

CCTP628: Arcade Theory

Spring 2014

Prof. Garrison LeMasters

Georgetown University

Thursdays, 11AM-1:30PM

Syllabus 1.9d (OMG edition) / Modified 3 February 2014

Contact Information

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Online Identities

I encourage you to seek me out online. Here are some of the familiar communities of which I am a part. Optionally, you are invited to share any details about your online presence on our blog's About [You] page.

Steam

Garrison or glemasters

Apple GameCenter

Garrison

XBox Live

PaleFirer

SOE/PlayStation

PaleFirer

Google+

gwlemasters

Raptr

Garrison

Assessment

Your grade this semester will be calculated as follows:

10%	In-Class Participation
15%	Your <i>Reader's Score</i>
20%	Blog Contributions
25%	Ready Player One project
30%	Final Project

The *Reader's Score* is part of a mechanism to allow you to read material that most interests you, and skip articles or essays that you find unappealing. Essentially, you will be given a certain number of points to earn every week, and will earn those points by reading various texts (or, in some cases, playing certain games). Reading scores, as well as additional readings, films, and games to choose from, will be made available ASAP.

Blogging

We will maintain a public-facing blog throughout the semester, to which you will contribute something interesting (!) on a weekly basis. If you prefer, you do not need to use your real name on the blog (please let me know and we will build an account for you that is not linked to your name).

I will post guidelines on the blog itself.

Final Project

I will share more details about the requirements for your final project later this semester. In essence, you have two choices, both of which carry – in addition to our usual scholarly expectations – an unusual degree of *technical difficulty*:

ONE

Design, test, publish a work of interactive fiction [IF] that addresses, in some fashion, any of the issues we will cover this semester. To write your IF, you will use a tool like INFORM 7 or TWINE.

– or –

TWO

Make creative use of Valve's Source Filmmaker (3D animation; machinima). Write, build, film, and publish a short video that addresses, in some fashion, any of the issues we will cover this semester.

In either case, you may elect to pursue your project individually, or you may collaborate with a classmate.

Note that if neither of these options interest you, I am happy to discuss alternatives, including a traditional end-of-term paper.

Game On

29 January

Game Mechanics

5 February

Games and Contingency

Suits, Bernard. 1978. "Construction of a Definition." *Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*. Boston: David R. Godine.

Juul, Jesper. 2003. "Game, Play, World. Looking for the Heart of Gameness." In *Level Up: Digital Games Research Conference Proceedings*, edited by Marinka Copier and Joost Raessens, 30-45. Utrecht: Utrecht University.

Press Play

12 February

Beyond Mere Gameness: Play & the Ludic

Bateson, Gregory. 1972. "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc.

Huizinga, Johann. 1949. "Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon." *Homo Ludens*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Sutton-Smith, Brian. 2001. "Play and Ambiguity." *The Ambiguity of Play*. Boston: Harvard UP.

19 February

Odysseus' Tearful Tales & Plato's *Welthistorische Entscheidung*: From Mimesis-play to Mimesis-representation

Badiou, Alain. 2012. "Poetry and Thought (592b-608b)." *Plato's Republic: A Dialogue in Sixteen Chapters, with a Prologue and an Epilogue*. Originally published as *La République de Platon*, Librairie Arthème Fayard (2012). Translated from French to English by Susan Spitzer. Cambridge: Polity.

Crowe, Malcom. 1996. "Heraclitus and Information Systems." *Computing and Information Systems* 3, pp. 97-106.

26 February

Gaming in a Serious Century

Debord, Guy. 1956. "Theory of the Dérive." *Les Lèvres Nues* #9 (November).
Transl. Ken Knabb.

Debord, Guy and Gil J. Wolman. 1956. "A User's Guide to Détournement." *Les Lèvres Nues* #8 (May). Transl. Ken Knabb.

Kline, Stephen, Nick Dyer-Witheford, and Greg dePeuter. "Histories: The Making of a New Medium." *Digital Play*. Montréal, McGill-Queen's UP.

Ko, Christie. 2008. "Politics of Play: Situationism, Détournement, and Anti-Art." *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts, Special 02*, Summer.

Garite, Matt. nd. "The Ideology of Interactivity; (Or, Video Games and the Taylorization of Leisure)." Unpublished MS (Syracuse University).

