

MIT 3371

+ DIGICOMM 3206

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Video and computer games have revolutionized popular culture, digital technology, and the entertainment industries over the past few decades.

But as digital games have gone from a niche hobby to a mainstream pastime, they have provoked controversy over issues from game addiction to online violence to equity in the games industry.

This course examines the economic dynamics and the social formations of game communities, as well as the theories of aesthetics, simulation, and play that video games continue to generate.

ARCADES TO E-SPORTS: VIDEO GAME CULTURE, TECHNOLOGY & INDUSTRY

INSTRUCTOR:
**DR. LUKE
ARNOTT**

Twitch Livestream:
Wednesdays, 1:30 PM
[twitch.tv/doc_arnott](https://www.twitch.tv/doc_arnott)

Virtual Office Hours:
Twitch livestream chat,
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**WESTERN
UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF
INFORMATION AND
MEDIA STUDIES**

WINTER 2021

EVALUATION BREAKDOWN

Annotated Bibliography	10%
Midterm	20%
Game Analysis Paper	40%
Final Exam	30%

1. *Annotated Bibliography* **DUE: Feb. 10**

A preliminary bibliography for your game analysis paper. The bibliography must consist of at least five sources not included in the course material; at least one source must also be theoretical.

Each source must have a 2 to 3 sentence description explaining its importance to the proposed topic. A finalized thesis is not necessary at this stage. Consider it an opportunity to “pitch” your topic and receive feedback and guidance.

2. *Midterm* **DATE: Feb. 24**

Students will write a midterm based on all course readings and lectures up to that point. The format will consist of open-book essay questions submitted via OWL. (Midterms missed with valid academic consideration will be written Mar. 3.)

3. *Game Analysis Paper* **DUE: Apr. 7**

An 8–10 page, double-spaced paper, due the day of the last lecture. It must engage critically with a game or series of your choice using the methods described by Fernández-Vara. Ask permission if your paper ends up being on a substantially different subject than that of your annotated bibliography.

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

IMPORTANT: you will also be required to hand in a draft of your paper (no shorter than 10 pages) one week before the final paper is due. (**Mar. 31**) The draft will not be graded, although students who do not hand it in will have 10% deducted from their final paper mark. This is to make sure that you do not write the paper at the last minute, and set aside time for proofreading, necessary revisions, and so on.

