

Fall 2024

# ITLS 6730

## Professor

**Dr. Deborah Fields**, You can call me Debbie, Dr. Fields, or Prof. Fields -- whatever you're comfortable with. I often go by Castle Master in this course...

Email: [deborah.fields@usu.edu](mailto:deborah.fields@usu.edu)

Phone (use with discretion): \_\_\_\_\_. I know how to use do not disturb settings, so don't worry about disturbing sleep.

Office Hours: By appointment. I'd recommend you send an email to set up a 20-minute meeting with me (virtually - I live in California!) at least once during the semester to get to know each other and discuss your course projects.

## Course Description

This course provides an overview of the research on games and learning. Drawing on research from education, psychology, and game studies, students examine the history of video games, research on gameplay and players, and the role of design in play and learning.

**What can we learn from games?** How can we apply the same principles from game design in learning environments? What genres and mechanics of games may best be used for different kinds of learning? This course will answer these questions, by drawing from work in education, psychology, game studies, and human-computer interactions. Together, we will explore questions such as:

- Who plays games? Who designs them? Who mods them? Why?
- What do you learn when you play games?
- What learning theories can we glean from game design?
- What types of practices and communities are formed in games, and how are those communities productive for learning?
- How do players and designers tackle issues of society and ethics in games?
- How do we use game design principles in creating learning experiences?

*No prior knowledge* or experience in video games or virtual worlds is a prerequisite for taking this course. To ace the course, students are expected to contribute to class discussions, reflect on their history of playing traditional (card, board games) and/or digital games, play various games (some required, some of their choosing), reflect on the play experience, connect to readings & lectures, and design a game or learning experience.

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## IDEA Course Objectives

Learning Objectives

Areas	Objectives
Basic Cognitive Background	<b>Learn fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories</b> about video games and their educational potential
Application of Learning	<p><b>Learn to apply course materials</b> to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view as a critical game player</p> <p><b>Develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view</b> needed by professionals in the field (e.g., game designers, instructional designers)</p>

**Course Format**

Delivery of this course is online, through the Canvas learning management system.

Assignments will have deadlines on **Fridays**. Comments are due on **Tuesdays**. Feel free to go in and explore the readings earlier - it's good to spread out the comments over the week so others can add to your comments!

All of the modules (organized by weeks and levels) are available on Canvas. I may add additional lecture videos, given the direction of the course discussions. You may work ahead of due dates.

You can expect the following from the instructor:

- Reasonable responses to requests to meet with the instructor virtually (24-48 hours in some instances). Should there be multiple student requests (at least 1/3 of the class), a formal conference day and time will be scheduled and an announcement encouraging others to participate will be made on the course site.
- Questions regarding personal concerns can be sent to the instructor via Canvas messages or email.
- Questions about the course are best asked on the Discussion Boards (especially the HELP FORUM). Other students may benefit from hearing your questions and others' responses, so don't hesitate to ask questions.

My hope for you in this course is that you will better **synthesize and articulate your understanding** and engage in **design thinking critically**. We will be reading topics across areas of learning, design, and game studies, and trying to make connections between them. One way to become a deeper synthesizer is to engage with the readings, do activities involved in designing and thinking about games, and practice these skills iteratively. For those reasons, the course will be structured as follows:

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- Each week, there will be some readings that everyone will complete.
- We will take notes on the readings and post questions, comments, and connections to other ideas discussed in class in the Canvas discussions.
- We will play games, take notes on our gameplay experiences, and evaluate the games we play critically.
- We will begin to design and prototype ideas for a learning game, or an instructional unit that incorporates game design principles.

As a graduate course, you will be doing a fair amount of independent reading, gaming, and writing/reflecting. Thus, you need to be a self-motivated and independent learner. You will not be able to succeed in this course if you skip the readings.

## Use of Generative AI Tools

The use of generative AI is encouraged with certain tasks and **with attribution**: You can choose to use AI tools to help brainstorm assignments or projects or to revise existing work you have written. You can also use these tools to generate artwork to accompany your game design. When you submit your assignments, clearly attribute what text, images, or other artifacts was generated by AI and cite the tools (e.g., AI-generated text appears in a different colored font, quoted directly in the text, or use an in-text parenthetical citation). Feel free to add an appendix with descriptions, e.g., the prompts you use to generate the artifacts and how you iterate through the prompts.

### **Course Materials & Fees [for online course fees see below]**

**Readings.** Course readings are available through links or pdfs online through Canvas. You will provide comments on the readings via Canvas discussions.

**Gameplay.** Throughout the course, you will play several games, many by your choice. For the four-week video gameplay assignment, you can pick a free game (or borrow a game from friends/family), but if you want a paid game, you are responsible for funding your own gameplay. If you want to purchase a game, consider what technology you have or have access to (PC, Mac, console, smartphone). Occasionally, you will need to register for free accounts to games, so have a junk email address ready.

