This class will meet on Thursdays from 5:00-7:40 pm for seminar (discussion), and on Mondays from 7:00-8:00 pm for a game lab, which will usually meet at the library in room W164. (More on the game lab below.)

In this course we will consider video games as a technology, industry, cultural form, and set of social practices. We will also survey game studies as an emergent academic field with backgrounds in many disciplines. Students will be expected to play a variety of games, to read extensively in the literature of game studies, and to formulate an original research project which will become a final paper.

My interest in games is primarily as a subject for cultural history, but this course will also look at video game criticism and theory. Students are encouraged to pursue any approach to their research that appears useful and appropriate.

One way of looking at games is as a form of new media, and particularly as an instance of convergence of technologies, in particular audiovisual technologies such as TV, cinema, and computers. This will be one way of approaching video games. But to many writers, digital games are also a medium unto themselves, and their distinctness from other media is also a matter for serious consideration.

Among the specific topics to be considered are:

- The early history of video games and the establishment of their cultural identity.

- The spaces of play and the significance of gaming in everyday life.

- The association of gaming with identities, particularly those of age and gender, and dynamics of power inherent in such cultural constructions.

- Gaming as an practice situated in communities, online and offline.

- Gaming as a product of advanced capitalist industry and culture.

- Video games as a textual, aesthetic form.

- Game genres such as first-person shooter and rhythm game (e.g., *Dance Dance Revolution, Guitar Hero*); games as remediations of practices such as shooting, musical performance, and earlier forms of play like board games, and of genres of popular culture from other media.
Readings:

The following books are available at the UWM Bookstore and on 2-hour reserve at the library, which is now located in the lower level of the west wing (see below for full citations):

Donovan, *Replay: The History of Video Games*
Galloway, *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*
Juul, *Half-Real: Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*
Taylor, *Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture*

Additional readings are available through library e-reserve or D2L, or are published on sites freely accessible online. See below.

Assignments:

- **Reading responses.** To be shared on the course blog by noon on the day of class, minimum 500 words. Each student will complete two reading responses during the semester. A signup sheet will circulate at the first class meeting.

- **Book review.** You have two books to choose from: Bissell, *Extra Lives*, and Bogost, *How to Do Things with Video Games*. You will read the same book as several others in the seminar. During the class meeting on March 29 we will have a book club where you will discuss the book in a roundtable format. Minimum 1500 words. Due March 29.

- **Research project.**
  
  **Components:**
  1. Primary sources workshop. March 1.
  2. Annotated bibliography, minimum 5 scholarly sources, minimum 1000 words total. Due April 12.
  3. Presentation, approximately 20 minutes followed by discussion. May 3 and 10.

Grades:

Reading questions: 10% (5% each)
Book review: 20%
Participation: 10%
Research project: 60%
  
  workshop: 5%
  presentation: 5%
  annotated bibliography: 10%
  paper: 40%
**Game lab:**

This will be a weekly hour of game play, and it will have at least two purposes. One is to give us examples to discuss in our seminar meetings, including examples of games analyzed in the readings. Another is to offer seminar members an opportunity to share games they want to work on in their research. This is intended to make a collaborative space in which participants become familiar with each others’ interests and support each other’s work. Days marked “curated” are available for seminar participants to program with games they will bring in. The library has an XBox for our use. This curation is optional and voluntary, and is not a graded component of the course. We will discuss signing up for curated game labs in the first few weeks of the course.

**Online tools:**

All participants in the seminar will become contributors to a Wordpress blog: http://videogamesseminar.wordpress.com. Invitations to join the blog will be sent after the first class meeting. Reading responses are to be posted to the blog. Participants are encouraged to subscribe in an RSS reader such as Google Reader and to check in regularly to be sure not to miss any entries. The blog may also be used to post other materials, such as links or videos of interest, primary sources to be shared during the workshop, and final projects. Seminar participants may post to the course blog at any time.

Is **twitter** useful in a class setting? If you want to find out, we can try to incorporate it. To give you a sense of how twitter might be used by video game scholars, I made a list of them on twitter: https://twitter.com/#!/list/mznewman/video-game-scholars. I am open to incorporating twitter into our course if others initiate. A hashtag would be a good first step.

**University policies:**

Students with disabilities should notify the instructor as soon as possible so that every possible accommodation may be made. For more see http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf.

Students whose religious observance conflicts with class requirements should do the same. For more see http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm.

Academic misconduct may result in severe sanctions. For more see http://

These and many other UWM policies are detailed in this document: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf.

Schedule:

1.23 game lab off
1.26 seminar course introduction & background

1.30 game lab Atari games
2.2 seminar History I: Donovan, *Replay* ch. 1-14

2.6 game lab Nintendo games
2.9 seminar History II: Donovan, *Replay* ch 15-28

2.13 game lab arcade field trip
2.16 seminar Early Games: Bernstein, Brand, Huhtamo, Sudnow, Turkle

recommended 2.20 11:30 am, Curtin Hall 939, I am presenting my research (“Play TV: Early Video Game History”) at the works-in-progress series, Center for 21st Century Studies

2.20 game lab *BioShock*
2.23 seminar Narrative: Deterding, Jenkins, “Games: the New Lively Art;” Jenkins, “Game Design as Narrative Architecture;” Juul, “Games Telling Stories?”

2.27 game lab curated 1
3.1 seminar primary sources workshop

3.5 game lab Grand Theft Auto IV
3.8 seminar Theorizing Gaming I: Juul, *Half-Real*

3.12 game lab Call of Duty: Modern Warfare
3.15 seminar Theorizing Gaming II: Galloway

-----spring break------


3.26 game lab curated 2
3.29 seminar book club: Bissell, Extra Lives; Bogost, How to Do Things with Video Games

4.2 game lab curated 3
4.5 seminar Video Game Culture I: Skirrow, Shaw, “What is Video Game Culture?” Shaw, “Do You Identify as a Gamer?” Jenkins, “Complete Freedom of Movement’: Video Games as Gendered Play Spaces”

4.9 game lab curated 4
4.12 seminar Video Game Culture II: Flynn, Murphy, Voida & Greenberg, Newman work in progress

4.16 game lab an online game, preferably curated 5
4.19 seminar Online Play: Taylor

4.23 game lab Rock Band 2
4.26 seminar Rhythm Games & Interdisciplinarity: Miller, Smith

4.30 game lab curated 6
5.3 seminar presentations

recommended 5.3-5.5: The Nonhuman Turn in 21st Century Studies, a conference at the Center for 21st Century Studies at which Ian Bogost will be speaking http://www4.uwm.edu/c21/pages/events/conferences.html

5.7 game lab curated 7
5.10 seminar presentations

Citations:

Charles Bernstein, “Play it Again, Pac-Man,” Postmodern Culture v.2 n.1 (September, 1991), http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue.991/pop-cult.991. online


Ian Bogost, How to Do Things with Video Games (Minnesota, 2011). reserve


Tristan Donovan, *Replay: The History of Video Games* (Yellow Ant Media, 2010). reserve


Sheila C. Murphy, “‘This is Intelligent Television’: The Emerging Technologies of Video Games, Computers, and the Medium of Television,” *How Television Invented New Media* (Rutgers, 2011). e-reserve


David Sudnow, Pilgrim in the Microworld (Warner Books, 1983), excerpt. D2L

