



WRIT 3150: Topics in Digital Rhetoric

Section Topic: Rhetoric, Ethics, and Play

Department of English

3 Credit Hours

Semester/Year: Spring 2021

Instructor Name: Dr. Sergio C. Figueiredo

Class Location: Online

Office: 071 English Building

Class Time: N/A (Asynchronous Course)

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Instructional Method: Online

Phone: 470-578-2359

Course Website: [Online \(D2L\)](#)

Office Hours: By Appointment

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Course Information

Catalog Description

This course explores rhetorical practices in electronic environments and provides an examination of major works on digital reading, writing, and culture framed by contemporary rhetorical theories. Students plan, design, and compose a variety of rhetorically effective digital texts. This course can be taken more than once provided the course content differs from the previous offering

Short Section Description

This course introduces students to the ethics of play and rhetorical invention through the study and design of games. Students will read five takes on play as an experiential ethic by scholars and game designers, play a variety of online/digital games, reflect on their practices and experiences of play, and develop a concept for a game-based story examining the rhetorical systems informing a specific social or cultural value.

Extended Section Description

This section of Topics in Digital Rhetoric introduces students to the ethics of play and rhetorical invention through the study and design of games. Students will read about how scholars and game designers consider play as an experiential ethic, play a variety of online/digital games, reflect on their practices and experiences of play, and develop a concept for a game-based story that examines the rhetorical systems that influence and structure a specific social, cultural, or institutional value.

The primary focus of the course will be to prepare students for a theory- and practice-based understanding of digital game design and development through the lenses of rhetorical invention, constraints, and ethics. Students in this section of the course can expect to read a number of texts by scholars and industry professionals on designing interactive gaming experiences and narratives for public and casual gaming audiences, play and analyze digital games, and write a series of project that culminate in the creative design of a digital game intended to affirm, challenge, or deny a contemporary value – the idea for this project will become clearer as we work through the course material.

The work you do in this course can contribute to your preparedness for a number of positions in the gaming and entertainment industries, including as interactive narrative designers, script and quest writers for games, as writers for other interactive narrative projects (such as Netflix's *Carmen Sandiego*), and game reviewers for popular publications.

This course is designed to prepare you to think of play and digital/video games as a professionals invested in growing the industry and developing an inclusive culture

across gaming cultures and communities. Most importantly, however, this course is designed to prepare you to understand *ethics* as a rhetorician does – not as good/bad or true/false, but as an expression of particular worldviews and decision-making processes. While this sort of approach to *ethics* can be seen in any number of the popular arts, the significance of play is that a game developer must recognize that they put players into a world with a limited number of options and force those players to make ethical decisions if they are to participate in the act of playing.

Your first guiding question for this course is as follows: **What responsibility does a professional writer working in gaming industries have to ensure that a social ethic (a set of shared values) is maintained, challenged, and/or wholly reconsidered?**

Course Prerequisites

ENGL 1102

Required Materials

- Flanagan, Mary, and Helen Nissebbaum. *Values at Play in Digital Games*. The MIT Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0262027663. [\$20]
- Gray, Kishonna L., and David J. Leonard. *Woke Gaming: Digital Challenges to Oppression and Social Injustice*. University of Washington Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0295744179 [\$30]
- Isbister, Katherine. *How Games Move Us: Emotion by Design*. The MIT Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0262534451. [\$16]
- Sicart, Miguel. *Play Matters*. The MIT Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0262534512. [\$16]
- Additional readings provided to you within the course modules on D2L. A complete list of the additional readings can be found at the end of this syllabus.

Recommended Materials

- Brock, Kevin. *Rhetorical Code Studies Discovering Arguments in and Around Code*. University of Michigan Press, 2019. [[Open Access Version](#)]
- Brown, James J. *Ethical Programs: Hospitality and the Rhetorics of Software*. University of Michigan Press, 2015. [[Open Access Version](#)]
- de Koven, Bernard. *The Well-Played Game: A Player's Philosophy*. MIT Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0262019170. [\$28]
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th Edition. University of Chicago Press, 2003. Also available @ [The Chicago Manual of Style Online](#).
- *MLA Handbook*, 8th Edition. The Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Reflect on the experience and ethic of playing games through the lenses of rhetoric and game design theory. *Corresponds to the Discussion Board assignments.*
- Explain how *play* functions as an ethic in and beyond video games. *Corresponds to the Play Narrative assignment.*
- Analyze the rhetorical and ethical issues at work in video game design through the lenses of players and designers. *Corresponds to the Video Game Reviews assignment.*
- Evaluate the rhetorical and ethical influence of games on players. *Corresponds to the Ethical Game Case Study assignment.*
- Apply rhetorical and ethical principles in the production and design original games. *Corresponds to the Original Game Design Concept assignment.*

Instructional Methods

This course is designed using an independent learning method. The course modules are organized to scaffold the learning process, moving from lower order to higher order skills. Each course module prepares students for the following module. Discussion boards are used to facilitate collaborative learning. There will also be a discussion board for general questions student may have for the instructor. For specific questions, students should email the instructor at sfigureir@kennesaw.edu.

Course Content Disclaimer

Students in this course should expect to have their values and ethical practices respectfully challenged. This is, after all, a course with a focus on ethics—or, in scholarly terms, philosophies of morals. Students who do not challenge themselves to see the world, a community, or even a game through the perspectives of others will fail to successfully meet the immeasurable purpose of the course: to prepare students to live lives of service to the communities in which they participate and in the societies in which they live and work. However, I do recognize that particular readings, videos, or games have the potential to trigger a mental health event. In the event that you feel an item of the course content might trigger such an event, please stop reviewing the material and inform the instructor so that other accommodations can be made.

Assignments

Each major assignment will be accompanied by a detailed assignment sheet.

Participation [20%]

The participation grade for this course includes all quizzes, activities, and discussion boards. For the discussion board activities, students are expected to write a substantive reflection of at least 150-250 words in response to the prompts (unless otherwise noted), as well as substantively respond to at least three other class members' posts. In addition, each student should follow up on their peers' response.

For example: Student A responds to the discussion board activity – Student B posts a response to Student A's post – Student A posts a follow-up message to Student B's response.

By the end of the course, students should have written 14 original posts and 41 response posts, not counting the research topic proposal or the video game reviews.

Play Narrative Essay [15%]

Compose a narrative of 2-4 single-spaced pages (or a video essay of 3-5 minutes) reflecting on the roles that *play* has taken in your personal and professional lives. In concluding this narrative essay, you should identify recurring patterns in the play-experiences you have described in the essay and articulate three to five of the values that guide your *play* and *playfulness*. In the narrative, you should include at least three specific examples of *play* at different stages and in different contexts in your life, such as an experience you had playing with classmates in elementary school, an experience of play that you had while at a friend's birthday party, and an experience of play you had in a professional or workplace environment. The values you identify should be clearly connected to one another in the conclusion of the essay.

Video Game Reviews (3) [20%]

This assignment asks students to write three video game reviews of 1200-1500 words that explores evaluates the chosen game using common genre conventions of game reviews. The reviews should also clearly identify key ethic principles or values promoted by the game. The essay should be formatted and cited using either MLA Style or Chicago Style. This review should be addressed to a public audience with an interest in the genre of game you are reviewing – e.g., if you are reviewing a casual game or an RPG, your review should be addressed to audiences who have a particular interest in that type of game. If you are not familiar with many games, consider selecting a game hosted on the Molleindustria website or looking through the independent game hosting platform itch.io for games to play and review.

