The rapid rise in the power and accessibility of digital technology has made possible myriad new forms of entertainment, artistic expression, and socio-political engagement. Among these new forms, videogames and other kinds of interactive entertainment offer artists and designers unprecedented opportunities to engage not just with audiences, but with players and participants. Drawing on voices from game studies, cultural studies, art history, social psychology, game design practice, and games journalism, this course will explore a range of critical frameworks for understanding and analyzing digital games and related forms of interactive entertainment. To facilitate this exploration, digital works and practices will be contextualized within the broader history of games, interaction design, and play – a history that predates electronic computation by thousands of years and includes diverse cultural practices such as performance art, ritual, and political activism.

**Required Texts**

The primary required text for this course, *The Game Design Reader*, is available online at Amazon.com in both electronic and physical editions. Copies of the book may also be found at the USC bookstore or at other local booksellers. Additional required readings will be provided in class, online, and/or via links included in this syllabus.


**Recommended Reading**

The following texts are recommended to students as starting points for research.


• ---. *Second Person: Role-Playing and Story in Games and Playable Media*. The MIT Press, 2010.


ASSIGNMENTS

You will engage with the themes of this course through writing, presentations, in-class participation, and a game jam. Detailed constraints and prompts will be provided when assignments are issued in class. Additional materials and assignment documents can be downloaded from a shared Google drive.

https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B_kNeccgctubVGU3QUVZNgBOVlkE&usp=sharing

Assessment breaks down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Game Story</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>September 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>November 22 or 29*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Variable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game Jam Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>October 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Quizzes**</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Variable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation***</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Total</td>
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* Research papers handed in by 11:59 PM on November 22 will receive full comments. The absolute final deadline is 11:59 PM on November 29.

** Multiple choice pop quizzes will occur unpredictably during class time over the course of the semester. Generally speaking, there will be one or two quizzes around the middle of the course, and one or two around the end. The quizzes are easy grades if you keep up with the readings and pay attention in class. If you miss more than one pop quiz due to an unexcused absence, you will automatically be deducted a full letter grade.

*** We want to hear your thoughts on the readings and games we discuss each week. Your participation will be appreciated and honored.
## Schedule

Readings specified for each week must be read in advance of the class. I will call on you to participate in the discussion, so try not to show up without having done the readings. Additional required readings will occasionally be assigned during class. All readings marked “SZ” are from the main course textbook (Salen and Zimmerman).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theme &amp; Assignments</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | August 23 | TALKING ABOUT INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT AND GAMES | - Since you won't have the syllabus before this class, you will have some extra reading to do (just a little, I promise – but it's important to set things up). Make sure to read at least the first three articles listed below before next class (along with the readings for Week 2).
  
  - “Speaking of Games” (SZ, 44)
  - “What is a game?” (SZ, 77)
  - “What is Play?” (SZ, 83)

In class: Introductions, syllabus overview, presentation selection

Recommended:

- Roger Caillois, “The Definition of Play: The Classification of Games” (SZ, 122)
- Leigh Alexander, “Gaming Made Me: Colossal Cave Adventure”
  
| 2    | August 30 | PLAY AND PLAYERS | - “The Player Experience” (SZ, 9)
  
    
  
  - Brian Sutton-Smith, “Play and Ambiguity” (SZ, 296)

Pecha Kucha I

Assigned: Game Story

Recommended:

- Johann Huizinga, “Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon” (SZ, 96)
| 3    | September 6 | RULES AND FORMS | “The Rules of a Game” (SZ, 8)
  
  - Greg Costikyan, “I Have No Words & I Must Design” (SZ, 192)
  
  - Stephen Sniderman, “Unwritten Rules” (SZ, 476)
  
  - Robin Hunicke et al, “MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research.”
    
    [http://www.cs.northwestern.edu/~hunicke/MDA.pdf](http://www.cs.northwestern.edu/~hunicke/MDA.pdf)

Pecha Kucha II

Recommended:

Watch:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXk96RK8qpo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXk96RK8qpo)
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<td>7 Oct</td>
<td>GUEST SPEAKER TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>**9</td>
<td>October 18</td>
<td><strong>VALUES</strong></td>
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<td><em>Pecha Kucha VI</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Mary Flanagan, “Values at Play”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Ian Bogost, “The Rhetoric of Video Games”</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.arts.rpi.edu/~ruiz/EGDFall10/readings/RhetoricVideoGames_Bogost.pdf">http://www.arts.rpi.edu/~ruiz/EGDFall10/readings/RhetoricVideoGames_Bogost.pdf</a></td>
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<td>Recommended:</td>
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<td>● Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed</td>
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<td>**10</td>
<td>October 25</td>
<td><strong>GAME JAM</strong></td>
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<td><em>Pecha Kucha VI</em></td>
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<td><strong>Assigned: Research Paper</strong></td>
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<td><strong>DO NOT MISS THIS CLASS: please notify us ASAP if you have a conflict.</strong></td>
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<td>**11</td>
<td>November 1</td>
<td><strong>GAME JAM PRESENTATIONS</strong></td>
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<td><em>Due: Game Jam Presentation</em></td>
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<td>**12</td>
<td>November 8</td>
<td><strong>DIFFERENCE</strong></td>
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<td><em>Pecha Kucha VII</em></td>
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<td>● Browse the video interviews at <a href="http://valuesatplay.org/">http://valuesatplay.org/</a></td>
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<td>● James Gee, “Cultural Models: Do You Want To Be The Blue Sonic or the Dark Sonic?” (SZ, 610-639)</td>
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<td>● “Cultural Representation” (SZ, 70)</td>
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<td>**13</td>
<td>November 15</td>
<td><strong>AESTHETICS OF INTERACTIVITY</strong></td>
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<td><em>Pecha Kucha VIII</em></td>
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<td>● David Sudnow, “Eyeball and Cathexis” (SZ, 558)</td>
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<td>● Phillip D. Deen, “Interactivity, Inhabitation and Pragmatist Aesthetics” <a href="http://gamesstudies.org/1102/articles/deen">http://gamesstudies.org/1102/articles/deen</a></td>
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14 November 22
CRITICAL FUTURES