Sloterdijk, Peter. 1985. *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Transl. Michael Eldred. Minneapolis: UMin Press.

Ready Player One

5 March

The Player as Vitruvian Man

Bartle, Richard A. 1996. "Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players Who Suit MUDs." <http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hclds.htm>. Retrieved 14 December 2013.

Castronova, Ted. 2007. "In Search of an Understanding of Fun and Games." *Exodus to the Virtual World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 81-89.

Castronova, Ted. 2007. "A Theory of Fun." *Exodus to the Virtual World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 91-108.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Stith Bennett. "An Exploratory Model of Play." *American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol. 73, No. 1* (February). pp. 45-58.

19 March

The Player as Homo Ludens

Castronova, Ted. 2003. "The Right to Play." Unpublished MS.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1992. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *OCTOBER 59*, Winter. pp. 3-7.

Dibbell, Julian. 1993. "A Rape in Cyberspace." *Village Voice*, December 21.

Koster, Raph. 2000. "Declaring the Rights of Players." Raph Koster's Website. <http://www.raphkoster.com/playerrights.shtml>. August 27.

McGonigal, Jane. 2003. "A Real Little Game: The Performance of Belief in Pervasive Play." Unpublished MS.

Pearce, Celia and Artemesia. 2008. "Identity-as-Place: Trans-Ludic Identities in Mediated Play Communities – The Case of the Uru Diaspora." *Internet Research 9.0*, Copenhagen, October 15-18.

Playnomics. 2013. "Playnomics Player Engagement Study, Q3 2013". <http://www.playnomics.com>. Retrieved 03 January 2014.

Thomas, Douglas and John Seely Brown. "Learning for a World of Constant Change: Homo Sapiens, Homo Farber & Homo Ludens Revisited." Paper presented at the 7th Glion Colloquium, University of Southern California. June.

Wark, McKenzie. 2004. "Abstraction," "Education," and "Hacking." *A Hacker Manifesto*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

26 March

Session dedicated to logistics for GameLab exhibit

All That Is Solid Melts Into Air

2 April

The Playbours of Sisyphus

McGonigal, Jane. 2011. "More Satisfying Work." *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. New York: The Penguin Press.

Goggin, Joyce. 2011. "Playbour, Farming and Leisure." *ephemera* 11(4): 357-368.

Valve Corporation. 2012. *Valve: Handbook for New Employees: A Fearless Adventure in Knowing What To Do When No One's There Telling You What To Do*. First Edition. Bellevue, Washington: Valve Corporation

9 April

Mimesis+

Jerz, Dennis G. 2007. "Somewhere Nearby is Colossal Cave: Examining Will Crowther's Original 'Adventure' in Code and in Kentucky." <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/001/2/000009/000009.html>

Montfort, Nick. 2003. "Interactive Fiction In Our Culture." *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

16 April

Digitality & this.world()

Winsberg, Eric B. 2010. "Methodology for a Virtual World." *Science in the Age of Computer Simulation*. Chicago: U Chicago.

Yee, Nick, Jason Ellis, and Nicolas Ducheneaut. 2009. "The Tyranny of Embodiment." *Artifact, Vol. 2*. pp. 1-6.

Zizek, Slavoj. n.d. "Cyberspace; or, The Virtuality of the Real." Unpublished (or unattributed) MS.

Insert Quarter to Continue

23 April

Start-Select (Game Thot)

Bogost, Ian. 2012. "Carpentry: Constructing Artifacts That Do Philosophy." *Alien Phenomenology*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT UP.

Bogost, Ian. 2006. "Critical Networks." *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

GameLabs

In addition to our regularly scheduled classes, we will organize several after-hours sessions that will allow us to better achieve our aims. These sessions are by no means required. We will discuss and schedule these during class. If we elect to do so as a class, we may abandon one proposed GameLab for something else entirely.

GameLab One

Remaking the Psychogeography of the CarBarn. How can we up-end – even if only for a moment – the solemn and bureaucratic nature of this building?

GameLab Two

Dungeons & Dragons (live role-playing). It is probably not too much of an exaggeration to claim that, in one way or another, D&D is responsible for some aspect of nearly every videogame produced in the last thirty years. More than anything else, though, a game of *Dungeons and Dragons* fosters *communitas* through storytelling – which marks it in stark contrast to most contemporary videogames. NB that I imagine we would probably invite other students from CCT (and English, of course) to join us.