Ethical Game Case Study [20%]

This assignment prompts students use the course readings to write a case study of 1200-1500 words about the ethic(s) presented in a game of their choosing. This game may not be one of the games students have been assigned in the course. This case study should build on each student's approved research topic proposal and video game reviews, but it should not be focused on a game that a student has already reviewed. This case study should be addressed to the game designers and recommend ways of improving the ethic embedded in the game, as experienced by a player.

Original Game Design Concept [25%]

Using one of the Game Design Document templates from the readings, prepare an original single-player game design addressing some issue you think presents a current ethical dilemma for a particular community. The issue and community you decide to address with this original game design is up to you, but the ethic you are promoting must be clear to readers across each of the sections of the document—that is, your game concept must be cohesive and focused on promoting a particular ethical value through the play-experience you describe. This project should draw from each of the four modules in this course. This project will be assessed as a work-in-progress, meaning that the game you are designing should be as thorough while also flexible enough to be altered in the design process. The final version of this assignment should be between 8-15 pages (single-spaced with a space between paragraphs), demonstrate a clear and nuanced understanding of the course material, and follow the writing guidelines in the Richard Rouse reading, including each of the sections listed in page 359. You should also prepare this document as a formal proposal, including a cover page with an appropriate title, your name, contact information, and date. Please review GDD [Game Design Document] examples in this module to get a sense of the appropriate formatting, style, and design of these documents. Students should use the [2020 IEEE Style guide](#) to format and cite this document.

Calculating Your "Grade"

To calculate your grade during the semester, add the total number of points earned, divide by the total points possible, and multiply by 100.

A basic formula for calculating your grade throughout the semester is:

$$([total\ points\ earned] \div 20) \times 100 = [percentage] - e.g., (18 \div 20) \times 100 = 90\%.$$

Percentages will be rounded to the nearest whole number – e.g., 80.9% becomes 81%.

Assessment Policies

Statement of Learning & Assessment Philosophy

When assessing student work, I tend to focus more on the quality of a given project submission and how that project fits into a student's learning trajectory over the course of a semester or capstone project. My focus is never on grades, and I consciously avoid the term grading when discussing the process of reviewing and evaluating student work. My approach to assessment is holistic (meaning that I look at the work as a whole) because a successful project is rarely evaluated by its constituent elements. In fact, Steven Katz teaches us in "The Ethic of Expediency" that while a purely structural approach to assessment may be expedient, it rarely accounts for the ethical dimension of a work – Katz's primary example being a Nazi memo that is a "perfect" piece of technical communication in every sense of effective documentation, but that leaves unacknowledged the human cost of implementing strategies for more effectively and more expeditiously murder human beings.

When assessing work my focus is not just on how well students check off assignment or project requirements; rather, my focus is on how well students have comprehended and applied what they are learning. Students who demonstrate that they have actively engaged with the course material, worked to understand principles of the field (not just surface-level elements), and respond to feedback in a productive manner work generally perform well in my courses, even if the final product is technically imperfect. Students who are actively engaged in a course, an organization, or industry are invested in how their academic work demonstrate an awareness about and focus on social and cultural institutions. This is the kind of engagement that is essential to an individual's intellectual and professional growth.

The assessment model I use to evaluate student learning is [The Learning Record \(TLR\)](#), which consists of six dimensions of learning that reflect an individual's students intellectual growth and trajectory (copied from TLR website):

Confidence and independence: Growth and development happen when learners' confidence and independence become congruent with their actual abilities and skills, content knowledge, use of experience, and reflectiveness about their own learning. It is not a simple case of "more (confidence and independence) is better."

Skills and strategies: Skills and strategies represent the "know-how" aspect of learning. When we speak of "performance" or "mastery," we generally mean that learners have developed skills and strategies to function successfully in certain situations. Skills and strategies are not only specific to particular

disciplines, but often cross disciplinary boundaries.

Knowledge and Understanding: Knowledge and understanding refers to the "content" knowledge gained in particular subject areas. Knowledge and understanding is the most familiar dimension, focusing on the "know-what" aspect of learning.

Use of prior and emerging experience: Use of prior and emerging experience involves learners' abilities to draw on their own experience and connect it to their work. A crucial but often unrecognized dimension of learning is the capacity to make use of prior experience as well as emerging experience in new situations. It is necessary to observe learners over a period of time while they engage in a variety of activities in order to account for the development of this important capability, which is at the heart of creative thinking and its application.

Reflection: Reflection refers to the developing awareness of the learner's own learning process, as well as more analytical approaches to the subject. When speaking of reflection as a crucial component of learning, we are not using the term in its commonsense meaning of reverie or abstract introspection. We are referring to the development of the learner's ability to step back and consider a situation critically and analytically, with growing insight into his or her own learning processes. It provides the "big picture" for the specific details. Learners need to develop this capacity in order to use what they are learning in other contexts, to recognize the limitations or obstacles confronting them in a given situation, to take advantage of their prior knowledge and experience, and to strengthen their own performance.

Creativity, Originality, Imagination: As learners gain confidence and independence, knowledge and understanding, skills and strategies, ability to use prior and emerging experience in new situations, and reflectiveness, they generally become more playful and experimental, more creative in the expression of that learning. This is true not only in "creative" fields such as the arts, but in nearly all domains: research, argumentation, history, psychology, mathematics. In all fields the primary contributions to the field at the highest levels are the result of creative or imaginative work. Even in the early stages of learning in a discipline, exploration and experimentation, taking new or unexpected perspectives, and playfulness should be recognized and encouraged as a natural part of the learning process. This dimension makes explicit the value of creativity, originality, and imagination in students' development and achievement. Among other things, it recognizes the value of creative experimentation even when the final result of the work may not succeed as the student may hope. If we hope to foster this quality in students' thinking and

development, it is important to encourage it, to document it, and to explicitly make it a value.

General Assessment Scale (Institutional Requirement)

A (Excellent): 100-90

Represents excellent participation in all course activities. All major assigned work completed on time, with no or very minor exceptions. Completed work represents superior quality. Student shows evidence of significant and sustained development throughout the course.

B (Above Average): 89-80

Represents above average participation in all course activities. All major assigned work completed on time with minor exceptions. Completed work represents above average quality. Student shows evidence of marked and above average development throughout the course.

C (Average): 79-70

Represents average participation in all course activities. Some major assignments may have been turned in late and/or not at all. Completed work represents average quality overall. Student shows evidence of some development throughout the course.

D (Below Average): 69-60

Represents *weak and uneven* participation in course activities. Some major and/or minor assignments have not been turned in or have not met basic expectations. Completed work represents below average or inconsistent quality across coursework. Student show partial or unclear evidence of development throughout the course.

F (Failure to Meet Expectations): 59 and below

Represents below average (or no) participation in all course activities. Assignments are consistently turned in late and/or not at all. Completed work represents below average quality overall and/or demonstrates minimal understanding of the course material. Student shows little or no evidence of development throughout the course.

Participation

In addition to completing the assignments, you should read, analyze, and respond to the questions and comments from your peers and from me. Active participation in this course is defined as engaging in classroom discussions by frequently posting in the main

classroom discussion forum and respond to questions and comments your peers leave in response to your posts. Your goal should be to provide evidence that you are an active participant in the learning experience, engaging with your classmates, and contributing to the discussions. In other words, you should demonstrate that you are regularly reading others' posts and comments, as well as composing messages that add value to the collective learning experience of the course.

