



MDST3704: Games & Play

Fall, 2020 — Online

Professor: Sean Duncan

Zoom Personal Meeting Room: <https://virginia.zoom.us/my/games> (password: “scdsdscd”)

Office hours: By Appointment Only (please email or DM on Discord to schedule)

Zoom Check-Ins: Tuesdays, 9:30am-10:30am Eastern

Why Games and Play?

Games are a major cultural, economic, and even political force. How should we make sense of what games are, the many ways that people use them, and what kinds of meanings can be drawn from interaction within gaming cultures? In this course, we will explore multiple approaches to understanding these media, as well as engage in ongoing debates over their role in current social and cultural tensions.

We will ground an introduction to this field through an investigation of games and play, from historical roots in ritual and play through analyses of participation in contemporary digital and analog games. As part of this approach, we will learn about and discuss the field of “game studies” — approaches drawn from cultural studies, game design/interactive media design, and other forms of games research. We will discuss the history of early game systems to major subcultural events with political consequences (“Gamergate”). Since studies of games move across multiple disciplinary boundaries, we will explore how fruitful understandings of these media are developed through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary investigations into them, balancing perspectives from the humanities, social sciences, and design fields.

The emphasis in this class is on providing a survey of games research, tackling issues in game design, and developing a sense of the field of game studies. The breadth of this field is surprisingly large, and we cannot incorporate all perspectives within this class. As a consequence, even in its current virtual learning form, this class has an emphasis on play experiences and issues in gaming culture that are often unfamiliar to undergraduates. De-emphasizing and overtly challenging popular consumerist discourses around games, **we focus in this class on independent, art, and “serious” games much more than dominant commercial videogame franchises.** Students are encouraged to explore games as *expressive media* through this course, and experience multiple approaches to understanding them: Through play, interpretation, critique, and design. We will learn how to talk about and read about games as fans, scholars, players, *and* designers. All students will gain rudimentary experience with game design through this course, with the intent of creating games that can help students work through issues raised by the course.

Through active and significant participation in this course, students will:

- Learn how to *interpret* and *critique* games as media, developing analytic interpretations of games in concert with self-observations of gaming practices
- Gain an understanding of the *history of games* and the production, analysis, and design of games
- Develop an understanding of games as *expressive media* that incorporate argument, politics, values, and ways of knowing
- Develop *critical game design* skills, creating a small game prototype as a means of wrestling with topics raised by the course through making games.

What This Course Is and Is Not

This course is not designed to cater to students who traditionally identify as “gamers.” Students’ commitment to and fandom of games can be useful but often get in the way of productive critique of these media. Students sometimes enter this course holding onto their profound and significant gaming experiences, but a *larger* portion of students who enroll this course know next to nothing about contemporary gaming culture. Both of these sets of student experiences are valuable and important for the class, but it requires balance from both the professor and the students in the course to navigate.

Additionally, while much of the existing study of games and play has privileged commercial digital video games, the consideration of non-digital games, art games, and folk games will be a *regular* occurrence in this class. The choice of games we will discuss in this course is intentionally designed to challenge students to look beyond their experiences with commercial games and engage with a broader world of play. Specifically, we will spend much of our time looking at “indie” games, non-digital games, performative games, and otherwise lesser-known games instead of AAA games you might be more familiar with (e.g., *Fortnite*, *Call of Duty*, *The Last of Us 2*). This is intentional for three reasons: (1) to push students out of consumerist perspectives driven by the AAA gaming industry and gaming press, which privileges games as commercial, consumable entertainment; (2) to provide students with a variety of provocative game mechanics, modalities, experiences, and alternate uses they may have not seen with a focus primarily on AAA games; (3) to provide a level playing field for all students, where students with a great deal of gaming experience will often be as new to the games played/discussed in class as students for whom games are an unknown. Students should adjust their expectations accordingly — you will be challenged to learn about many different forms of “games” in this class, and repeatedly challenged to play them.

