

# MIT 2185A: THE STORY OF PLAY WHY GAMES MATTER

WESTERN  
UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF  
INFORMATION  
AND MEDIA  
STUDIES

FALL 2019

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## INSTRUCTOR:

**DR. LUKE ARNOTT**

### Lecture:

Mondays, 9:30-12:30  
FNB 3090

### Office Hours:

Mondays, 12:30-1:30  
FNB 4134

### Email & Twitter:

[larnott@uwo.ca](mailto:larnott@uwo.ca), [@ArnottDoc](https://twitter.com/ArnottDoc)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION:

People have played games throughout recorded history, but only recently have games been studied seriously as media of expression and social interaction.

This course presents an introduction to the history of gaming, from ancient dice and board games to the contemporary, globalized video game industry.

Guided in-class gameplay will illustrate basic game design principles and issues of representation in games.



# EVALUATION BREAKDOWN

Post-Ludum Reports (x4)	40%
Midterm	15%
Game Analysis	25%
Final Exam	20%

**1. Post-Ludum Reports DUE: Various**  
Students will be assigned to gameplay groups and write four 500-word evaluations of their in-class gaming sessions over the course of the semester. A template with more detailed instructions will be provided for students to follow.

**2. Midterm DATE: Oct. 21**  
Students will write an in-class midterm based on all course readings and lectures up to that point. The format will consist of multiple choice, short answer questions and essay questions. (Midterms missed with valid accommodation will be written Oct. 25.)

**3. Game Analysis DUE: Dec. 2**  
A 1000-1500 word, double-spaced paper, due at the beginning of the last lecture. It must engage critically with a game or series of your choice using the methods described by Fernández-Vara. Students are encouraged to attend office hours to discuss their topics beforehand.

The paper must have a title page and references page, and be formatted using Chicago Parenthetical/Author-Date citation style.

**4. Final Exam DATE: TBA**  
This will cover all course material and take place during the official final exam period in December. It will consist of multiple choice and essay questions.

# COURSE POLICIES

**Late policy:** All assignments are due in class before the beginning of lecture; any handed in afterward will be considered one day late. Late assignments will have 5% deducted from the grade for every calendar day they are overdue (this includes weekends). Late assignments must be handed in via the FIMS office, and be date-stamped. Assignments more than a week late will receive a mark of zero. There will be no exceptions without proper academic accommodation.

**Email policy:** Please e-mail me about any course-related questions you may have. Be advised, however, that I have other commitments and sometimes cannot respond right away. I regularly check and answer university emails on Mondays and Thursdays, so it might be 2 or 3 days before I can get back to you.

Please check your university email account regularly. Email/OWL will be the primary means of communication with the class, and during the term I may send you reminders and supplementary materials electronically.

**Electronic devices policy:** Laptops and mobile devices may only be used for note-taking in class, whose use (barring official accommodation) is a privilege. However, due to the nature of the course, monitored use of games on personal devices may be allowed as part of class activities. No electronic devices are permitted in exams.



# LECTURE SCHEDULE:

**WEEK #1**    **SEPTEMBER 9**

**Introduction: The Story of Play**

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 31-52; Sotamaa and Stenros

**WEEK #2**    **SEPTEMBER 16**

**Ante Up: Dice, Card, and Tabletop Games**

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 52-69; Faidutti

**WEEK #3**    **SEPTEMBER 23**                      **REPORT #1 DUE**

**Arcade Projects: Proto-Interactive Machines to the Rise of Atari**

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 69-75; Hutahmo; Collins, "Mechanical Arcades"

**WEEK #4**    **SEPTEMBER 30**

**The Next Level: Nintendo and the Console Wars**

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 75-101; Sheff; Kline et al.