Generally, students should login to the course management system at least three times a week to review the course materials, complete activities, review and post on the discussion boards, and submit assignments. Logging into the course management system three times a week reflects active participation in the course. Merely logging in to complete the discussion board activities and submitting assignments does not reflect the instructor's expectations for participation.

In all of your discussions, I recommend that you connect your responses to course activities and discussions to "real world" experiences as much as possible. In each activity/discussion, you should refer to the content of the course readings and other materials to demonstrate how you are developing collaboratively and professionally. Your comments should significantly add to the discussions by building on others' comments, suggesting alternative perspectives, pointing out potential problems or oversights, and even constructively and productively disagreeing in a way that contributes to the collective learning experience. You should ensure that any and all comments you make are logical and substantiated with evidence that clearly demonstrates that your claims are based in fact or arrived at through logical reasoning.

The **purpose** of active participation is for you to demonstrate your individual work ethic, to reflect your commitment to developing as a writer in professional environments, and to establish your character as a professional. Failure to actively participate in the class reflects poorly on each of these criteria. Please consider this as you plan your work for the semester. If you know that you will need to travel to a place without a reliable internet connection, be sure that you inform me and your team of these plans as early as possible and plan to be more active upon your return to primary residence.

The **goal** of our discussions is to promote a collaborative (rather than combative) learning experience. To ensure that you are responding appropriately, I strongly encourage you to always reread your responses before posting them, making sure that your messages are worded in a way that will not be taken as personal attacks. Be positive in your approach to others and diplomatic with your words. Respect is demonstrated in what we say (words) and how we say it (tone), and it is the foundation of successful online teaching, learning, and professional and workplace conduct.

Teamwork

As mentioned above, you may be asked to work in teams during this course. If the course requires or allows for a team-based project, groups will have their own discussion board on the course management system (CMS). These should be the main place you collaborate unless you have made other arrangements with your instructor. Your group discussion boards will be used to monitor and assess whether your teams are collaborating effectively and whether any team members are derelict in their responsibilities to a team.

Work in the learning teams will be individually assessed, meaning that it is possible that some group members may receive higher or lower grades on the final assignment. You should participate in your team's work through the discussion boards since this will be the only evidence the instructor will have that each team member has actively worked on construct the collaborative recommendation report assignments. The instructor will monitor individual contributions to the team.

This section is designed to provide clarity about how the groupwork will be evaluated since there is always a question about whether all members of a team will automatically receive the same grades. In this class, individual effort is taken into account when assigning grades for collaborative and group projects. However, individual effort alone does not a team make; in reviewing your group discussion boards, the instructor will also evaluate how well teams work as a cohesive unit rather than a group of individuals working independently of one another. In other words, be sure that your team puts in the work to build a strong and effective team dynamic, as described in the course readings and other materials.

Extensions, Revisions, and Late Work

In rare circumstances, the instructor may grant students an extension or an opportunity to submit late work.

Extensions will be negotiated among students and instructor and granted at the instructor's discretion.

Revisions: Students may revise one major project per semester. The highest of the two assessments will be the final project grade. Minor projects may not be revised.

Late work will receive a five-point deduction per day late, including weekends. Students should consult directly with the instructor about make-up work.

Responding to Student Work

Generally speaking, the instructor's focus is to respond to student work in order to provide feedback that can contribute to your learning and professional development, as

well as providing a roadmap for improving student performance in the future. Feedback will be provided for each project and be used to document your development over the course of the semester. In most cases, the instructor will respond to student work within 10 business days of the due date, not including weekends.

Course Policies & Expectations

Academic Integrity Statement

Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the [Student Code of Conduct](#), as published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Section 5c of the Student Code of Conduct addresses the university's policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to university materials, misrepresentation/falsification of university records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the Department of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (SCAI), which includes either an "informal" resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct's minimum one semester suspension requirement.

Basic Needs Security

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable her to provide any resources that she may possess (Sara Goldrick-Rab, "[Basic Needs Security and the Syllabus](#)").

Course Communications

Please use my faculty email (sfigureir@kennesaw.edu) as the primary method contacting me about questions, concerns, or comments about the course. Emails will receive a reply within 48 hours, unless otherwise noted. **If you use the D2L email system to contact me, you may not receive a response.**

Email is considered an official form of communication most commonly used for brief notifications, questions, clarifications, requests, and project submissions (school/work). As a part of this course, I may send emails with course information. Please check their email accounts daily.

The University provides all KSU students with an "official" email account with the address "@students.kennesaw.edu." As a result of federal laws protecting educational information and other data (FERPA), this is the sole email account you should use to

communicate with your instructor or other University officials and the account they will use to communicate with you.

KSU Netiquette Policy: All members of the class are expected to follow [rules of common courtesy in all email messages](#), threaded discussions and chats.

Office Hours: If you need to schedule a meeting with the instructor, please email that instructor to request a meeting. You should also include at least three days/time when you are available to meet virtually. The instructor may setup a video conference using university systems (Microsoft Teams; Collaborate Ultra), although you may request a meeting using other video conferencing platforms such as Google Hangouts or Skype.

Course Technology

We will use [D2L Brightspace](#) for accessing the syllabus, attendance, course materials, assignment submission system, and grades. Prior to logging in to D2L, students should perform a browser check using [USG's Brightspace Browser Checker](#) to determine if the browser being used is compatible with D2L.

Students should have basic computer skills and must have access to both a laptop/desktop and the Internet. University Information Technology Services (UITs) provides students, faculty, and staff with the technology support, training, and services necessary for academic collaboration, research, and innovation. Students can receive technical support from UITs by calling 470.578.3555 or emailing [the Student Help Desk](#). Additionally, students in need of technical support can submit an online [Service Request Form](#). For more information, go to the [UITs website](#).

This course will require students to use several educational technologies, including technologies that exist outside of the learning management system. Below is a list of common educational technologies, as well as links to the accessibility & privacy statements for these technologies:

- Adobe (Acrobat Reader) [[Accessibility](#) | [Privacy](#)]
- Desire2Learn (D2L) [[Accessibility](#) | [Privacy](#)]
- Google & YouTube [[Accessibility](#) | [Privacy](#)]
- Microsoft (Office Suite Products) [[Accessibility](#) | [Privacy](#)]

General Expectations for Online Courses

If you have never taken an online course before, you will find that online courses provide opportunities for independent learning that eliminates drive time and “seat time” on campus while offering the same level of rigorous and structured learning experiences as you would get in the face-to-face classroom. You should set aside

dedicated time each day to complete your coursework and maintain an active presence in the course in order to avoid falling behind in your work. Review the modules and assignments carefully to get a sense of how you will need to manage your time. You should also reach out to your instructor with any questions you have about the course expectations. **At minimum, I recommend that you set aside at least four (4) to five (5) hours each week to complete class readings, activities, and assignments. Please plan on getting online, at least, three times a week to complete the coursework.**

Assignments are most often due by 11:59pm on Sunday nights. However, some assignment due dates may be due on other days, so be sure to review the syllabus and module outlines carefully. I strongly encourage you to complete assignments well in advance of the due date in order to avoid unforeseen technology difficulties. It is a good idea to have two (2) ways of accessing a computer and the Internet, including your personal devices and services and those of a friend or neighbor. **Make contingency plans in the event that you encounter a problem with your technology resources.**

Conducting Research Involving Human Subjects

Student-researchers who conduct projects involving human subjects at variance from or extending beyond a class assignment must consult with their faculty advisor or instructor about securing KSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Research involving human subjects cannot be conducted without supervision by a faculty advisor and IRB approval and oversight. Moreover, student-researchers must contact any IRB-type organization available in their research setting for approval and oversight. Additionally, student-researchers will be required to complete human subjects ethics training through an online training program before any research activity is allowed to begin in the research setting. Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) provides the official certification program for KSU-affiliated personnel and students. Student-researchers are required to complete any needed IRB forms, follow accepted policies, and gain approval in writing, consistent with the guidelines set by their research setting, prior to beginning any assigned research project. For more information, visit [KSU's IRB website](#).