GameLab Three

Ready Player One: We will curate an online exhibit that focuses on players at play. Obviously, there is a lot of latitude here: When they talk about games with the public, most institutions follow fairly predictable “critical” tropes: (1) games as art, (2) the positive or negative effects of games on players and their communities, (3) the realism of games, (4) the history of games as a commodity.¹ It seems to me as though – despite allegedly identifying in the player with all manner of theoretical agency – scholars have done very little to acknowledge how players play. I would like to consider exploring this further.

1. If we include sports in this category, then my point is moot (although it would be interesting to ask if we are considering athlete’s manner of play or focusing on them instead as celebrities and commodities).

Games

Gameplay is integral to our research. Play attentively. Play throughout the semester. Keep a notebook within which to record your reactions, insights, and observations, and translate those remarks into your weekly blog entry.

During the semester, *you should play at least five of the following games.* While there is nothing wrong with playing a game once and then abandoning it, our intention here is close, scrupulous study: Plan on investing each game with at least eight hours of attention. (NB: This may include time spent on wikis, watching online tutorials, etc.).

Valve Corporation's Steam service is the [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) of digital game distribution: It is a great place to browse for downloadable games. (Once you've set up an account on Steam, share your Steam username with us on the blog.) Good Old Games, [GOG.com](https://www.gog.com), sells a lot of inexpensive titles from the 90's and early 2000's (intense nostalgia warning).

Below, I have identified several games as "highly recommended" components of the course. These are likely integral to one or more of our discussions.

Highly Recommended

Portal (Valve)

Cart Life (Inkthirsty)

The Stanley Parable (Galactic Cafe)

Papers, Please (3909)

DOTA 2 (Valve)

Minecraft (Mojang)

Superbrothers' Sword & Sworcery EP (Capybara)

Grand Theft Auto IV (Rockstar)

SimCity (any iteration) (Maxis / EA)

Prison Architect (alpha) (Introversion)
Half-Life 2 (Valve)
Gone Home (The Fulbright Company)
The Last of Us (Naughty Dog)
Pikmin (any iteration) (Nintendo)
Device 6 (Simogo)
Papa Sangre II (Somethin' Else)

More Options

Candy Crush Saga (King)
FarmVille 2 (Zynga)
Clash of Clans (Supercell)
Peggle (any iteration) (PopCap Games)
Plants vs. Zombies (PopCap Games)
State of Decay (Undead Labs)
Civilization V (2K Games)
Europa Universalis IV (Paradox Interactive)
War Thunder (Gaijin)
Path of Exile (Grinding Gear Games)
America's Army: Proving Grounds (US Army)
Blockland (Blockland LLC)
Long Live the Queen (Hanako Games)
Arma III (Bohemia Interactive)
fIOW (That Game Company)
World of Warcraft (Blizzard)
Sims 3 (any iteration) (Electronic Arts)
EVE Online (CCP)
Timber and Stone (alpha) (Robert Reed)

Interactive Fiction

At the semester's end, we will focus briefly on interactive fiction [IF], a quiet, unassuming category of literate game that may – or may not – hint at the future of narrative. Your final project for this course will include the design, production, testing, and distribution of a short work of IF. Be sure to acquaint yourself with its variety by exploring the amazing resources at the Interactive Fiction Database (IFDB): <http://ifdb.tads.org>.

Frotz is the cross-platform interpreter that brings most IF games (written in the venerable Z-code) to life. It is available on just about any platform, including A recent iOS implementation comes with some of the best recent IF already installed. See:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/frotz/id287653015?mt=8>

Suggested IF

The following texts offer a good way to begin with IF.

Colossal Cave Adventure (1975, Crowther / Woods).

"Castle, Forest, Island, Sea" by Carolyn Price (Open University, Philosophy).

Platform: Twee / TiddlyWiki

Zork I (1980, Blank and Lebling). See the *Zork I* page at IFDB: <http://ifdb.tads.org/viewgame?id=0dbnusxunq7fw5ro>

Photopia (1998, Adam Cadre). See the *Photopia* page at IFDB: <http://ifdb.tads.org/viewgame?id=ju778uv5xaswnlpl>