4. *Final Exam* **DATE: TBA**

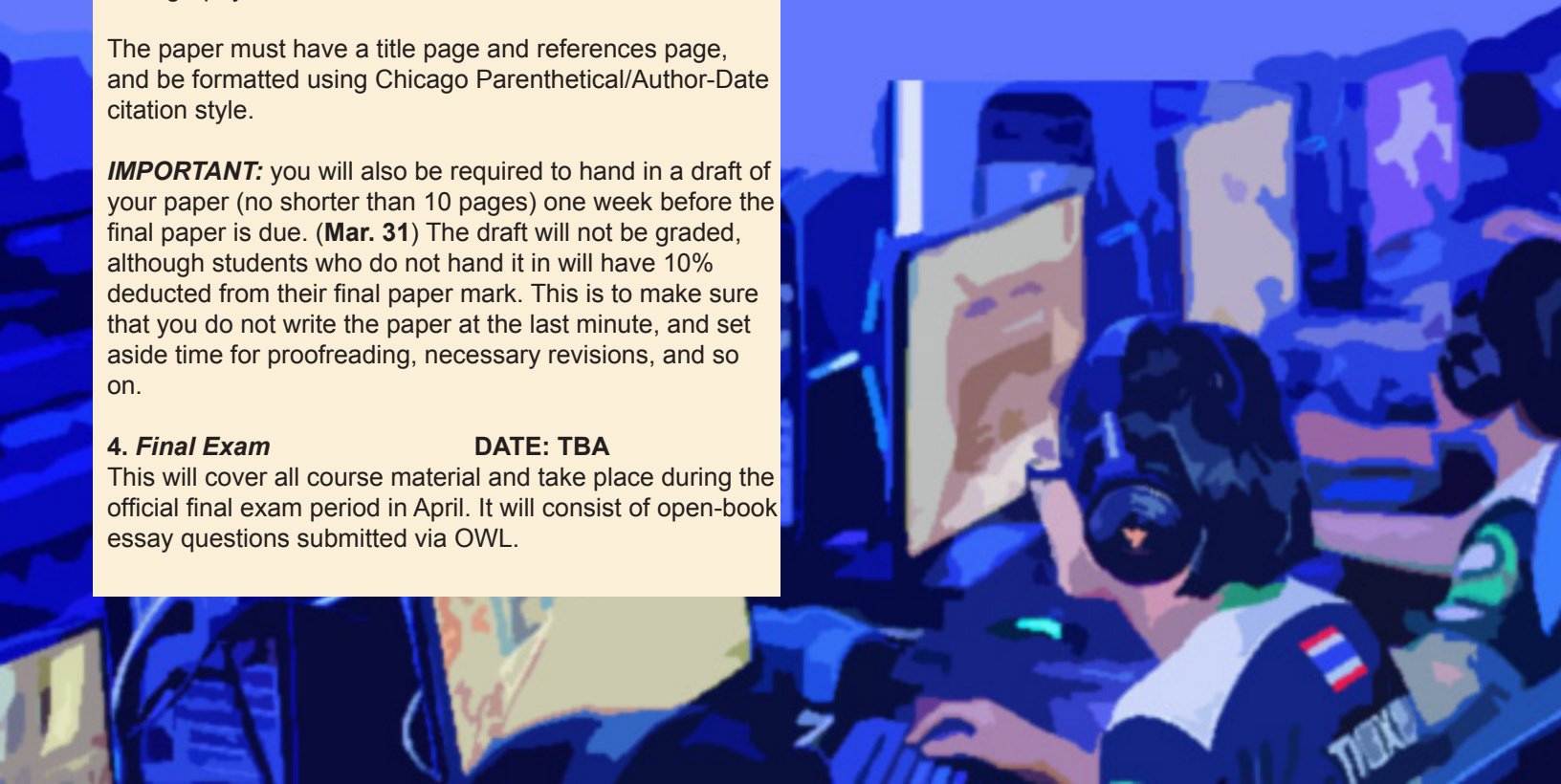
This will cover all course material and take place during the official final exam period in April. It will consist of open-book essay questions submitted via OWL.

COURSE POLICIES

Late policy: All assignments and exams are due via OWL at the specified date and time (EST); 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). Assignments more than a week late will receive a mark of zero. There will be no exceptions without proper academic consideration.

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.



LECTURE SCHEDULE:

WEEK #1 | **JANUARY 13**

Introduction: The Art and Science of Game Studies

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 1-14; Parker

WEEK #2 | **JANUARY 20**

Insert Coin: Arcades and Early Video Game Development

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 61-75; Picard

WEEK #3 | **JANUARY 27**

All Your Base Are Belong to Us: The AAA Game Industry & Indie Games

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 15-30; Dyer-Witherford & De Peuter; Schreier

WEEK #4 | **FEBRUARY 3**

Just Dance Revolutions: Platforms, Interfaces, and Controllers

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 129-149; Altice

WEEK #5 | **FEBRUARY 10**

ANNOTATED BIB. DUE

Cheaters Prosper: Hacks, Piracy, and Mods

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 185-190, 191-193; Consalvo; Sotaama

WEEK #6 | **FEBRUARY 17**

Winter Reading Week: No Class

Readings: Fernandez-Vara

WEEK #7 | **FEBRUARY 24**

Midterm

WEEK #8 | **MARCH 3**

Now That's Edutainment: Gamification and Serious Games

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 241-279; Bogost

WEEK #9 | **MARCH 10**

Sim Cities: Simulations and Algorithms

Readings: Galloway, Wark, Arnott

WEEK #10 | **MARCH 17**

Moral Combats? Wargames and Shooters

Readings: Keogh, Allen

WEEK #11 | **MARCH 24**

Twitch Response: eSports, Online Communities, Spectatorship

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 180-185, 190-191; Johnson & Woodcock; Pun et al.