Like media studies in general, game studies is an inherently *interdisciplinary* affair. As such, this course will have us engaging with radically different readings from very different disciplines, sometimes within the same week. Emerging interdisciplinary fields often require students to become comfortable with a rapid shifting of perspective between multiple approaches — criticism, design, fandom, and scholarship. Students should be prepared to engage with a wide range of discourses in this class, and also ask for context/clarification whenever any is needed.

Course Texts

Books:

- *How to Play Video Games*, edited by Matthew Payne and Nina Huntemann. This is the key textbook for the term, and you will use multiple chapters from it throughout the semester (paper or ebook copy are both fine). The book is required by *Week 5* of the semester. Please order ASAP! Purchase links: [Amazon](#) | [B&N](#) | [Publisher](#)
- *Games, Design, and Play* by Colleen Macklin and John Sharp. Secondary textbook; we'll use this at the beginning of the term and again near the middle (paper or ebook copy are both fine). Purchase links: [Amazon](#) | [B&N](#) | [Informit](#). Note: Also available free online via UVA Libraries — see [this link](#) for information on how to access the O'Reilly Digital Library.

Games:

Students are expected to *play games* as part of this course. Ongoing “Gameplay Report” assignments will be assigned where students will be tasked with playing most or all of a game from a set of pre-approved games. Every week, at least one of these games will be free, but many others will cost between \$10-\$20 apiece (with a rare option being \$40-\$60). Students will need to play a minimum of *four* of these throughout the term, and should consider their access to these games or their ability to purchase these games.

Course Policies

Details of course policies often weigh down a syllabus, so they have been put into a separate file for all of Dr. Duncan’s Fall, 2020 classes. All relevant course policies are all available for your reference as a PDF at: <http://se4n.org/teaching/course-policies-current.pdf>. The professor reserves the right to alter the course policies at his discretion.

Writing Guidelines

Similarly, since Dr. Duncan’s courses often involve a great deal of writing, general guidelines and common pitfalls in student writing for his courses are available in a separate file here: <http://se4n.org/teaching/writing-guidelines-current.pdf>. The professor reserves the right to alter the writing guidelines at his discretion.

Assignments

Assignment	Points	%	Due	Notes
Gameplay Reports x4 (out of 8 opportunities)	400	40%	Variable	Spec graded! One revision
Game Jam				
- Prototype	100	10%	Nov 20	Spec graded [Group project]
- Postmortem	150	15%	Nov 24	Individually assessed
Missing Chapter	200	20%	Dec 5	Replaces final exam
Online Participation	150	15%	Ongoing	Discord (Zoom, Collab)

Gameplay Reports - Worth a total 400 course points max (40% of total course grade max)

One of the not-very-secret goals of this course is to push students to appreciate a broader palette of experiences that have been labeled “games” than students typically enter the class with. Therefore, all students will be compelled to complete — at *minimum!* — four “Gameplay Reports” that will allow you to (1) experience and reflect on the play of a digital, tabletop, or role-playing game; (2) connect this experience to course readings; and (3) raise additional questions that help to forward your consideration of the social, cultural, political, and economic understanding of games. Students are responsible for acquiring their own games for this assignment, finding games that interest them which play on platforms that are available to them, and also can afford. No student should feel the need to buy any digital gaming hardware for this course, and each week’s games feature at least one free or free-to-play option.

Games are fundamentally social and communicative media. Therefore, students are strongly encouraged to *not* go it alone, even for the single-player games. Students should reach out to others on the course Discord to find other students (or maybe even the professor!) to play games with, as well as to potentially coordinate live gameplay sessions for other students to witness, if they’d like. Please use the #gameplay-coordination Discord channel for this purpose, and if students are interested in streaming their own gameplay, feel free to use the “Gameplay Streaming” Voice/Video channel on Discord. While the writing of each Gameplay Report is assumed to be done individually, students *should* reach out to others to discuss their gameplay experiences and interpretations.