Student Resources

Campus resources available to facilitate students success at KSU include:

- Academic Support Services:
http://www.kennesaw.edu/stu_dev/msrs/academic.html
- Dean of Students: <https://deanofstudents.kennesaw.edu/about-contact.php>
- ESL Study/Tutorial Center:
http://uc.kennesaw.edu/academicinitiatives/docs/Guide_to_the_ESL_Center.pdf

- Student Disability Services:
http://www.kennesaw.edu/stu_dev/dsss/welcome.html
- The Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.kennesaw.edu/>

Student Safety Statement

In case of an emergency, please call the Kennesaw State University (KSU) police at 470.578.6666 or use the LiveSafe app. LiveSafe is a free app that is user-friendly and can be used to submit emergencies, safety issues, or general questions straight to KSU Police in real-time. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) offers free training to faculty, staff, and students year-round. For more information, go to the [OEM website](#) or email the OEM at oem@kennesaw.edu. You can also follow OEM on Twitter ([@ksuoem](#)) and Facebook ([@kennesawstateOEM](#)) for up-to-date information on campus closures, delays, and other important information.

University Policies

Students should be familiar with the following policies and resources:

- [All Federal, BOR and KSU Student Policies](#)
- [KSU Student Resources](#)

KSU Enrollment Policy: Students are solely responsible for managing their enrollment status in a class; nonattendance does not constitute a withdrawal.

Tentative Course Outline – Spring 2021

Please note that this course is arranged into four units, each concluding with the submission of one major assignment:

- **Unit 1:** Introduction to Rhetorics of Games and Play – Weeks 1-3
- **Unit 2:** Affective, Social, and Community Game Design Methods – Weeks 4-6
- **Unit 3:** Contemporary Issues in Gaming Cultures – Weeks 7-12
- **Unit 4:** Designing Games to Effect Ethical and Social Change – Weeks 13-17

Week 01: Introduction to the Course & The Well-Played Game [1 Week] – Begins January 11, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction

In this module, you will be introduced to the instructor, review the course syllabus and associated information, and complete a quiz about your understanding of the course expectations. In addition, you will read excerpts from Bernard de Koven's book, *The Well-Played Game: A Player's Philosophy*. These excerpts set the stage for our study and application of the course's primary topic: *the act of play and its significance a rhetorical and ethical practice*.

Objectives

The objective of this module is to demonstrate that you understand the instructor's expectations for your work during this semester.

Activities:

- Read the Syllabus
- Complete the Syllabus Quiz
- Post Questions to the Syllabus Discussion Board (if you have any)
- Review Discussion Board Assignment Sheet
- Read Bernard de Koven's *The Well-Played Game* (Excerpts)
- Respond to the "Playing Well" Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- Syllabus
- Bernard de Koven, Excerpts from *The Well-Played Game* [PDF]
- Reed Berkowitz, "[A Game Designer's Analysis of QAnon](#)"

Recommended Content:

- Jesper Juul, ["The Game, the Player, the World: Looking for a Heart of Gameness"](#)

Assessments/Required Activities:

- Syllabus Quiz – **Due: Sunday, January 17, 2021 by 11:59pm**
- Syllabus Discussion Board – **Due: January 17, 2021 by 11:59pm**
- "Playing Well" Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, January 17, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have reviewed the course syllabus and completed the syllabus assignment. At this point, you should understand what the instructor's expectations of your participation and engagement in the course.

Additionally, you have read a philosophy of play, written by Bernard de Koven, that prepares you with an understanding of key concepts and theories of play. Using de Koven's work, you have also written a brief reflection on what it means to play well and identified key elements of an engaging and fulfilling play experience.

What Next:

Now that you have completed Module 01, you may move on to Module 02, Rhetorics of Games and Play.

Week 02: Rhetorics of Games & Play – Begins January 18, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module you will be introduced to some basic concepts about how digital games and play function rhetorically and socially. One article articulates how digital platforms constrain game developers' and players' options by looking at the role code play in digital game development. The second set of readings are by rhetorical theory scholar James J. Brown, Jr., on the way networked online spaces like games create (and break) hospitable online environments in order to explore rhetorical digital practices and ethics (sets of values or value-systems). Finally, your third reading is by game developer and scholar Miguel Sicart, who is interested in *play* as “a productive, expressive way of being, a form of understanding, and a fundamental part of our [individual and social] well-being” ([MIT Press Website](#)).

Objectives:

The objective for this module is to prepare students with the rhetorical and ethical language and concepts that will inform the course material and course projects throughout the semester. Students should take copious notes on terms and concepts so that they can begin using discipline specific terms and concepts in their projects.

Activities:

- Read Bogost, Brown, and Sicart
- Respond to the “Procedural Rhetoric, Hospitality, and the Means Available to Play” Discussion Board Activity
- Review the “Play Narrative” assignment sheet share questions with the instructor
- Begin drafting your “Play Narrative” assignment

Required Content:

- Ian Bogost, “The Rhetoric of Video Games” [PDF]
- James J. Brown, Jr. “[Introduction](#)” and “[Conclusion](#)” [PDF; from *Ethical Programs*]
- Miguel Sicart, *Play Matters*: Chapters 1-2

Recommended Reading

- “[What is Rhetoric?](#)” from [Silva Rhetoricæ](#) (created by Gideon O. Burton) – for a refresher on rhetorical theory and concepts
- Joshua Daniel-Wariya, “Ludic Rhetorics: Theories of Play in Rhetoric and Writing” [PDF]
- Miguel Sicart, “[Against Procedurality](#)”
- Reuben Keehan, “[Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play](#)”
- Kevin Brock, [Rhetorical Code Studies](#) – for students interested in rhetorics of technology and science

Assessments/Required Activities:

- “Procedural Rhetoric, Hospitality, and the Means Available to Play”
Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, January 24, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have been introduced to two rhetorical approaches to understanding the structures (rhetorics/procedures), ethics (hospitality), and philosophy of experiential play (and playfulness) with respect to digital games. You have also started tracing connections between the significance of play and how play-experiences are developed in digital games. Finally, you have reflected on the role of procedural rhetoric in creating play experiences that contribute to the values that make up our respective *ethic* (set of values).

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 02, you may move on to Module/Week 03, Ethics & Play in Context.

Week 03: Ethics & Play in Context [1 Week] – Begins January 25, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module you will be introduced to the concept of critical play and how that concept manifests in four unique contexts for play: (1) toys; (2) playgrounds; (3) beauty; and (4) politics. As you read chapters from Sicart's *Play Matters*, you should also be taking notes on specific methods and strategies that inform contemporary game design and development. As you work through this material, you will also be asked to compose a narrative essay reflecting on the role *play* has played in your life within various contexts (with family and friends, at work, etc.). The "Play Narrative" project is meant to have you identify specific practices that repeat themselves in your play-experiences. Based on the patterns you discover in writing your narrative, you will briefly articulate the values that you see reflected in your experiences of *playing with others*. You will also write a summary of your play narrative for this module's discussion board activity.