### **Course Requirements**

There are three main requirements for the course:

**Gaming Quests (50%):** play, read/investigate, and synthesize between your play and scholarly investigations. Comments on discussion boards consist of 25% of this grade, so set reminders to participate!

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**Required XP (20%):** choose between several options to customize your learning. Various articles, some videos, and some play experiences are encouraged. If you want to design your own XP, contact the professor with enough notice for approval (at least 1 week before the XP is due).

**Boss Battle (30%):** design either an analog (non-digital) game or customize a learning environment with gaming inspiration. Peer review, play testing, and revision are core elements of this final project.

### **Boss Battle Choice 1: Make a game for learning.**

You will create your own game (card, board, or similar game) with purposes for learning. I am more interested in the design principles of the games than the technical side, so paper prototypes or a detailed layout of the game are perfectly OK (i.e., finessed aesthetics for cards, board, etc. are not necessary as long as you can communicate what is needed). Your **final product** must have:

- Well-defined learning objectives
- Well-defined target audience
- Outline of the game
- Explanation of how the game format and design support the learning objectives
- Explanation of how the game helps learn this content in ways that other types of instruction cannot
- Required pieces & components, gameplay instructions,

### **Boss Battle Choice 2: Create a learning experience inspired by games.**

You will create a learning experience (or instructional unit) that uses games for learning or applies principles from games to reshape learning in your instructional environment. This should be bigger than just a lesson. It should encompass a topic in some course or area of formal (or even informal) learning and cover it through a set of lessons and experiences. Perhaps you want to redesign a curricular unit in a course that you teach. Perhaps you want to develop a new unit for a museum or a science club or a writing workshop or a Sunday School unit. In addition to developing the curriculum, you will explain the how and why behind the curriculum and your choices:

- How does the experience help foster learning?
- Why did you choose this particular game or format?
- How do the game elements help participants learn this content in ways that other forms of instruction cannot?

### **Evaluation Methods and Criteria**

(e.g., exams, presentations, papers, performances, etc.)

### **Grade Policy**

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The following grading standards will be used in this class:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Range</b>
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%

## Attendance and Excused Absences Policy

### Game Passes

See Level 0 for the available game passes.

### Resubmission Policy

Resubmission of assignments on which you lost points is possible by **one week** from the date I submit feedback, or the last day of classes, **whichever comes first**. You only get to resubmit once per assignment. You may only resubmit if your original submission is complete (i.e., if you submit a partial lesson plan by the original due date, you do not get a chance to resubmit). If the original submission was late, you cannot resubmit.

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### Missed Assignments or Projects

Students will be allowed to make up assignments or projects at full credit only if they meet one of the following criteria:

- Incapacitating illness prevents a student from attending classes for a minimum period of two weeks,
- A death in the family,
- Financial responsibilities requiring a student to alter a schedule to secure needed employment,
- Change in work schedule as required by employer (with verification) or,
- Other emergencies are deemed appropriate by the instructor.

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If there are extenuating circumstances, a student may petition the instructor for time beyond the deadline. Documentation of the circumstances cited to justify the make-up is required.

## Written Assignments

Unless otherwise noted, **all written assignments** should be in the following format:

1. MS Word file with **your name** and assignment type in the file name.
2. 8.5 x 11, single-spaced.
3. Times/Times New Roman/Calibri, 12 pt. font.
4. Your name **is** on the first page.
5. Submitted electronically in Canvas.

## All assignments must be original work

Plagiarism will result in a failing grade. The preferred style for bibliographic referencing is APA (*American Psychological Association*). You can find details about APA documentation on [this helpful website](#). For educational research, the most popular database is ERIC (*Education Resources Information Center*). This can be found online at [ERIC: Institute of Education Sciences](#).

- see also the policy on generative AI (above) and on academic integrity (below)

## Nonattendance Policy

### Students May Be Dropped For Nonattendance

If a student does not attend a class during the first week of the term or by the second class meeting, whichever comes first, the instructor may submit a request to have the student dropped from the course. (***This does not remove responsibility from the student to drop courses which he or she does not plan to attend.***) This option is typically used for classes that are full and the instructor is trying to make a seat available for another student, but may be considered for other courses. Requests must be made during the first 20 percent of the course and will be considered on an individual student basis. Students who are dropped from courses will be notified by the Registrar's Office through their preferred e-mail account (see [USU nonattendance policy](#)).

## 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 <https://libguides.usu.edu/statewide>.

## Online Course Fee

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A fee of \$15 per credit is applied to all online courses to support digital technologies and support services required for engaging and effective online learning.

## **Classroom Behavior**

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](#) for more information.