Each of the Reports will follow a prescribed format, first describing in detail the play of the game and the student’s reactions to the play experience in approximately 2-3 paragraphs. Next, the student will be tasked with connecting their gameplay back to the readings under discussion, also in approximately 2-3 paragraphs. Finally, the student will have the opportunity to raise questions relevant to the course topics that arose from this reflective play experience. Please see [this sample Gameplay Report](#) for an example of how a report might look, but also please note that this format is but a guideline — if your gameplay experience warrants deviating from this structure, you are encouraged to be creative with the format.

Additionally, each of these Gameplay Reports can serve as a way to work through ideas that can be later explored in the final, cumulative written assignment, the “Missing Chapter.”

Gameplay Reports are *specifications-graded*, according to specifications listed in the Collab Assignment link. Students are limited to *one submission per assignment link*, which covers the most recent two-week span each. In Week 4, for instance, you may submit a Gameplay Report based on a game assigned during Weeks 3 or 4. Students are strongly encouraged to jump right into this assignment in Week 2 — students often assume a lower writing standard than the Professor in this class, so be sure to give yourself enough time to potentially revise unsuccessful Gameplay Reports! Students have lost entire letter grades due to falling behind on this particular assignment or its equivalent in other classes. You may revise any unsatisfactory Gameplay Reports as you see fit, with a final deadline for Gameplay Report Revisions in Week 10.

The games chosen have been listed in the course schedule for each week (see the Course Schedule), with links provided to play the game (for free or to purchase). Students are strongly encouraged to play a game that they are interested in writing about during the week that they are assigned as play options, as readings have been paired to connect to the game in some fashion. Students should use the course Discord to coordinate gameplay sessions with one another.

Game Jam — Worth a total of 250 course points (25% of the course grade)

Central to this course in recent semesters has been the experience of designing a game, as a means of grounding some of the scholarly work on game studies in a small bit of game design practice. In the face-to-face version of the course, this has entailed a group midterm project in which students have created, by-and-large, non-digital paper prototypes of games based on a theme. For the online version of this course, we will push this assignment to later in the term, with students developing games in *pairs* (or no more than three students apiece), provided with a theme, a set of “diversifiers,” and a set of constraints to guide students’ creative design process. Students will be tasked with creating a game that explicitly and seriously addresses the Game Jam theme through the design of a digital or non-digital (or hybrid) game. No specific platform or type of game is assumed (folk games, card games, digital games, role-playing games, story games, theatre games, are all fine) and no previous experience in game design is required or expected. Links to several easy-to-use digital game environments (Twine and Bitsy) will be provided.

In subsequent weeks, games designed during the Game Jam will be playtested by other students in the class. Using iterative game design approaches described by Macklin and Sharp text, students will engage in a truncated form of iterative game design, wherein one round of design will be undertaken, critiques will be evaluated and incorporated into students’ designs, and then new game prototypes will be proposed. Student groups will each develop an Initial Prototype (worth 100 course points). Since many students in this course have no game design experience, the Initial Prototype will be specifications graded, though this project will not be subject to the same revision opportunity as the Gameplay Reports.

Additionally, each student will be required to write a Postmortem paper, due at the same time. This paper will give students the opportunity to describe their game development process, connecting it to the

Macklin & Sharp readings, as well as other texts drawn from the course. This paper will be individually written, is worth 150 course points, and will be graded using the Standard Grading Scale.

Missing Chapter — Worth 200 course points (20% of course grade)

The culminating assignment for this course will be a written paper, which ideally builds upon Gameplay Reports and allows students the opportunity to express their understanding of issues raised throughout the course.

We will be reading multiple chapters from Payne and Huntemann's *How to Play Video Games* in this course, which outlines multiple approaches to interpreting games and connecting games to discussions in media studies. The approaches they take are eclectic and range in disciplinary interest — from foci on representation to issues of labor to participation in gaming communities. For this culminating paper for the course, you'll be tasked with creating your own, unique "read" of a game (following an approach drawn from the Payne and Huntemann text), incorporating insights drawn from your own play, synthesizing analytic techniques discussed throughout the term, and written in a clearly articulated style.

Students may choose one of three paths — (1) picking a game and a theme of interest to write an interpretation of; (2) picking either a game or a theme from the Payne & Huntemann book and applying a new theme or game to it; (3) picking a game discussed in the Payne & Huntemann book and applying it to a new theme which was also drawn from the Payne & Huntemann book. Students will need to be familiar with the games under study, and all "missing chapters" will be need to be based on the detailed play of a game — therefore, building off of a previous Gameplay Report might be a solid foundation to a successful Missing Chapter paper.

Students will be asked to develop (ungraded) "pitches" of the game they'd like to study and themes they suspect they'd like to write about for their missing chapters by the beginning of November. Students are strongly encouraged to view this assignment as the equivalent of a cumulative final examination; it is an opportunity to bring together threads from the entire course, and apply their understanding of games as media to the interpretation of a single theme and single game. A rubric will be provided for the grading of this assignment, which will be assessed using the Standard Grading Scale.

Online Participation - Worth 150 course points (15% of total course grade)

This class meets fully online, using three primary online tools for interaction — Collab, Zoom, and Discord. All students are expected to have regular, daily or near-daily access to all of these. The majority of class discussions will occur on the course Discord, supplemented by once-weekly Zoom call discussions. As such, this course is almost entirely asynchronous, with only a few synchronous meetings over the entire term. Since student discussion will be asynchronous and primarily over Discord, students should use whatever platform(s) the student is most comfortable with (phone, tablet, laptop) to keep active in the course Discord.

Online participation in this course is conceptualized as *active and visible attempts to genuinely contribute to other students' learning*. That's vague, but the gist is about *talking to other students, even if it may be initially uncomfortable*. Instead of "just doing my required post," students should use Discord actively





and genuinely to discuss topics of relevance to the course. This is not about “online attendance,” it’s about actively trying to help others learn, through conversation, discussion, working on group activities, and attempts to replicate seminar discussions online. The two primary means of interaction will be Discord and Zoom:

- **Discord:** Use of the course Discord is *mandatory*; students are very strongly encouraged to download Discord on as many devices as they are likely to have regular access to during their day. You will be prompted multiple times per week to discuss the course readings and activities in several dedicated Discord channels. You will be tasked with using the course Discord eagerly and regularly to, at minimum, conversing with one another about the ongoing discussion questions as if they were questions prompting an in-class discussion. Your performance in Discord *will be the bulk of your class participation grade*. Students who treat the course Discord as though it is an ongoing conversation (or set of conversations) will get the most out of this tool, and will also contribute the most to the learning of others in the class. Students will be required to participate (via text, sometimes via audio) in multiple Discord channels regarding discussions of readings, gameplay assignments, and group projects. Please familiarize yourself with Discord as quickly as possible.
- **Zoom Check-Ins:** These will occur during the course’s scheduled meeting time, once per week. Attendance will be taken to record who has been present, but these are *not mandatory*. You are encouraged to turn your camera on but are *not* required to, and virtual backgrounds are encouraged but not required. Participation in Zoom calls will be assessed with regards to whether or not you *actively participated* in these spaces, not whether you showed up (so, attending with your camera and mic off and not actually engaging with any discussions will *not contribute to your course participation grade*).

We are all still experimenting with tools to replicate or replace the in-class teaching environment, so please expect some hiccups with both technical issues as well as translating the face-to-face seminar interaction to an online space. In general, while the Discord environment may be used for a variety of non-instructional purposes, this is a *University course* and, as such, the norms for interaction should be more formal and considerate of others’ comfort than in many other Discord spaces. A Code of Conduct will be placed within the course Discord, and students who repeatedly violate this Code of Conduct will find themselves removed from it (which will certainly lead to consequences for the students’ online participation grade). Also, please note that the professor will make every effort to respond to emails and Discord DMs in a prompt manner, but will need at least one full business day to get back to you. The professor will *not reply to any Discord DMs sent between 9pm and 9am*, so it’s best to just wait and send something in the morning.

Course Schedule

All readings are due by Monday of each week; students will be prompted to discuss these on the course Discord before the Tuesday Zoom calls. Each week’s class also lists discussion prompts for Discord discussions (to be ongoing in the #seminar-discussions channel), as well as weekly play opportunities.