Objectives:

The primary objective for this module is to build on your work in the previous two modules by asking you to identify what role *play* has played in your personal and professional lives and analyzing those experiences to identify a set of recurring values that appear across the contexts. The course readings are designed to prepare you to critically analyze your play experiences and how specific contexts for play encourage specific approaches to critical and experiential play.

Activities:

- Read Flanagan and Sicart
- Complete the "Play Narrative" assignment
- Respond to the "Play Narrative Summary" Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- Mary Flanagan, Excerpts from *Critical Play* [PDF]
- Miguel Sicart, *Play Matters*: Chapters 3-6

Recommended Readings

- Miguel Sicart, [Play Ethics: Values, Virtues, and Videogames \[Video\]](#)
- Miguel Sicart, "[Papers Please: Ethics](#)" [PDF]
- Paul M. Dombrowski and Sam Dragga, "The Ethics Tradition" [PDF]
- J. N. Hooker, "Three Kinds of Ethics" [PDF]
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [Ethics](#)
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [Search Results for Ethics](#) (see the entry for [Virtue Ethics](#), if you are interested in digging deeper into "virtues" and "vices")

Assessments/Required Activities:

- “Play Narrative Summary” Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, January 31, 2021 by 11:59pm**
- “Play Narrative” Assignment – **Due: Sunday, January 31, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have been introduced to the concept of *critical play* and how specific contexts for play call for particular methods and strategies for *play* and *playfulness*. You have also reflected on and analyzed your own experience with play across specific contexts (e.g., school, home, work, church, etc.), identified three to five values that have recurred in each of those contexts, and articulated how these values are connected to one another as a value system (or, in philosophical terms, an ethic).

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 03, you may move on to Module/Week 04, Contemporary Digital Play.

Week 04: Designing for Communities of Play [1 Week] – Begins February 1, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module you will be introduced to how game developers and scholars think about their work designing games for developing online digital communities grounded in collaborative and social play. As “communities of play” (Pearce) emerge, the collaborative and social community that a group of players form begin to establish their own set of moral values (their *ethic*) about what constitutes a well-played game and appropriate self-governance. As you read this week’s materials, you should be taking notes on the processes and procedures the authors identify as essential to designing games that allow these communities of play and their respective values to thrive (as well as when these communities are no longer sustainable). Based on your notes, you will respond to the “Building Community in Digital Game Environments” discussion board activity. Additionally, you will review the assignment information for the next major course project, the Research Topic Proposal and Video Game Review assignment, and begin brainstorming research topics to complete that project.

Objectives:

The primary objective for this module is to begin exploring the methods and practices that game developers and designers use when creating digital game environments and experiences for communities of play. A second objective is to have students identify specific methods and practices that they may want to consider when working on the Ethics Case Study and the Original Game Design Concept assignments. The course readings are designed to prepare you to think as a game review and developer.

Activities:

- Read Sicart, Isbister, and Pearce
- Review Research Topic Proposal and Video Game Review Assignment Information
- Respond to the “Building Community in Digital Game Environments” Discussion Board Activity
- Begin researching and refining your research topic ideas

Required Content:

- Miguel Sicart, *Play Matters*: Chapters 7-8
- Katherine Isbister, *How Games Move Us*: Introduction
- Celia Pearce, [“Communities of Play: The Social Construction of Identity in Persistent Online Game Worlds”](#) and “Communities of Play and the Global Playground” [PDF]
- Research Topic Proposal and Video Game Review Assignment Sheet [PDF]

Assessments/Required Activities:

- “Building Community in Digital Game Environments” Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, February 7, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have been introduced to the concept of *communities of play* and the methods and practices game developers use when creating digital game environments that support the emergence, growth, and sustainability of these communities. You have also offered some tentative answer to questions about the significance and value of how these communities function, particularly with respect to the roles and responsibilities you think game developers have to creating the space for those communities to form and thrive.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 04, you may now move on to Module/Week 05, Social Play & Affective Game Design.

Week 05: Social Play and Affective Game Design [1 Week] – Begins February 8, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module you will be introduced to Katherine Isbister’s emotional game design methodology, a manifesto about the role of games in society and culture, and a reflection on how the games we play and the memories generated by reflecting on those play experiences influence our values (and the *ethics* we live by). As you review the course materials in this module, you should continue taking notes on the methods, strategies, and tactics that Isbister describes in these chapters and how those practices are reflected in the other two required readings. Remember, the notes you take now will make it easier for you to successfully complete the rest of your work in this course – consider these notes a gift to your future self (i.e., when we get to November). The discussion board activity for this module asks you to consider how these methods, strategies, and tactics appear in one or two games designed by arts and humanities scholars—each taking on a specific social or cultural issue—and published in the online journal *Hyperrhiz*. Consider this discussion board activity as food for thought as you prepare to submit your Research Topic Proposals at the end of Module 6.

Objectives:

The primary objective for this module is to introduce students to methods and strategies of emotional game design and its use in developing compelling and enriching games. A second objective is to have students consider how scholars and artists use research to develop games to explore social and culture ethics. The course materials are designed to prepare you think further about the research topics you want to pursue this semester.

Activities:

- Read Isbister, Gazzard, and Zimmerman/Chaplin
- Complete the “Designing Games Grounded in Scholarly and Cultural Research” Discussion Board Activity
- Continue researching and refining your research topics ideas

Required Content:

- Katherine Isbister, *How Games Move Us*: Chapters 1-2
- Eric Zimmerman & Heather Chaplin, [“Manifesto: The 21st Century Will Be Defined By Games”](#)
- Alison Gazzard, [“A History of the Everyday: The Playfulness of Games and the Games That We Play\(ed\)”](#)

Recommended Content:

- Mary Flanagan, [“A Path to Our Futures”](#)

- Richard Bartle, "Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players Who Suit MUDS" [PDF]

Assessments/Required Activities:

- "Designing Games Grounded in Scholarly and Cultural Research" Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, February 14, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module you have been introduced to methods, strategies, and tactics of emotional game design, as well as how scholars and artists have used similar methods, strategies, and tactics to develop digital games that raise ethical concerns grounded in social and cultural research. You have also reflected on how these scholar/artist-created games implement the methods and concepts from the required readings in this module. At this point you should have a clear and narrow focus for your Research Topic Proposal assignment and be prepared to complete that assignment.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 05, you may now move on to Module/Week 06, Connectivity in Digital Games.

Week 06: Connectivity in Digital Games [1 Week] – Begins February 15, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module, you will finish reviewing Katherine Isbister’s work on an emotional game design methodology with a focus on embodied gaming and creating intimate game experiences. In addition, you will review two essays (by Steve Benford et al. and Aubrey Anable) related to mobile and augmented reality gaming – games designed to move our bodies around in the physical world. The required material in this module is meant to provide you with some final considerations about game design and development as you prepare to submit your Research Topic Proposals. The discussion board activity for this module is not directly tied to the readings, but the readings should inform the methods and strategies you plan to describe in your discussion board activity.

Objectives:

The primary objective for this module is to build on students’ understanding of methods and strategies used in emotional game design with a focus on mobile and augmented reality game design. A second objective is to have students propose a research topic for their work this semester. The course materials are designed to prepare you to consider how you might address the social and/or cultural values you take up in your research topic and coursework.

Activities:

- Read Isbister and Anable
- Complete the “Research Topic Proposals” Discussion Board Activity/Assignment

Required Content:

- Katherine Isbister, *How Games Move Us*: Chapters 3-4 and “Endgame: A Few Last Thoughts”
- Steve Benford et al., “Bridging the Physical and Digital in Pervasive Gaming” [PDF]
- Aubrey Anable, “Introduction” and “Touching Games” [PDF – excerpts from *Playing with Feelings: Video Games and Affect*]

Recommended Content:

- Sean Morey and Jason Crider, “Hyperanimals: Inverting Nature Through *Pokémon Go*” [PDF]
- John Craig Freeman, “Emergent Technology as Art Practice and Public Art as Intervention” [PDF]

Assessments/Required Activities:

- Research Topic Proposal (Discussion Board Activity) – **Due: Sunday, February 21, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module you have finished reviewing Isbister's book on emotional game design methods, strategies, and techniques, reviewed material related to contemporary mobile and augmented game design, and submitted research topic proposal for your work throughout the rest of the semester. As you prepare to move onto Module 07, you should re-consider and reflect upon what you have learned about rhetoric, ethics, play, and game design. Your work in this module concludes Unit 2 (Rhetorics of Games and Play) of the course and marks the transition to Unit 3 (Contemporary Issues in Gaming Cultures). Your work up to this point in the semester has prepared you to study, investigate, and analyze how the design of a game influences play behavior and provokes questions about the ethical values that designers and players alike bring to varying play experiences.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 06, you may now move on to Module/Week 07, Contemporary Issues in Gaming Ethics, Part 1.

Week 07: Contemporary Issues in Gaming Cultures, Part 1 [1 Week] – Begins February 22, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module, you will begin exploring some of the major contemporary issues of social and cultural values that scholars and artists are exploring and researching in gaming cultures. This particular module addresses ethics, violence, and oppositional gaming practices that “disrupts our collective relationship to destruction, mayhem, and pain” (p. 16). Additionally, you will play three games that produce play experiences that address social and collective values when it comes to state-sponsored violence. In this module’s discussion board activity, you will be asked to reflect on how the concepts from the readings to the assigned games you will play. As you do the reading and play the assigned games, you should be taking notes on specific issues of concern to the authors and how you see those issues reflected in the games you play. These notes should be taken in support of your work on the Video Game Reviews and Ethics Case Study assignments.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this module is to prepare students to think critically about specific elements of game design, development, and player experience as they begin investigating their research topics/questions and thinking about their original game design concepts.

Activities:

- Read Gray/Leonard
- Play 3 Pre-Selected Games
- Review Ethics Case Study Assignment
- Review Case Study Writing Guides
- Continue Identifying and Playing Games for the Video Game Reviews Assignment and the Ethics Case Study Assignment
- Complete the “Reflections of Violent Games and Social Ethics” Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- Kishonna L. Gray and David J. Leonard, *Woke Gaming: Part 1* (Ethics, Violence and Oppositional Gaming)
- Play: [September 12th: A Toy Story](#) (Optional reading: Florencia Espel, “[September 12th: a Toy World – The First Newsgame](#)”)
- Play: [Peacemaker](#)
- Play: [When Rivers Were Trails](#)
- Ethical Game Case Study Assignment Sheet [PDF]
- “Case Study Writing Guide” [PDF]

- “Guidelines for Writing a Case Study Analysis” [PDF]

Recommended Content:

- Kishonna L. Gray and David J. Leonard, *Woke Gaming*: Introduction

Assessments/Required Activities:

- “Reflections of Violent Games and Social Ethics” Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, February 28, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have started exploring and critically thinking about specific issues of concern in contemporary gaming cultures and playing games that present play experiences that challenge players to confront their own values in relation to related social, cultural, political, and institutional issues. You have also reflected on how the games you have been assigned to play implore players to confront those issues in experiential and emotional ways.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 07, you may now move on to Module/Week 08, Contemporary Issues in Gaming Ethics, Part 2.

Week 08: Contemporary Issues in Gaming Cultures, Part 2 [1 Week] – Begins March 1, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module, you will begin exploring some of the major contemporary issues of social and cultural values that scholars and artists are exploring and researching in gaming cultures. This particular module addresses economics and capitalist values in gaming cultures that can pose barriers to ethical game design practices. Additionally, you will play three games that produce play experiences that address social and collective values related to economics and capitalist social structures. In this module's discussion board activity, you will be asked to reflect on how the concepts from the readings to the assigned games you will play. As you do the reading and play the assigned games, you should be taking notes on specific issues of concern to the authors and how you see those issues reflected in the games you play. These notes should be taken in support of your work on the Video Game Reviews and Ethics Case Study assignments.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this module is to prepare students to think critically about specific elements of game design, development, and player experience as they begin investigating their research topics/questions and thinking about their original game design concepts.

Activities:

- Read Gray/Leonard
- Play 3 Pre-Selected Games
- Continue Identifying and Playing Games for the Video Game Reviews Assignment and the Ethics Case Study Assignment
- Complete the "Reflections of 'Economics' Games and Social Ethics" Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- Kishonna L. Gray and David J. Leonard, *Woke Gaming: Part 2* (Economics of Gaming)
- Play: [McDonald's Videogame](#)
- Play: [Third World Farmer](#)
- Play: [Universal Paperclips](#) (Optional reading/guide: Paul Tassi, "[Ten Things I Wish I Knew When I Started 'Paperclips'](#)")

Assessments/Required Activities:

- "Reflections of 'Economics' Games and Social Ethics" Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, March 7, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have started exploring and critically thinking about specific issues of concern in contemporary gaming cultures and playing games that present play experiences that challenge players to confront their own values in relation to related social, cultural, political, and institutional issues. You have also reflected on how the games you have been assigned to play implore players to confront those issues in experiential and emotional ways.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 08, you may now move on to Module/Week 09, Spring Break.

Week 09: Spring Break [1 Week] – Begins March 8, 2021 @ 12:00AM**Introduction:**

Take the week off and try to relax or catch up on other schoolwork.

Objectives:

To take a break and relax

Activities:

- Optional: binge a new show
- Optional: play a new game
- Optional: spend some time at the shore

Required Content:

- None

Assessments/Required Activities:

- None

Module Summary:

It's been a week to take a break and relax, or to catch up on other work. Either way, I hope you are all a bit better rested and ready to move forward with the course.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 09, you may now move on to Module/Week 10, Contemporary Issues in Gaming Ethics, Part 3.

Week 10: Contemporary Issues in Gaming Cultures, Part 3 [1 Week] – Begins March 15, 2021
@ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module, you will begin exploring some of the major contemporary issues of social and cultural values that scholars and artists are exploring and researching in gaming cultures. This particular module addresses feminist values in gaming cultures that aim to build “a culture of voices that imagine more just and empowering realities” (p. 18). Additionally, you will play three games that produce play experiences that address social and collective values related to feminist values in the gaming industries and gaming cultures. In this module’s discussion board activity, you will be asked to reflect on how the concepts from the readings to the assigned games you will play. As you do the reading and play the assigned games, you should be taking notes on specific issues of concern to the authors and how you see those issues reflected in the games you play. These notes should be taken in support of your work on the Video Game Reviews and Ethics Case Study assignments.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this module is to prepare students to think critically about specific elements of game design, development, and player experience as they begin investigating their research topics/questions and thinking about their original game design concepts.