**WEEK #5**    **OCTOBER 7**                              **REPORT #2 DUE**

**Play-stations: Contemporary Consoles, PCs, and Mobile Gaming**

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 101-117; Loguidice and Barton

**WEEK #6**    **OCTOBER 14**

**Thanksgiving Holiday: No Class**

**WEEK #7**    **OCTOBER 21**

**Midterm**

**WEEK #8**    **OCTOBER 28**

**Building Blocks: Game Design and Analysis**

Readings: Anthropy; Fernandez-Vara; Fullerton

**WEEK #9**    **NOVEMBER 4**

**Fall Reading Week: No Class**

**WEEK #10**    **NOVEMBER 11**                              **REPORT #3 DUE**

**Choose Your Own Adventure: Stories, Games, Meaning**

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 221-235; Mangan and van der Weel

**WEEK #11**    **NOVEMBER 18**

**All Your Base: Sound, Cinematics, and Multimedia**

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 199-220; Collins, "Game Sound"

**WEEK #12**    **NOVEMBER 25**                              **REPORT #4 DUE**

**M for Mature: Censorship, Rating Systems, and Controversies**

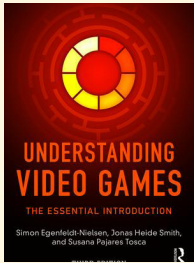
Readings: *UVG*, 163-168; Krapp; Devane and Squire

**WEEK #13**    **DECEMBER 2**                              **GAME ANALYSIS DUE**

**Conclusion and Review: Why Games Matter**



# COURSE READINGS:



## Course Textbook (Available at UWO Bookstore):

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon, Jonas Heide Smith, and Susana Pajares Tosca. 2016. *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*. Third edition. New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

## Other Readings (Available via the course OWL site):

- Anthropy, Anna, and Naomi Clark. 2014. *A Game Design Vocabulary: Exploring the Foundational Principles Behind Good Game Design*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Addison-Wesley.
- Collins, Karen. 2008. *Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory, and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 2016. “Game Sound in the Mechanical Arcades: An Audio Archaeology”. *Game Studies* 16: 19.
- DeVane, Ben, and Kurt D Squire. 2008. “The Meaning of Race and Violence in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*”. *Games and Culture* 3 (3–4): 264–285.
- Faidutti, Bruno. 2017. “Postcolonial *Catan*”. *Analog Game Studies* 2: 3–34.
- Fernández-Vara, Clara. 2014. *Introduction to Game Analysis*. New York: Routledge.
- Fullerton, Tracy. 2019. *Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games*. Fourth edition. Boca Raton, FL: A K Peters/CRC Press.
- Huhtamo, Erkki. 2005. “Slots of Fun, Slots of Trouble: An Archaeology of Video Gaming”. In *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, edited by Joost Raessens and Jeffrey H Goldstein, 3–21. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kline, Stephen, Nick Dyer-Witthford, and Greig De Peuter. 2003. *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture, and Marketing*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Krapp, Peter. 2014. “Violence”. In *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies*, edited by Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron, 345–52. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Loguidice, Bill, and Matt Barton. 2014. *Vintage Game Consoles: An Inside Look at Apple, Atari, Commodore, Nintendo, and the Greatest Gaming Platforms of All Time*. New York: Focal Press, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Mangen, Anne, and Adriaan van der Weel. 2017. “Why Don’t We Read Hypertext Novels?” *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 23 (2): 166–81.
- Sotamaa, Olli, and Jaakko Stenros. 2019. “Through a Shot Glass, Darkly: The Study of Games in the Light of Drinking Games”. *Games and Culture* 14 (1): 87–103.



# NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Fall 2019

## Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic\\_policies/rights\\_responsibilities.html](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html)

## Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

## Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

## Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the

semester, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- during exam periods,
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are NOT met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate, if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services Office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration For Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

## Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

## Grading at FIMS

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

**Elective courses and 4<sup>th</sup> year seminars have no recommended course averages.**

## Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

## SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca)

Student Development Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)

Psychological Services:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych)

Services for Students with

Disabilities:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

Accessibility

Information:

[www.accessibility.uwo.ca](http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca)

∟ Writing Support

Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing)

Learning Skills Services:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning)

Indigenous Services:

[http://indigenous.uwo.c](http://indigenous.uwo.ca/)

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International and Exchange Student

Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/int](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/int)

Career Centre at Western:

[www.success.uwo.ca/careers/](http://www.success.uwo.ca/careers/)

## Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

### Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

#### 90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

#### 80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

#### 75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

#### 70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

#### 60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

#### 50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

#### Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

## Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

### Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

### Stages in the Appeals Process:

**The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor.** For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

**If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee.** Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

### **The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.**

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

### **If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:**

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

### **The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.**

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.