The  icon represents required readings, the  represents discussion prompts for #seminar-discussions, the  represents options for which Gameplay Reports you might wish to complete for that week, and the  icon represents that an assignment is due that week. **All Zoom check-ins will be held on Tuesday mornings at 9:30am, and all assignments, unless otherwise noted are due at 9am Eastern on the Friday of the week in which they are due.**

Other than the first and last weeks in which the Gameplay Report assignments are due, all weeks feature at least three play opportunities. All play opportunities have been linked up in the course syllabus, along with an estimated cost for each (in parentheses), with at least one free option available for each week. Also note: To help financially support game designers, I have chosen to privilege itch.io links over Steam links for digital games whenever possible in this syllabus, but you are welcome to acquire these games in whatever way you wish.

Week 1: Introductions / Why study games and play?



Anna Anthropy ["The Problem with Videogames"](#); Matt Payne & Nina Huntemann, ["Introduction"](#), from *How To Play Video Games*



What kinds of games do you play? What games do you like? What forms of play do you dislike? Why do we like what we like, and how do we reflect on what's shaping our preferences? What are games "good for"?



[Dys4ia](#) (free; requires Flash)



Join the course Discord, post an introduction in the #introductions channel!

Week 2: What are "games"?



Robin Hunicke, Marc LeBlanc, & Robert Zubek ["MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research"](#); Roger Caillois ["The Definition of Play and the Classification of Games"](#); Colleen Macklin & John Sharp, Ch. 1-2 [see above to access free digital copy!]



What are games? How do we classify types of play? How do we distinguish between design-focused writing about games from other scholarly forms of writing about games?



[Dear Esther](#) (\$10); [Octodad](#) (free); [Proteus](#) (\$10); [Dog Eat Dog](#) (\$5); [Sunset](#) (\$20); [Speed Chess](#) (free; Windows only); [howling dogs](#) (free); [Pandemic](#) (~\$40)



Gameplay Report (Weeks 1 & 2)

Week 3: Focusing on the player



Macklin & Sharp Ch. 3-4; Brenda Romero, “[Train \(or How I Dumped Electricity and Learned to Love Design\)](#)” (video); Linda Hughes, “[Beyond the Rules of the Game: Why are Rooie Rules Nice?](#)”; Now optional: Stephen Sniderman, “[Unwritten rules](#)”



What are the kinds of play that game designers use? How do these match/conflict with forms of play you’ve experienced? How do we consider pushing against what a game wants us to do? When and why might we do that? What rules are written and which are unwritten?



[Nidhogg](#) (\$10); [Portal 2](#) (\$10); [The Witness](#) (\$40); [Analogue: A Hate Story](#) (\$10; not compatible with MacOS Catalina); [The McDonald’s Videogame](#) (free); [Thirty Flights of Loving](#) (\$5); [Alabaster](#) (free); [Perfect Woman](#) (\$9; XboxOne only)



Gameplay Report (Weeks 2 & 3)

Week 4: Design values and values in play



Ian Bogost, “[The Rhetoric of Video Games](#)”; Macklin & Sharp, Ch. 6.; Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum, “[Uncovering Values at Play](#)” from *Values at Play in Digital Games* (bad scan; will try to fix later)



Moving beyond kinds and types of play, we now need to consider the messages embedded in games. And more than just messages, how are values communicated through play? In what ways are arguments parts of games?



[Pong](#) (free; requires installation of MAME emulator to play); [Journey](#) (\$15; also available for PlayStation consoles); [Desert Golfing](#) (\$2; also available for iOS/Android); [Consentacle](#) (\$6 via Itch; or play [free print-and-play Kickstarter version](#)); [Ico](#) (\$10 for PS3 only, available elsewhere for PS2); [Flower](#) (\$7, Windows only; also [available for PS3](#)); [Beyond Good & Evil](#) (\$10, Windows only); [The McDonald’s Videogame](#) (free)



Gameplay Report (Weeks 3 & 4)