WEEK #12 | **MARCH 31**

GAME ANALYSIS DRAFT DUE

Don't Hate the Player: Gamergate and Toxic Online Cultures

Readings: *UVG*, pp. 168-180, 283-313; Mortensen

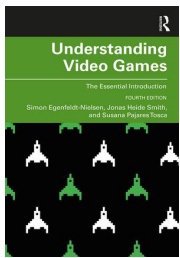
WEEK #13 | **APRIL 7**

GAME ANALYSIS DUE

Conclusion and Review



COURSE READINGS:



Course Textbook (Available via the course OWL site):

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon, Jonas Heide Smith, and Susana Pajares Tosca. 2020. *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*. Fourth edition. New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Other Readings (Available via the course OWL site):

- Allen, Robertson. 2017. *America's Digital Army*. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.
- Altice, Nathan. 2015. *I Am Error: The Nintendo Family Computer/Entertainment System Platform*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Arnott, Luke. 2018. "Building Broken Worlds: The Alien Franchise, Failed Utopias, and Other Bio-Shocks". In *Beyond the Sea: New Perspectives on Bioshock*, edited by Felan Parker and Jessica Aldred, 320–50. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Bogost, Ian. 2016. "Why Gamification Is Bullshit". In *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, edited by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Anna Watkins Fisher, and Thomas Keenan, 2nd ed., 678–88. New York: Routledge.
- Consalvo, Mia. 2007. *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Video Games*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Dyer-Witheford, Nick, and Greig De Peuter. 2009. *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fernández-Vara, Clara. 2019. *Introduction to Game Analysis*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Galloway, Alexander R. 2006. *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Johnson, Mark R, and Jamie Woodcock. 2019. "The Impacts of Live Streaming and Twitch. Tv on the Video Game Industry". *Media, Culture & Society* 41 (5): 670–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718818363>.
- Keogh, Brendan. 2012. *Killing Is Harmless: A Critical Reading of Spec Ops: The Line*. Marden, Australia: Stolen Projects.
- Mortensen, Torill Elvira. 2018. "Anger, Fear, and Games: The Long Event of #GamerGate". *Games and Culture*, 13 (8): 787-806.
- Parker, Felan. 2018. "Roger Ebert and the Games-as-Art Debate". *Cinema Journal* 57 (3): 77–100. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2018.0032>.
- Picard, Martin. 2013. "The Foundation of Geemu: A Brief History of Early Japanese Video Games". *Game Studies* 13 (2).
- Pun, Boris, Yiyi Yin, and Anthony Fung. 2019. "ESports Gamers in China: Career, Lifestyle and Public Discourse among Professional League of Legends Competitors". In *Video Games and the Global South*, edited by Phillip Penix-Tadsen, 183–198. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon University: ETC Press.
- Schreier, Jason. 2017. *Blood, Sweat, and Pixels: The Triumphant, Turbulent Stories Behind How Video Games Are Made*. New York: Harper Paperbacks.
- Sotamaa, Olli. 2010. "When the Game Is Not Enough: Motivations and Practices Among Computer Game Modding Culture". *Games and Culture* 5 (1): 239–255.
- Wark, McKenzie. 2007. *Gamer Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2021

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

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

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments, including take-home exams, 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 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 Accessible Education (formerly 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 two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, 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, unless noted on the syllabus. 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 or equivalent documentation, 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

In the event of a Covid-19 resurgence, it is possible that different procedures may need to be put in place on short notice.

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 4th 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

Mental Health

Support:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

Accessible Education:

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Accessibility

Information:

www.accessibility.uwo.ca/

Writing Support

Centre:

<http://writing.uwo.ca/>

Learning Skills

Services:

<https://www.uwo.ca/sdc/learning/>

Academic Learning and Support for Online Learning:

<https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/types/academic-and-learning-support.html>

Indigenous Services:

<https://indigenous.uwo.ca/>

Western International:

<https://international.uwo.ca/>

Career Centre:

<http://careerexperience.uwo.ca/>

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.