

School of Creative Industries

CRI 510: Art and Business of Gaming Winter 2015

Instructor Name: Elliot Siemiatycki

Office Location: RCC 331

Office Hours: Tuesday 5-5:45 pm and/or by appointment

Web Site: D2L course shell through my.ryerson.ca

Email address: elliot.siemiatycki@ryerson.ca. *Only Ryerson e-mail accounts are to be used for communication between faculty and students.*

Class: Tuesdays, 6-9 PM, KHE 129

Prerequisite: There are no prerequisites for this course.

Calendar Description

Video games constitute one of the most dynamic and growing segments of the Creative Industries. This course explores the history, aesthetics, and cultural impact of video games while familiarizing students with the production, distribution and marketing processes that have evolved to stimulate this young industry. Issues confronting the video game industry as well as applicable developments in design and technology will be among the topics covered. Lecture: 3 hours. Course weight: 1.00

Course and Learning Objectives

This course is intended for students that are interested in the video game industry. Students DO NOT need to be experts or gamers to succeed in the course. Indeed, we will follow the evolution and current trends that have seen this industry grow to be considerably bigger than the music, movie, and print media industries. We will study the video game sector first from a technical perspective to understand the basics of the industry and then from a social perspective to trace the cultural impact of video games. The broader mandate of the course is to develop student knowledge, communication and analytical skills through course lectures and class projects that are grounded in real-world cases and examples.

Key Learning Objectives for this course are listed below. Upon completion of this course, students will:

- 1) Know the history of the video game industry and its connections to other entertainment sectors such as Film and TV, computer software, print media, etc.
- 2) Understand the evolving economic underpinnings of gaming in terms of business models, marketing and branding, production and consumption, etc.
- 3) Recognize the importance that new technology plays in gaming and how legal systems have been established to protect/enhance intellectual property.
- 4) Consider the social, cultural and political elements of video games.
- 5) Appreciate the many and varied applications of knowledge about the video game sector including gamification, production techniques, branding, etc.

Teaching Methods

This is a lecture course that will rely heavily on real-world cases and examples. Students need to complete their readings and assignments on time in order to participate in the in-class debates, discussions and activities each week.

My approach to this course is to structure it in accordance with some common practices to be found in the video game sector. In particular:

- Evaluations will be termed ‘Milestones’ which is the industry language used to describe discrete components of a game – for example story, music, artistic renderings, code, etc. – that usually have very strict deadlines.
- Evaluations will be a mix of individual and group work since this is how video games are actually made.
- There will be certain elements of surprise (eg. The dates of the two quizzes) since the production of games, and games themselves, always include some surprises.
- Games are (often) meant to be fun, so we will try to have some fun in the classroom. Indeed, we will break from lectures regularly for role playing games and activities that enable students to see different perspectives on the games industry.
- Finally, gaming is becoming increasingly diverse and inclusive as more and more people become interested in video games. Our class will be a space for open and respectful discussion of different issues related to games and digital media.

Evaluation

Course Milestones	Description	Due Date	% of Final Mark
Assignment 1	Wiki Project	Feb. 23	20
Quizzes	In class, based on assigned reading	Weeks 2-5,7-10 2 selected randomly	10
Assignment 2	Business Case Analysis	Mar. 29	20
Group Presentation	Based on Wiki	Week 13	10
Exam	Mix of short answer and essay-style questions	University exam period (April 15-30)	35
Participation	In class	All Weeks	5

Please Note:

- **Submissions:** Assignments **MUST** be exclusively submitted for this course in hard-copy at the beginning of class on the due date.
- **Returns:** First grades will be returned in week 6-7 (posted on Brightspace).
- **Lateness Policy:** Assignments received after the beginning of class on the due date will be penalized 5% of the value of the assignment *per day*.
- **Citations:** It is important to cite sources in all written projects. Students need to cite both direct quotes and paraphrased statements in accordance with the (MLA) template provided in the Creative Industries Student Handbook.

Detailed Descriptions of Assignments and Tests

Assignment 1: Wiki Project

While we often take Wikipedia for granted, using it as any other encyclopaedia, all of the entries on Wikipedia are created by regular users and edited by other users. In this assignment I want you to become a more critical and hands-on user of Wikipedia.