Tuesday, Sept 15th Zoom Check-In: [Procedural rhetoric and design values](#) (Passcode: g%&is.8z)

Week 5: Magic circles, rules, and narratives



Steven Conway, “*FIFA: Magic Circle*” (Ch. 1); Rolf Nohr, “*Tetris: Rules*” (Ch. 2); Anastasia Salter “*King’s Quest: Narrative*” (Ch. 3) — all in Matt Payne & Nina Huntemann (Eds)., *How to Play Video Games*



How do we talk about the boundaries of play, the rules of games, and narrative in games? What are the goals of this book? How do each of these chapters address different types of games, different theoretic goals, and different approaches to game studies?



[FIFA 20](#) (variable price, available for multiple platforms); [King’s Quest](#) (free); [Tetris](#) (free); [Thousand Year Old Vampire](#) (\$15); [Arkham Horror: The Card Game](#) (\$45); [Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective](#) (~\$45)



Gameplay Report (Weeks 4 & 5)

Week 6: Indies and forms of play



Felan Parker, “[Indie Game Studies, Year Eleven](#)”; Jesper Juul, “*Braid: Indies*” (Ch. 8); Miguel Sicart, “*Papers Please: Ethics*” (Ch. 18); James Newman, “*Minecraft: User-Generated Content*” (Ch. 33) — all in Matt Payne & Nina Huntemann (Eds)., *How to Play Video Games*; Optional: Bo Ruberg, “The Queerness and Games Conference: Community” in Payne & Huntemann



What’s an indie game? What forms of play are explored in “indie” games? How have games transitioned from “indie” to commercial and critical successes? What does this imply about the “industry”?



[Braid](#) (\$15); [Papers, Please](#) (\$10); [Minecraft](#) (~\$20, available for multiple platforms; [free demo available](#)); [The Return of the Obra-Dinn](#) (\$20; [free GDC demo available](#)); [Slay the Spire](#) (\$25)



Gameplay Report (Weeks 5 & 6)

Week 7: Money, cheating, and labor



Mia Consalvo, "[Cheating can be good for you: educational games and multiple play styles](#)"; Mia Consalvo, "*Clash Royale*: Gaming Capital" (Ch. 22); Randy Nichols, "*Pokémon Go*: Globalization" (Ch. 30); Kelly Bergstrom, "*EVE Online*: Cheating" (Ch. 36) — all in Matt Payne & Nina Huntemann (Eds.), *How to Play Video Games*



What does "cheating" have to do with "capital"? How do we consider the many forms of economic activity at play in games? What forms of labor are involved in playing games? How do we consider the globalized markets for games?



[Clash Royale](#) (free, with in-app purchases); [Pokémon Go](#) (free for mobile devices); [EVE Online](#) (free-to-play; paid options available); [World of Warcraft](#) (free-to-play; paid options available)



Gameplay Report (Weeks 6 & 7)

Week 8: Gender, race, and sexual orientation



Shira Chess, "[Contextualizing Player Two](#)" from *Ready Player Two: Women Gamers and Designed Identity*; Shira Chess, "*Kim Kardashian: Hollywood*: Feminism" (Ch. 11); Adrienne Shaw, "*Leisure Suit Larry*: LGBTQ Representation" (Ch. 13); TreaAndrea Russworm, "*NBA 2K16*: Race" (Ch. 15)



How is difference coded in games? In what ways are games designed for certain "player twos"? How do we consider how commercial video games embody gender, race, and sexual orientation/identity?



[Kim Kardashian: Hollywood](#) (free, with in-app purchases); [Leisure Suit Larry](#) (free); [NBA 2K21](#) (variable price between \$70-\$100, multiple platforms)



Gameplay Report (Weeks 7 & 8)



Tuesday, Oct 13th Zoom Check-In: [Difference and game design](#). (Passcode: M%w77V41)

Week 9: The culture wars



Anita Sarkeesian, “[Damsel in Distress: Part 1 - Tropes vs Women in Video Games](#)”;
Optional: Aja Romano, “[What we still haven’t learned about Gamergate](#)”; Shira Chess & Adrienne Shaw, “[A Conspiracy of Fishes, or, How We Learned to Stop Worrying About #GamerGate and Embrace Hegemonic Masculinity](#)”; Tanner Mirrlees, “*Medal of Honor: Militarism*” (Ch. 29 in Payne & Huntemann, *How to Play Video Games*); Chris Paul, “[A Toxic Culture: Studying Gaming’s Jerks](#)” from *The Toxic Meritocracy of Video Games: Why Gaming Culture is the Worst*



The “culture wars” came to gaming in the early 2010s. Why and how? What have games become, and how is power represented within them? What is toxic meritocracy, and how do we combat it? What’s wrong with gaming culture and why?



[Medal of Honor](#) (\$20, available on multiple platforms); [Social Justice Warriors](#) (\$8); [Quing’s Quest VII](#) (free)



Gameplay Report (Weeks 8 & 9)

Week 10: Game Jam Kickoff [Zoom Check-In: 9:30am, Tuesday, Oct 27]



Game Jam Kickoff — Theme TBA!; Macklin & Sharp, Chs. 5, 9-11

Optional game design resources:

- *Twine* (<http://twinery.org>); Alison Harvey, “[Twine’s revolution: Democratization, depoliticization, and the queering of game design](#)”; Adam Hammond, [A Total Beginner’s Guide to Twine 2.1](#)
- *Bitsy* (<https://ledoux.itch.io/bitsy>): Adam Dixon, “[How small game makers found their community with Bitsy](#)”; Shonte Daniels, “[Bitsy makes it easy to design small narrative games](#)”; Claire Morwood, [A Bitsy Tutorial](#); Liverpool Coding Club, [Telling Stories With Bitsy](#); Andrew Yolland, [Bitsy Variables: A Tutorial](#)



You’ll be placed into groups for the Game Jam at the beginning of the week, as well as provided with an introduction video that reveals this semester’s game jam theme. Students will be encouraged to discuss approaches to their games in several Discord channels (#game-jam, as well as several platform-specific channels).



Gameplay Report (Week 9) - Final opportunity



Tuesday, Oct 27th Zoom Check-In: [Game Jam Kickoff](#) (Passcode: z90pCm+t)

Week 11: Game Jam Work Week



This is a work week — no assigned readings, no discussion prompts (other than, perhaps, the occasional “How’s everyone doing?”). Students are expected to be visible and active on Discord (in #game-jam and other platform-specific channels) as they develop their prototypes and seek out suggestions/playtesting from other students.

Week 12: Game Jam Playable Prototypes



We will devote this week to playing each others’ games, providing detailed feedback on them, and suggesting concrete directions for the games to be iterated. New channels will likely pop up to facilitate this — audio and video channels! Playtesting feedback will be recorded on Collab for all students to see and contribute to.



Full playable prototypes (ungraded, submitted to Discord). All groups are expected to have full playable prototypes available for students and the professor, linked up via Discord in the #playable-prototypes channel.

Gameplay Report Revision

Missing Chapters Pitches (ungraded). Due on Discord.



Tuesday, Nov 10th Zoom Check-In: [Planning playtesting](#) (Passcode: d*wo0sin)

Week 13: Iterating Games



Finally, we will have one week to interpret the previous week’s playtesting feedback, and then iterate these game designs. What will you change based on player feedback? How are you refining your approach to the game jam theme?

Individually, you will also be working on developing initial Missing Chapter ideas into doable paper topics.



Prototypes (final prototypes; submitted to Collab)

Week 14: Missing Chapters / Wrapping Up



Eric Zimmerman & Heather Chaplin, "[Manifesto: The 21st Century Will Be Defined By Games](#)"; Ian Bogost, "[The End of Gamers](#)" from *How to Do Things With Videogames*



Wrapping up. What is the future of games and game studies? What about this course? What worked well about the structure of this online class, and what didn't? What would you suggest we change in the future?



Postmortems

Finals



**Missing Chapters; Participation Self-Assessments
Due December 7th at 5pm.**