Activities:

- Read Gray/Leonard
- Play 3 Pre-Selected Games
- Continue Identifying and Playing Games for the Video Game Reviews Assignment
- Begin Drafting your Ethics Case Study Assignment
- Complete the “Reflections of Feminist Games and Social Ethics” Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- Kishonna L. Gray and David J. Leonard, *Woke Gaming*: Two essays of your choice from Part 3 (Feminist Gaming)
- Play: [dys4ia](#)
- Play: [Elude](#)
- Play: [Loneliness](#)
- Play: [Regret](#) (game linked at the end of the article)

Assessments/Required Activities:

- “Reflections of Feminist Games and Social Ethics” Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, March 21**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have started exploring and critically thinking about specific issues of concern in contemporary gaming cultures and playing games that present play experiences that challenge players to confront their own values in relation to related social, cultural, political, and institutional issues. You have also reflected on how the games you have been assigned to play implore players to confront those issues in experiential and emotional ways.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 10, you may now move on to Module/Week 11, Contemporary Issues in Gaming Ethics, Part 4.

Week 11: Contemporary Issues in Gaming Cultures, Part 4 [1 Week] – Begins March 22, 2021
@ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module, you will begin exploring some of the major contemporary issues of social and cultural values that scholars and artists are exploring and researching in gaming cultures. This particular module addresses counter narratives and alternative realities in gaming cultures as a way into exploring the potential of games to “foster critical consciousness, aid in particular democracy, and effect social change” (p. 18). Additionally, you will play three games that produce play experiences that address social and collective values related to centering silenced and marginalized value systems in gaming cultures. In this module’s discussion board activity, you will be asked to reflect on how the concepts from the readings to the assigned games you will play. As you do the reading and play the assigned games, you should be taking notes on specific issues of concern to the authors and how you see those issues reflected in the games you play. These notes should be taken in support of your work on the Video Game Reviews and Ethics Case Study assignments.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this module is to prepare students to think critically about specific elements of game design, development, and player experience as they begin investigating their research topics/questions and thinking about their original game design concepts.

Activities:

- Read Gray/Leonard
- Play 3 Pre-Selected Games
- Continue Identifying and Playing Games for the Video Game Reviews Assignment
- Continue Drafting your Ethics Case Study Assignment
- Complete the “Reflections of Activist Games and Social Ethics” Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- Kishonna L. Gray and David J. Leonard, *Woke Gaming*: Two essays of your choice from Part 4 (Gaming Against the Grain)
- Play: [Icarus Needs](#)
- Play: [Ancient Greek Punishment](#) – play as each character at least two times
- Play: [Here](#)
- Play: [A Dark Room](#)

Recommended Content:

- Stefano Gualeni, ["Self-Reflexive Videogames: Observations and Corollaries on Virtual Worlds as Philosophical Artifacts"](#)
- Geoff Kaufman and Mary Flanagan, ["A Psychologically 'Embedded' Approach to Designing Games for Prosocial Causes"](#)

Assessments/Required Activities:

- "Reflections of Activist Games and Social Ethics" Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, March 28, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have started exploring and critically thinking about specific issues of concern in contemporary gaming cultures and playing games that present play experiences that challenge players to confront their own values in relation to related social, cultural, political, and institutional issues. You have also reflected on how the games you have been assigned to play implore players to confront those issues in experiential and emotional ways.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 11, you may now move on to Module/Week 12, Contemporary Issues in Gaming Ethics, Part 5.

Week 12: Contemporary Issues in Gaming Cultures, Part 5 [1 Week] – Begins March 29, 2021
@ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module, you will begin exploring some of the major contemporary issues of social and cultural values that scholars and artists are exploring and researching in gaming cultures. This particular module addresses how game designer, developers, and player might intervene “in the culture of violence and inequity by focusing on how games have the potential to foster change through empathy and compassion” (p. 19). Additionally, you will play three games that produce play experiences that address social and collective values related to “the struggle for justice and equity” in gaming cultures and “society as a whole” (p. 19). In this module’s discussion board activity, you will be asked to reflect on how the concepts from the readings to the assigned games you will play. As you do the reading and play the assigned games, you should be taking notes on specific issues of concern to the authors and how you see those issues reflected in the games you play. These notes should be taken in support of your work on the Video Game Reviews and Ethics Case Study assignments. Your Ethics Case Study assignment is due at the conclusion of this module.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this module is to prepare students to think critically about specific elements of game design, development, and player experience as they begin investigating their research topics/questions and thinking about their original game design concepts.

Activities:

- Read Gray/Leonard
- Play 3 Pre-Selected Games
- Continue Identifying and Playing Games for the Video Game Reviews Assignment
- Complete Drafting your Ethics Case Study Assignment
- Complete the “Reflections of Empathetic/Inclusive Games and Social Ethics” Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- Kishonna L. Gray and David J. Leonard, *Woke Gaming*: Two essays of your choice from Part 5 (Empathetic and Inclusive Gaming)
- Erin Kathleen Bahl, Sergio C. Figueiredo, and Jeffrey D. Greene, “[A Primer for Telling Critical Stories through Accessible Games](#)”
- [Game Accessibility Guidelines](#)
- [Accessible.Games](#)
- Play: [Sara is Missing](#)
- Play: [In the Pause Between the Ringing](#)

- Play: [Switch On Life](#) (Optional reading: Medel Blog, "[Switch On Life: An Interactive Hearing Game](#)")
- Play: [Interland](#)

Assessments/Required Activities:

- Ethics Case Study – **Due: Sunday, April 4, 2021 by 11:59pm**
- "Reflections of Empathetic/Inclusive Games and Social Ethics" Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, April 4, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have started exploring and critically thinking about specific issues of concern in contemporary gaming cultures and playing games that present play experiences that challenge players to confront their own values in relation to related social, cultural, political, and institutional issues. You have also reflected on how the games you have been assigned to play implore players to confront those issues in experiential and emotional ways. In addition, you have completed your Ethics Case Study Assignment.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 12, you may now move on to Module/Week 14, Values at Play, Part 1.

Week 13: Values at Play, Part 1 [1 Week] – Begins April 5, 2021 @ 12:00AM**Introduction:**

The start of this module marks the beginning of Unit 4 (Designing Games to Effect Ethical and Social Change) and your introduction to the Values at Play game design heuristic, developed by Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum in *Values at Play in Digital Games*. Additionally, you will be introduced to writing game design documentation, review the guidelines for the Original Game Design Concept assignment, review a student example (very good) of this assignment, and begin brainstorming game design concepts in the discussion board activity. Finally, you should complete and submit any remaining video game reviews you have not yet written.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this module is to prepare you to begin applying the course material we have covered this semester to design an original game concept that addresses a contemporary social value that you think needs more attention that it is currently receiving. A second objective for this module is to have you build on the research you have conducted into the social value you have selected as your research topic for the semester – you’ve researched the issue in society, played and reviewed games that have taken on that issue in some way, and written a case study on a game in which that social value is a major component of the play experience. Now it is time to begin taking all of your work and put it to work in order to design a game that contributes to that conversation.

