to Academic Dishonesty, as defined the University's Student Code. Acts of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- **Cheating:** using, attempting to use, or providing others with any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or in any other academic exercise or activity. Unauthorized assistance includes:
 - Working in a group when the instructor has designated that the quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity be done "individually;"
 - Depending on the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
 - Substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, in taking an examination or preparing academic work;
 - Acquiring tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty member, staff member, or another student without express permission;
 - Continuing to write after time has been called on a quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity;
 - Submitting substantially the same work for credit in more than one class, except with prior approval of the instructor; or engaging in any form of research fraud.
- **Falsification:** altering or fabricating any information or citation in an academic exercise or activity.
- **Plagiarism:** representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes using materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the sale of term papers or other academic materials.

For additional information go to: [ARTICLE VI. University Regulations Regarding Academic Integrity \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Sexual Harassment/Title IX

Utah State University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free from acts of sexual misconduct and discrimination and to fostering respect and dignity for all members of the USU community. Title IX and [USU Policy 339 \(Links to an external site.\)](#) address sexual harassment in the workplace and academic setting.

The university responds promptly upon learning of any form of possible discrimination or sexual misconduct. Any individual may contact USU's [Office of Equity \(Links to an external site.\)](#) for available options and resources or clarification. The university has established a complaint procedure to handle all types of discrimination complaints, including sexual harassment ([USU Policy 305 \(Links to an external site.\)](#)), and has designated the Office of Equity Director/Title IX Coordinator as the official responsible for receiving and investigating complaints of sexual harassment.

Withdrawal Policy and "I" Grade Policy

Students are required to complete all courses for which they are registered by the end of the semester. In some cases, a student may be unable to complete all of the coursework because of extenuating circumstances, but not due to poor performance or to retain financial aid. The term 'extenuating' circumstances includes: (1) incapacitating illness which prevents a student from attending classes for a minimum period of two weeks, (2) a death in the immediate family, (3) financial responsibilities requiring a student to alter a work schedule to secure employment, (4) change in work schedule as required by an employer, or (5) other emergencies deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Students with Disabilities

USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the [Disability Resource Center \(DRC\) \(Links to an external site.\)](#) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn # 101, (435) 797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.

Students who are at a higher risk for complications from COVID-19 or who contract COVID-19 may also be eligible for accommodations.

Diversity Statement

Regardless of intent, careless or ill-informed remarks can be offensive and hurtful to others and detract from the learning climate. If you feel uncomfortable in a classroom due to offensive language or actions by an instructor or student(s) regarding ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, contact:

- Division of Student Affairs: <https://studentaffairs.usu.edu> (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1712, studentservices@usu.edu, TSC 220
- Student Legal Services: <https://ususa.usu.edu/student-association/student-advocacy/legal-services> (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-2912, TSC 326,
- Access and Diversity: <http://accesscenter.usu.edu> (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1728, access@usu.edu; TSC 315

- Multicultural Programs: <http://accesscenter.usu.edu/multiculture> (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1728, TSC 315
- LGBTQA Programs: <http://accesscenter.usu.edu/lgbtqa> (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1728, TSC 3145
- Provost's Office Diversity Resources: <https://www.usu.edu/provost/diversity> (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-8176

You can learn about your student rights by visiting:

The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State

University: <https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode> (Links to an external site.)

Grievance Process

Students who feel they have been unfairly treated may file a grievance through the channels and procedures described in the Student Code: [Article VII](#) (Links to an external site.).

Full details for USU Academic Policies and Procedures can be found at:

- [Student Conduct](#) (Links to an external site.)
- [Student Code](#) (Links to an external site.)
- [Academic Integrity](#) (Links to an external site.)
- [USU Selected Academic Policies and Procedures](#) (Links to an external site.)
- [USU Academic Policies and Procedures](#) (Links to an external site.)
- [Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility Policy](#) (Links to an external site.)

Emergency Procedures

In the case of a drill or real emergency, classes will be notified to evacuate the building by the sound of the fire/emergency alarm system or by a building representative. In the event of a disaster that may interfere with either notification, evacuate as the situation dictates (i.e., in an earthquake when shaking ceases or immediately when a fire is discovered). Turn off computers and take any personal items with you. Elevators should not be used; instead, use the closest stairs.

Mental Health

Mental health is critically important for the success of USU students. As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Utah State University provides free services for students to assist them with addressing these and other concerns. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services

available on campus at [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\) \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

Students are also encouraged to download the [“SafeUT App” \(Links to an external site.\)](#) to their smartphones. The SafeUT application is a 24/7 statewide crisis text and tip service that provides real-time crisis intervention to students through texting and a confidential tip program that can help anyone with emotional crises, bullying, relationship problems, mental health, or suicide related issues.