Video Games as Visual Culture
Course Number: FILM 80V
Professor Soraya Murray
Summer 2022 Syllabus [ONLINE 5-WEEK FORMAT]

FILM+DIGITAL MEDIA

<mark>**THIS IS AN ACCELERATED COURSE THAT TEACHES 10 WEEKS OF MATERIAL IN A 5 WEEK PERIOD.****</mark>

Meeting Place and Time: CANVAS Online. This is an asynchronous course, with NO live lectures.

Office Location, Hours, Email: Online by appt. Contact me for a Zoom meeting if you wish to talk.
                                           *Use the CANVAS inbox to contact me for the quickest response.

Teaching Assistants: 👾 : SECTION 1: ALLEN he/him
                                           🚀 : SECTION 2: COLLEEN she/her
                                           🤖 : SECTION 3: KELLY she/her
                                           🕹️ : SECTION 4: KSENIA they/she
                                           All Student Hours by Appointment. Please always be respectful
                                           to the TAs, they work really hard for you :)

Because this is a large course, please contact your TA via CANVAS **first**, regarding any questions you may have. If your TA cannot answer your question, they will forward your query to me.

Course Description:
This course introduces the study of video games through their cultural meanings, visual, theoretical and social contexts. **Please note that this course does** not **teach technical training in game development, design or programming.** Rather, it is intended to provide students with a useful understanding of how games function as visual culture, and to increase visual literacy in players, aspiring designers, and others interested in video games. This course takes a largely critical game studies approach. Topics covered include: games and play, the history of video games from the 1950s to the present, issues in games and representation, games and politics, and the intersection of games and cinema. In addition, we will explore the aesthetics of games, as well as the ways in which they model virtual "place". Through the writings of theorists, designers, scholars and cultural critics, we will also investigate games in context by looking at media responses to popular and controversial games, key conceptions/misconceptions about the impacts on players, games and identity.

Race, gender and queerness in games will be covered, through the analysis of popular and alternative games. Students who successfully complete this course will be conversant in the "golden age" of early video games as well as key issues surrounding contemporary gaming. They will understand the aesthetic development of games, as well as the ways in which video games may have affected visual culture—and culture at large. Those students interested in game design will benefit from a focused consideration of aesthetics, reception and interpretation. Those interested in video games from a visual culture/media perspective will be introduced to existing debates and key concepts that shape this new, timely and shifting area of study.

Student Learning Outcomes:
(PLO#3)Demonstrate the relationship between different types of form and meaning through the critical analysis of them.
(PLO#6)Demonstrate scholarly writing skills appropriate to the discipline of film and digital media.
(PLO#7)Demonstrate an ability to analyze, interpret, and critique media from a variety of theoretical perspectives using the critical vocabulary and methodologies of the discipline.

Required Texts:
All required readings are available in PDF format, downloadable from the UCSC CANVAS page for this course.

Course Website:
https://canvas.ucsc.edu/ Log in using your Cruz ID and Gold Password.
You can learn about CANVAS here: https://its.ucsc.edu/canvas/canvas-student.html
URGENT: I will occasionally send updates and distribute information through the CANVAS page. CANVAS only works with UCSC accounts, so, if you regularly use another email address, please be sure that your UCSC account forwards to it. Also, within CANVAS, please keep your NOTIFICATIONS ON, so that you receive announcements.

Please note that all of these lectures are the professor's intellectual property. Do not audio- or video-record this course, sell or provide class notes, tests or recordings to any notetaking services (ie Coursehero, etc.). THIS IS UC UNIVERSITY POLICY.

A new learning module will open each week on CANVAS.
Please check into the course page frequently, try not to leave all your work for the last minute, and be sure to read my emailed announcements promptly. Thank you!

Weekly Course Breakdown – Subject to change at instructor's discretion.

WEEK 0   GETTING STARTED
             I'll open the course site a little early. Learn to navigate the course page. Introduce yourself!

WEEK 1   MON JUL 25 - SUN JUL 31
View: **Lecture 1: Introduction: Why Are We Doing This?**
             Download required readings in PDF format.
Read: Ian Bogost, "Introduction: Nobody Asked for a Toaster Critic" in *How to Talk About Video Games* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2015), vii-xiii.

View: **Lecture 2: A Speed-Run Through a History of Video Games**
             Videos: History of Video Games
                  History of Video Game Consoles

View: **Lecture 3: What is a Game? How Can We Approach Game Studies?**
Read: Espen Aarseth, "Computer Game Studies, Year One" in *Game Studies* vol. 1 iss. 1 (July 2001).

             Markku Eskelinen, "The Gaming Situation" in *Game Studies* vol. 1 iss. 1 (July 2001). [**Read only Sections 1, 6, 8**]

             Janet Murray, "The Last Word on Ludology v Narratology" (2005)

View: **Lecture 4: What is Visual Culture?**
Read: Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking* [**Read only 9-16, 21-33.**]

Discussion: **DUE THU, 11:59PM**
Assignment: **1000-word response on DUE SUN, 11:59PM.**

WEEK 2   MON AUG 1 – SUN AUG 7
View: **Lecture 5: Video Games in Culture**
Read: Is the "Culture" in Game Culture the "Culture" of Cultural Studies? in Soraya Murray, *On Video Games*, Introduction **[Read only 1-7, 17-27, 35-42**].

View: **Lecture 6: Video Games and Moral Panics**
Read: Carly A. Kocurek, "The Agony and the Exidy: A History of Video Game Violence and the Legacy of Death Race," *GameStudies.org*, v 12 iss 1 (September 2012) **[Read only 1-10]**

                Carly A. Kocurek,, "Night Trap: Moral Panic" in Matthew Thomas Payne and Nina Huntemann, eds., *How to Play Video Games* (NY: NYU Press, 2019), 309-316.

View: **Lecture 7: Issues of Representation**
Read: Media Education Foundation, "STUART HALL: Representation & the Media*"* [Transcript] 1997: 3-22.

                Richard Dyer, "Introduction" and "The Role of Stereotypes" in *The Matter of Images* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1-5, 11-18.

Discussion: **DUE THU, 11:59PM**
Assignment: **1000-word response on DUE SUN, 11:59PM.**

WEEK 3   MON AUG 8 - SUN AUG 14
View: **Lecture 8: Queerness and Games**
Read: Bonnie Ruberg and Amanda Phillips, "Special Issue -- Queerness and Video Games: Not Gay as in Happy: Queer Resistance and Video Games (Introduction)," *Game Studies* 18, no. 3 (December 2018), http://gamestudies.org/1803/articles/phillips_ruberg.

View: **Lecture 9: Arab Stereotypes**
Read: Vit Sisler, "Digital Arabs: Representation in Video Games" in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, SAGE Publications, 2008, pp. 203-220.

View: **Lecture 10: Asian Representation**
Read: Khai Trung Le, "The Invisible People: Why Asians Need to Be Better Represented in Video Games" Vice.com, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/mvk3px/the-invisible-people-why-asians-need-to-be-better-represented-in-video-games-950

                Koichi Iwabuchi, "How 'Japanese' is Pokémon?" in Joseph Tobin, ed., *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon* (Durham: Duke U Press, 2004), 54-79. **[Read 56-58 only]**

Discussion: **DUE THU, 11:59PM**
Assignment: **1000-word response on DUE SUN, 11:59PM.**

>>>>>>>>>>>**MIDTERM OPENS SUN AUG 14 AT 1AM AND CLOSES AT 1159PM**<<<<<<<<<<<

WEEK 4   MON AUG 15 – SUN AUG 21
View: **Lecture 11: Masculinity**
Read: Soraya Murray, "The Last of Us: Masculinity*"* in Matthew Thomas Payne and Nina Huntemann, eds., *How to Play Video Games* (NY: NYU Press, 2019), 101-109.

View: **Lecture 12: Game Space and Representation**
Read: Oscar Moralde, "Haptic Landscapes: Dear Esther and Embodied Video Game Space," *Media Fields Journal* 8 (2014): 1–15.

View: **Lecture 13: Games and Dystopia**
Read: TreaAndrea Russworm, "Dystopian Blackness and the Limits of Racial Empathy in *The Walking Dead* and *The Last of Us*" in *Gaming Representation*, eds. Jennifer Malkowski and TreaAndrea Russworm (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 109-128.

View: **Lecture 14: Video Games and Values**
Read: Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum, "Groundwork for Values in Digital Games" and "Uncovering Values at Play in Digital Games" in *Values at Play in Digital Games* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), pp. 3-13 and 15-31.

                 Miguel Sicart, *"Papers, Please: Ethics"* in Matthew Thomas Payne and Nina Huntemann, eds., *How to Play Video Games* (NY: NYU Press, 2019), 149-156.

Discussion: **DUE THU, 11:59PM**
Assignment: **1000-word response on DUE SUN, 11:59PM.**

WEEK 5   MON AUG 22 - SUN AUG 28
View: **Lecture 15: Video Games and Capitalism**
Read or view: "Videogames and the Spirit of Capitalism" by Molleindustria (Paolo Pedercini)

View: **Lecture 16: Games and the Military**
Read: Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter, "Banal War" in *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 97–122.

View: **Lecture 17: Representing War and Conflict in Games: Drone War**
Read: Matthew Thomas Payne, "Through A Drone, Darkly" in *Playing War: Military Video Games After 9/11* (NY: NYU Press, 2016), 116-144.

                 Media Education Foundation, "Militarism & Video Games: An Interview with Nina Huntemann", 1-5.

View: **Lecture 18: Games and Politics**
Read: Colin Campbell, "Why Are Game Companies so Afraid of the Politics in Their Games?,"
Polygon, June 20, 2018, https://www.polygon.com/2018/6/20/17480666/video-games-companies-lying-politics

Charlie Hall, "Tom Clancy's The Division 2 'Is Not Making Any Political Statements,'"
Polygon, June 12, 2018, https://www.polygon.com/e3/2018/6/12/17451688/the-division-2-is-not-making-any-political-statements

Heather Alexandra, "The Division 2 Is Political, Despite What Its Developers Say,"
Kotaku, accessed June 16, 2018, https://kotaku.com/the-division-2-is-political-despite-what-its-developer-1826776710

Edwin Evans-Thirlwell, "If Ubisoft Wants to Cling on to Clancy, It's Time to Talk Politics,"
Eurogamer, June 22, 2018, https://www.eurogamer.net/amp/2018-06-20-the-oppressive-afterlife-of-tom-clancy?__twitter_impression=true.

View: **Lecture 19: Wrap-Up Lecture**
Read: No reading.

Discussion: **DUE THU, 11:59PM**
Assignment: **None this week. Use the extra time to get ready for your exam.**

==>>>>>>>>>>>>FINAL OPENS FRI AUG 26 AT 1AM AND CLOSES AT 1159PM<<<<<<<<<<<<<==
==TESTING ON LECTURES 11-19. THE EXAM TAKES 60 MIN AND YOU ARE ALLOWED ONLY 1 ATTEMPT ONCE YOU OPEN IT. IF YOU CLOSE THE EXAM, IT WILL NOT OPEN FOR YOU AGAIN! DO NOT OPEN THE EXAM UNTIL YOU ARE READY. NO MAKE-UP EXAMS GIVEN.==

EXTRA CREDIT: DUE SUN AUG 28 AT 1159PM. No penalty if you don't complete it.

PLEASE NOTE: My lecture slides are downloadable as pdfs, as are all the readings.

Course Requirements/ Grading:
Discussions/Participation (20% of Final Grade)
It is absolutely essential that you view all lectures, walkthroughs, clips and respond to them. There are Discussions each week on CANVAS. Your participation in discussion will help you stay engaged. So, you must post one response of 150 words or more, and reply to someone else's. These are less formal, and do not require citation, but definitely use full sentences and answer all parts of the prompt. Please observe good citizenship and always keep the conversation constructive. You must post before you can see your classmates' posts.

Written RESPONSES (40% of Final Grade)
Students must submit 4 formal written response assignments of 1000 words each. Your responses will illustrate your understanding of the text. You should identify a key argument/idea of the reading and respond, with the guidance of the assignment prompt. Please use paragraph format, and spell-check—no bullet points or lists.

Keep a copy for yourself on your computer or storage device in the event that the submitted assignment is lost or destroyed. Responses will be assessed based upon the quality and specificity of your response, and proper length. Please adhere to the word count. Opinion is fine, but ground it in the readings and game examples.

Midterm/Final Examinations (40% of Final Grade: 20% midterm + 20% final)
There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. The midterm examination will cover everything up until the date of that examination. The final will cover all information after the midterm, however, as we will build on ideas over the term, there might be general reference to earlier material. These will be 25 questions long, in multiple-choice, true/false, matching form. **Note: Students are required to take both exams to pass the course**.

Online courses require you to stay engaged and check in often. Check in at least 3 times weekly. Stay self-motivated and engaged, since we are not meeting in person. If you are confused, contact your TA right away.

Final Grade
Your final grade will be based upon the quality of your written responses, discussions, and your midterm and final exam scores. A final grade of C-, D+, D, D-, or F cannot be used to satisfy a course prerequisite or to satisfy major or general education requirements. Any course graded P is equivalent to a C or better and can be used to satisfy general education requirements.

Lateness and Extensions
All assignments and exams must be turned in on time. **Assignments will not be accepted after 11:59PM on the day they are due.** If you are confused about an assignment, or having difficulty completing the course, contact your TA right away. If you are having a serious medical or family emergency, communicate with me if you know you won't be able to keep up with coursework, so that we can make a plan.

Workload Distribution (30 hours per week)
For this course, this breaks down approximately as follows:
● Lecture: 8 hours per week
● Readings: 8 hours per week
● Assignments: 6 hours per week
● Discussion: 6 hours per week
●Additional testing/test prep 2 hours per week

Disability Resource Center: UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time, I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or facilitating academic dishonesty. Acts of academic misconduct during the course, including plagiarism, will result in failure of the course. Your case will be reported to the College Provost as per the Academic Integrity guidelines found on the web at: https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct

Title IX and CARE Statement:
UC Santa Cruz is committed to providing a safe learning environment that is free of all forms of gender discrimination and sexual harassment, which are explicitly prohibited under Title IX. If you have experienced any form of sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, know that you are not alone. The Title IX Office, the Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education (CARE) office, and Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) are all resources that you can rely on for support.

Please be aware that if you tell me about a situation involving Title IX misconduct, I am required to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator. This reporting responsibility also applies to course TAs and tutors (as well to all UCSC employees who are not designated as "confidential" employees, which is a special designation granted to counselors and CARE advocates). Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. The goal is to make sure that you are aware of the range of options available to you and that you have access to the resources you need.

Confidential resources are available through CARE. Confidentiality means CARE advocates will not share any information with Title IX, the police, parents, or anyone else without explicit permission. CARE advocates are trained to support you in understanding your rights and options, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. You can contact CARE at (831) 502-2273 or care@ucsc.edu.

In addition to CARE, these resources are available to you:
• If you need help figuring out what resources you or someone else might need, visit the Sexual Violence Prevention & Response (SAFE) website, which provides information and resources for different situations.
• Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) can provide confidential counseling support. Call them at (831) 459-2628.
• You can also report gender discrimination and sexual harassment and violence directly to the University's Title IX Office, by calling (831) 459-2462 or by using their online reporting tool.
• Reports to law enforcement can be made to the UC Police Department, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1.
• For emergencies, call 911.

UCSC PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY
In this course, we abide by the UCSC Principles of Community , so please familiarize yourself with these important principles.

INCLUSIVITY
UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time, I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.

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https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct
Information on subject specific research guidelines is available at:
http://guides.library.ucsc.edu/

DISTRIBUTION OF COURSE NOTES
Please note that selling, preparing, or distributing for any commercial purpose course lecture notes or video or audio recordings of any course is explicitly forbidden by campus policy, *unless authorized by the University in advance – for instance, by the Disability Resource Center, which can assign students who need one a notetaker with a laptop or other recording device – and explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. (DRC notetaking accommodations should, and usually will, be announced to the instructor in advance in formal communication from the DRC.)*

GRADE DISPUTES
If you have questions about the grading of your work, please make arrangements to meet with your teaching assistant (TA). If your questions are not resolved, please see me in office hours. If the matter still remains unresolved, I will advise you on further options.

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS
Course evaluations for faculty will be available online through CANVAS for students to complete towards the end of quarter. You will receive a notification from CANVAS in your UCSC email account when online evaluations become available. Please be thoughtful in your responses, as we take these evaluations seriously. Course evaluations help faculty consider ways to improve instruction.