Pecha Kucha VIV(?)
Due: Research Paper

15 November 29
CONCLUSION & WRAP PARTY
Due: Research Paper

BOILERPLATE

Boilerplate is “any text that is or can be reused in new contexts or applications without being greatly changed from the original” (Wikipedia). That’s what this section contains. If you’ve taken a course at USC before, you’ve probably read much of this material already. If not, find below a set of reminders about important things like plagiarism (don’t do it), attendance (it’s mandatory), disabilities (if you have one, DSP can help you out), citation guidelines (use APA 5th edition), our commitment to diversity and safer spaces, and other matters.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to an SA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

DSP Website: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook (http://scampus.usc.edu), contains
the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html.

**Fair Use**

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. In keeping with section 107 of the Copyright Act we recognize four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

**Citation Guidelines**

All projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. The style we use is APA 5th edition (see http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/).

**Diversity**

In making games and interactive media in a professional and ethical way, it is important that you consider diversity. When looking at your projects, you should consider who is depicted and how this work will impact others. What kinds of individuals and communities are represented in your work? What point of view does your work express? This class will assist you in learning how to make work that includes diverse viewpoints, and may discuss racial, religious, gender and sexual orientation issues in the context of games and interactive media.

**Safer Spaces**

In this class, we make a commitment to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. This means that we will issue content warnings as appropriate, use preferred pronouns, and respect self-identifications. While debate and discussion are welcome, please remain aware of the implications of your words and the images that you include in your work. If the instructor or another student points out that something you have said or shared with the group might be offensive, avoid being defensive; this is a valuable opportunity for us to grow and learn together. If you have a concern about any aspect of the class, you are encouraged to speak with the instructor. If you feel uncomfortable speaking with the instructor, you are also welcome to speak with either the undergraduate or graduate advisor for the division, who can discuss the issue with

Jeff Watson, PhD – remotedevice@gmail.com - @remotedevice
you directly or point you toward other on- and off-campus resources for addressing your concern.

**Disruptive Student Behavior**

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. *Still stumped? Try searching for “rot-13”*. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. And here is a secret message, which will earn you a special advantage if you can decode it before midnight, January 18th, 2016: *frac zr na rznvy jvgu gur fhowrpg yvar "yhfbel nggvgqhr" naq lbhe anrz va gur obql bs gur zrffntr*. Please activate your course in Blackboard with access to the course syllabus. Whether or not you use Blackboard regularly, these preparations will be crucial in an emergency. USC's Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at [http://blackboard.usc.edu](http://blackboard.usc.edu).

**Confidential Resources**

USC Center for Work and Family Life
213.821.0800
http://www.usc.edu/programs/cwfl/

The center for Work and Family Life offers confidential counseling for faculty and staff, free of charge. Services offered include:

- anxiety, depression, and other mental and emotional problems and disorders
- family and relationship issues
- substance abuse and other addictions
- sexual abuse and domestic violence
- social and emotional difficulties related to disability, illness, relationships

USC Center for Women & Men

For students impacted or affected by gender-based harm, or to discuss issues of healthy relationships, please contact USC Center for Women & Men, which is the home of the Sexual Assault Resource Center (sarc.usc.edu).
The Center for Women & Men offers confidential 24-hour crisis counseling:
business hours: (213) 740-4900
after hours, call the on-call counselor at (213) 321-3982

Other On-Campus Resources (Not Confidential)

USC Department of Public Safety (DPS)
University Park Campus
Emergency: (213) 740-4321
Non-Emergency: (213) 740-6000
Health Sciences Campus
Emergency: (323) 442-1000
Non-Emergency: (323) 442-1000

USC Office of Equity and Diversity (includes Title IX compliance)
University Park Campus: (213) 740-5086
Health Sciences Campus: (323) 442-2020

Off-Campus Resources

Rape Treatment Center at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center

The Rape Treatment Center is nationally recognized for its comprehensive, free treatment for sexual assault victims, including 24-hour emergency medical care. Victim advocacy services available. The Rape Treatment Center offers 24-hour help at (310) 319-4000.

Sex Assault Center within the VIP Urgent Care Center at the LAC+USC Medical Center

2010 Zonal Avenue, Los Angeles (Health Sciences Campus). Victim advocacy services available. Includes 24-hour care. (323) 226-3961.

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)

National Sexual Assault Hotline, (800) 656-HOPE(4673)
National Sexual Assault Online Hotline

Peace Over Violence

Peace Over Violence is a nonprofit 501c3, multicultural, community based and volunteer centered organization that offers as 24-hour rape hotline at (213) 626-3393.
BE GOOD TO ONE ANOTHER. WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.