Activities:

- Read Flanagan/Nissenbaum and Rouse
- Review Original Game Design Concept Assignment and Student Example (Very Good)
- Complete the Video Game Reviews Assignment
- Complete the “Collaborative Game Design Concept Workshop” Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum, *Values at Play*: Introduction and Part I
- Richard Rouse, “The Design Document” [PDF]
- Original Game Design Concept Document Assignment Sheet [PDF]
- Student Example of Original Game Design Concept Document [PDF]

Recommended Content:

- Kokou M. Egbewatt, “[From Concept Ideas to Production – Game Design Documents \[GDDs\]](#)”
- “[Technical Design Document and Game Design Document](#)”

- Tim Ryan, "[The Anatomy of a Design Document, Part 1: Documentation Guidelines for the Game Concept and Proposal](#)"
- Condor, Inc., [Diablo Game Concept Pitch](#)
- New York Film Academy, "[How to Pitch to Game Developers](#)"
- GameDocs.org, "[Pitch](#)" Search (Examples of Game Pitch Documents)
- Modus, "[How to Pitch a Game to Publishers](#)"
- David Mullich, "[A Template for Game Pitch PowerPoints](#)"
- Philip Bouchard, "[I Designed the Oregon Trail , You Have Died of Dysentery](#)"

Assessments/Required Activities:

- Collaborative Game Design Concept Workshop Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, April 11, 2021 by 11:59pm**
- Video Game Reviews – **Due: Sunday, April 11, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have been introduced to the Values at Play game design heuristic and started to brainstorm ideas for your Original Game Design Concept assignment – including receiving feedback on these ideas from members of the course. You have also been introduced to general guidelines for preparing game design documentation to pitch a game concept to a game studio. Finally, you have completed your video game reviews assignment.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 13, you may now move on to Module/Week 14, Values at Play, Part 2.

Week 14: Values at Play, Part 2 [1 Week] – Begins April 12, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module, you will continue to study and deepen your understanding of the Values at Play heuristic, as developed by Flanagan and Nissenbaum, refine your game design concept idea based on peer feedback, and begin drafting your Original Game Design Concept assignment. In addition, you will be introduced to an overview of the video game development process and a template for detailing the structure of a single quest in a video game. As you review the course materials, please take notes on the readings to support your work developing the concept for your original game design. In the discussion board activity for this module, you will also finalize your decision about what game concept you will pursue in the Original Game Design Concept and apply the Values at Play heuristic to refine your concept.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this module is to support your intellectual and professional understanding of game design development and how to develop detailed quests for each part of the complete game. This primary objective is directly tied to your ability to apply the Values at Play game design heuristic in three game components: (1) Discovery; (2) Implementation; and (3) Verification.

Activities:

- Read Flanagan/Nissenbaum, “Video Game Development,” and “Quest” Template
- Begin Drafting the Original Game Design Concept Assignment
- Complete the “Applying the Values at Play Heuristic in Game Concept Development” Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum, *Values at Play: Part II*
- “Video Game Development” [PDF]
- Quest Template [PDF]

Recommended Content:

- Henry Jenkins, [“Game Design as Narrative Architecture”](#)
- Jeffrey Kim, Elan Lee, Timothy Thomas, and Caroline Dombrowski, [“Storytelling in New Media: The Case of Alternate Reality Games, 2001-2009”](#)

Assessments/Required Activities:

- “Applying the Values at Play Heuristic in Game Concept Development” Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, April 18, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have continued to learn about the Values at Play heuristic developed by Flanagan and Nissenbaum, decided which game concept you will pursue for the final course project, applied the three components of that heuristic to that game design concept, and learned about video game development processes and procedures. You should have also started drafting portions of your Original Game Design Concept documents.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 14, you may now move on to Module/Week 15, Values at Play, Part 3, and Peer Reviews.

Week 15: Values at Play, Part 3 [1 Week] – Begins April 19, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

In this module, you will complete your study of the Values at Play heuristic, develop by Flanagan and Nissenbaum, continue refining and drafting your Original Game Design Concept assignment, and consider specific issues with working in independent game studios. In addition, you will review one of two articles two other popular media industries (music and comics) and apply a similar analytical perspective to “the gaming industry” in this week’s discussion board activity. As you review the course materials in this module and complete the discussion board activity, you should be taking notes on this material to support your work developing the concept for your original game design. By the of this module/week, you should have a complete rough draft of your Original Game Design Concept assignment.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this module is to prepare you for a transition to further study of video game industries, game design documentation, and concept development. As a part of this objective, you will complete a rough draft of your Original Game Design Concept project for next week’s peer review workshops.

Activities:

- Read Flanagan/Nissenbaum and Colby/Colby
- Continue Drafting the Original Game Design Concept (OGDC) Assignment
- Complete the “Is There a Video Game Industry?” Discussion Board Activity
- Post Rough Draft of Your OGDC Project to the Week 16 Discussion Board

Required Content:

- Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum, *Values at Play*: Part III
- Richard Colby and Rebekah Shultz Colby, “[Game Design Documentation: Four Perspectives from Independent Game Studios](#)”
- Read at least one of the following articles:
 - Jonathan Sterne, “[There is No Music Industry](#)”
 - Benjamin Woo, “[Is There a Comic Book Industry](#)”

Assessments/Required Activities:

- “Is There a Video Game Industry?” Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, April 25, 2021 by 11:59pm**
- Post a Draft of your Original Game Design Concept Assignment for Next Week’s Peer Review – **Due: Sunday, April 25, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module you have completed your study of the Values at Play heuristic developed by Flanagan and Nissenbaum, considered the landscape of the gaming industries, and completed a rough draft of your Original Game Design Concept project.

What's Next:

Now that you have completed Module/Week 15, you may now move on to Module/Week 16, Original Game Design Concept Workshop.

Week 16: Original Game Design Concept Peer Review Workshops [1 Week] – Begins April 26, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

The purpose of this module is to provide you dedicated time to work on finalizing your full Original Game Design Concept pitch document. Please spend time this week working to review and incorporate suggestions from your peers' review of your work. This week will also give you time to write the accompanying final reflection on your work in creating the original game design concept.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this module is to provide you dedicated time to revising, editing, and reflecting on your work throughout the semester and how that work has led you to create an original game design concept designed to address a contemporary social ethic or value.

Activities:

- Write a reflection about your process, methods, and rhetorical purpose in developing the Original Game Design Concept.
- Complete the "Peer Review" Discussion Board Activity

Required Content:

- None

Assessments/Required Activities:

- "Peer Review" Discussion Board Activity – **Due: Sunday, May 2, 2021 by 11:59pm**
- Begin drafting you're the statement of goals and choices for the Original Game Design Concept Assignment – **Due: Wednesday, May 5, 2021 by 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module you have spent time revising and editing your Original Game Design Concept and the accompanying statement of goals and choices. If you have chosen to do so, you have also reflected on your learning experience in this course and any final or remaining thoughts you have about the course material by completing the "Optional Debriefing" discussion board activity.

What's Next:

Prepare for the Final Exam project. More information will be forthcoming as we get closer to the end of the term.

Module/Week 17: Final Project Editing & Proofreading [Finals Week] [1 Week] – Begins May 4, 2021 @ 12:00AM

Introduction:

The purpose of this module to give you time to do final editing and proofreading your Original Game Design Concept project. You should feel free to use this module to ask the instructor any final questions about the assignment, the course, and/or game industries.

Objectives:

The primary objective for this module is to complete a full draft of a game design concept for presentation to a game design studio. Please remember that your final project should be grounded in an issue of concern to contemporary social ethics.

Activities:

- Revise, Edit, and Complete the Original Game Design Concept by **May 5, 2021 at 11:59pm**

Required Content:

- N/A

Assessments/Required Activities:

- (OPTIONAL) Complete the “Optional Debriefing” Discussion Board Activity – **Due: N/A**
- Original Game Design Concept – **Due: May 5, 2021 at 11:59pm**

Module Summary:

In this module, you have applied what you have learned throughout to prepare a formal game design concept to a game development studio. You have completed the course.

What Next:

Enjoy the summer break!