## **University Policies & Procedures**

### **Appropriate Use of Canvas and Other IT Resources**

Canvas and all other course technologies are information technology services provided as tools to further the mission of the university. By using these services, users agree to comply with [USU Policy 550: Appropriate Use of Computing, Networking, and Information Resources](#) and the accompanying [Terms of use for USU IT](#) resources, as well as [Article V-3.B.25.c](#) of the USU Student Code. Using course technologies in ways that are inconsistent with the university's mission or are disruptive will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior includes any activity that interferes with either the faculty member's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program.

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### **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](#) 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](#)

## **Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct**

### **General Overview**



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USU strives to provide an environment for students and employees that is free from [discrimination](#) and [sexual misconduct](#). If you experience sexual misconduct or discrimination at any point during the semester inside or outside of class, you are encouraged to contact the USU Title IX Coordinator via Distance Education room 400 in Logan, 435-797-1266, [titleix@usu.edu](mailto:titleix@usu.edu), or at [equity.usu.edu/report](http://equity.usu.edu/report). You can learn more about the USU resources available for individuals who have experienced sexual misconduct at [sexualrespect.usu.edu](http://sexualrespect.usu.edu). Resources for individuals who have experienced discrimination are listed at [equity.usu.edu/resources](http://equity.usu.edu/resources).

### **Required Reporting of Sexual Misconduct and Threats of Harm**

USU cares about our students and provides a number of resources and supportive measures to students who may be experiencing thoughts of self-harm or who have experienced sexual misconduct. To ensure students are informed about resources and services available to them, including available grievance or criminal processes for incidents of sexual misconduct, USU has implemented [reporting policies and practices](#) that require designated employees to report any information they receive about incidents of sexual misconduct. This reporting policy also assists USU with its efforts to prevent sexual misconduct and keep our campus community safe.

Under USU's sexual misconduct reporting policy, I am designated as a "[reporting employee](#)." This means that if you share information with me about incidents of [sexual misconduct](#) (sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, or sex-based stalking), including within a course assignment, I *will report* that information to the [USU Title IX Coordinator](#). I will also share with you information about [designated confidential resources](#), [supportive measures](#), and [how you can file a report](#) with the USU Title IX Coordinator.

Self-disclosures about sexual misconduct that you experienced are not required for your course work.

Similarly, if you disclose thoughts of harm to self or a threat to others to me, including within a course assignment, I will report the information to the appropriate campus administrators. I will also share with you information about the [mental health and wellness resources](#) available to you.

### **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**

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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 \(DRC\)](#) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn # 101, (435) 797-2444, [drc@usu.edu](mailto: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 Pregnant or Have a Pregnancy-Related Condition**

If you need academic accommodations related to pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, recovery, or other pregnancy related conditions, please contact the Office of Equity as early as possible. All accommodations related to pregnancy must be approved by the Office of Equity. The Office of Equity will then coordinate with instructors to provide accommodations. The University will not exclude a student from participating in any part of an educational program based on the student's pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions.

*Office of Equity:* Distance Education, Room 400, Logan Campus, 435-797-1266, [Office of Equity: Pregnancy and Pregnancy Related Conditions](#).

### **Inclusive Excellence**

USU provides resources to help all students feel included as part of the campus and broader USU community. To learn more about the resources available and how to access them, visit the [Inclusive Excellence Office](#).

### **Grievance Process**

Students who feel they have been unfairly treated may file a grievance through the channels and procedures described in the [Academic Grievances section of the Course Catalog](#).

### **Full details for USU Academic Policies and Procedures**

- [Acceptable Use of University Computing Resources](#)
- [CanLinks to an external site.Academic Policies and Practices \(USU Catalog\)](#)
- [Student ConductLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Student CodeLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Links to an external site.Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility Policy](#)

### **Emergency Procedures**

In the case of a drill or real emergency, classes will be notified to evacuate the building via USU official communication channels. Those channels will be: an audible alarm, such as a fire alarm; an Aggie Alert notification; or notification by a USU representative. In the event of a disaster that does not permit enough time for notifications, evacuate as the situation dictates (i.e., when shaking ceases in an earthquake; immediately when a fire is discovered or in the event of other immediate life safety concerns). If it does not inhibit safety, turn off computers and take any

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personal items with you. Elevators should not be used; instead, use the closest stairs. See [USU Emergency Management](#) for more information.

### **General Health Protocols**

The cold, flu, COVID-19, and other illnesses can have an impact on the health of our university community. USU welcomes the wearing of masks in all university buildings and encourages taking measures to mitigate risk as recommended by federal and state public health officials: getting vaccinated, staying home if you are sick, and frequent hand washing.

### **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 \(CAPS\)](#).

Students are also encouraged to download the [“SafeUT App”](#) 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.