Your job is to create a Wikipedia account and work on an entry (ie. Page) of your own interest that is directly related to video games and the topics/themes we are covering in class. You can choose a topic that already exists on the site and make edits to it, or you can start a topic that does not yet exist on Wikipedia. Either way, you must make substantive additions to the Wikipedia entry on your chosen topic by: adding new references where evidence is needed, writing new sections or editing existing sections. You will hand in a one-page report (**with your username**) outlining why you chose your topic and how your material was received by other users.

You will be provided with a grading rubric and some wiki training documents for this assignment. Grades will be based solely on the work you do on the Wiki entry and not your one pager. That being said, the one-page report is an opportunity for you to explain your work, what you found interesting about the project, any challenges that came up and what you've learned.

Assignment 2: Business Case Analysis

In this assignment, you are going to conduct an in-depth business analysis of one game or game-related activity based on your own personal interest and experience. The modes and platforms of video game play have grown tremendously just in the past few years. Your job is:

- 1) Choose one game or game-related activity to study: it could be a game you are playing, a game you see people playing on the TTC, a game your family or friends play (whatever age), a youtube video about games you've heard about, a gaming website or community, a video game league (professional or amateur), or others (I'm open to different ideas but please pass them by me before you start). **It must be a different from your Wiki topic.**
- 2) Conduct secondary research and compile information related to 4 main questions:
 - a. What is the business-model behind the game or game-activity you chose and can this game or activity be considered a business success?
 - b. What kind of business and creative processes would likely be involved in the production of such games or game-related activities?
 - c. How, and to whom, is the game or activity being marketed and how is the consumer or game-player 'activated'?
 - d. What does your chosen game or game-related activity suggest about the current landscape of gaming and its future development?
- 3) Write an essay (maximum 1200 words, not including figures or references) presenting your research findings and personal opinions about the game or game-activity you studied. There will be a grading rubric provided for this assignment, but this is an expository essay that has a thesis statement supported with evidence.

Quizzes:

Quizzes will be written in-class in the form of reading response essays. You will be given approximately 20 minutes to respond to a question that derives from the reading for that week. The date of the quizzes is random (Surprise!!!!). These will basically be short-answer questions and the quizzes are meant to ultimately prepare you for the types of questions you will see on the final exam. They will be open book so you may consult your readings for that week while you write. We will discuss essay writing early in the semester, but these quizzes are meant to ensure that you are keeping up with the course readings and have a good sense for what to expect come exam time.

Group Presentation:

Video games are developed by teams of talented individuals with a wide variety of different skills. Learning how to produce interesting and engaging work in a team setting is an important part of your studies. The group presentation will offer an opportunity for you to report the results of your Wiki research to your classmates through a collective project. Students who have researched within the same general thematic area will present together. Your objective is to summarize and synthesize all of the evidence from the individual topics related to one larger question: what did you learn about video games from a technical and/or social perspective from the research you have done? Everyone must participate to some degree in the presentation and each group will be given a collective grade for overall presentation. This is not meant to be a standard Power Point presentation (though it can be if you want) and you are free to be creative in your presentation style and format. There will be a grading rubric provided for presentation. More on this in class...

- A comment on group work: All team members are expected to contribute to the research and content preparation of the group assignment. Team members will normally receive the same grade (except in exceptional circumstances where a team member has failed to make a satisfactory contribution). Therefore all members should expect (and demand) that all contribute an equal amount of work

Final Exam:

The final exam will be 2 hours in length and held during the official university exam period. You will be tested on the material from the entire semester and you will be expected to answer a set of short questions and essay length questions (with some degree of choice). The exam will cover material both from lectures and readings, but you will be expected to make explicit reference to required readings in your answers.

Attendance and Participation:

You are expected to not only be present in class but to participate actively in class discussions and activities. It is therefore required that all assigned readings should be completed in preparation for the class meeting for which they have been scheduled.

Required Reading (and Technology)

This course will combine readings from the growing academic literature on video games along with those from more mainstream and industry-driven sources. All readings will be available on the D2L course platform (Resources > One Stop Course Readings). A list of key texts, journals, and websites will be provided below which students can consult for their own personal interest or for a specific topic related to course assignments. This mixed approach is meant to highlight the many different perspectives on the gaming sector.

Course Schedule

<i>Level (Week)</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Notes/Activities/ Due Dates</i>		
1 (Jan. 19)	Introduction to Gaming	No Readings		Technical	
2 (Jan. 26)	A Brief History of Video Games	Level Up! 2 nd Ed., pp. 7-17			
3 (Feb. 2)	Making Video Games 1: How it's Made	Level Up! 2 nd Ed., pp. 17-26 Scrum in 10 Minutes (Youtube)	<i>Wiki Assignment Topics – Due</i>		
4 (Feb. 9)	Making Video Games 2: Where it's Made	Johns, J. (2006). Video Game Production Networks.	<i>Wiki Groups Created</i>		
<i>PAUSE</i>	STUDY WEEK	No Readings	NO CLASS		
5 (Feb. 23)	Playing Video Games	Manrique, V. (2013) Why people play games - Happiness, Motivation & Fun (Online).	<i>Assignment #1 – Due in Class</i>		
6 (Mar. 1)	The Business of Gaming	Level Up! 2 nd Ed., 419-423 Candy Crush Article (Online)			
7 (Mar. 8)	Gaming Law	Grimes, S. (2006). Virtual Space for Intellectual Property Debates			
8 (Mar. 15)	Is Gaming Innovative?	Clark, T (2012) The Most Dangerous Gamer (Online)			Social
9 (Mar. 22)	A Work of Love: Labour Issues in the Gaming Industry	Dyer-Witheford, N. and G. de Peuter (2006) 'EA Spouse' and the Crisis of Video Game Labour			
10 (Mar. 29)	Violence, Misogyny, Addiction and the Culture of Games	Leonard, A. (2013). Gaming's dark misogynist cesspool (Online).	<i>Assignment #2 – Due in Class</i>		
11 (Apr. 5)	Gamification and the Future of Gaming	Heller, N. (2015) High Score: Review of SuperBetter (Online)			
12 (Apr. 12)	Group Presentations and	No Readings	<i>Group Presentations</i>		
TBD	Final Exam	Based on ALL Course Materials	<i>Game Over!!!</i>		

Key Texts and Recommended Readings/Sources

Industry Platforms:

Level Up! The Guide to Great Video Game Design, Scott Rogers.

Gamasutra | www.gamasutra.com

GamePolitics | <http://gamepolitics.com>

Games Industry | <http://www.gamesindustry.biz/news>

Academic Outlets:

Games and Culture; New Media & Society; Media, Culture & Society

Mainstream Media Coverage

Wired Magazine's Game Life | www.wired.com/gamelif

PBS Digital – Game/Show

Additional Information:

- all students are required to retain a personal copy of all work undertaken for this course as well as *all rough materials, references, sources, and working notes* until the marked original has been returned.
- Any changes to the course assignments, due dates, and/or grading scheme as indicated in this syllabus will be discussed in class prior to being implemented.
- On occasion guest speakers may/will attend our class; students should refrain from contacting these guests after the class, unless invited to do so.
- Cell phones must be turned off during all classes.
- It is the student's responsibility to contact the professor promptly concerning any situation that may have an adverse impact upon his/her academic performance (attendance, submission of graded material, etc). Any considerations (e.g. medical or compassionate) or accommodations must be requested well in advance, to the extent possible and supported by written documentation.
- Title Pages. In an effort to correct for any biases, I try to anonymize all of my grading. All submitted materials should include your name and student number on the LAST page. Please include a title and word count on the first page (cover pages are not necessary).

Policy Guidelines: Be sure to include the following statement:

This course is conducted in accordance with all relevant University academic policies and procedures and students are expected to familiarize themselves with them and adhere to them. Students should refer online (ryersoncreative.ca) to the 2015/16 Creative Industries Student Handbook for specific information with respect to the following policies:

Policy #60: Student Code of Academic Conduct

Policy #61: Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct

Policy #134: Undergraduate Academic Consideration and Appeals

Policy #157: Ryerson's E-mail Accounts for Official Communication

Policy #159: Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities