

Comm 3513: Video Games and the Individual

T/R, 2:20 pm - 3:40 pm, Journalism 360

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Enrollment in this course constitutes an agreement to this syllabus and the general course structure. Some aspects of the course may change as necessary.

Course Description:

Who plays video games? Nerds who live in their parents basement? Kids? Teenage boys? These stereotypes obscure the truth! Today, industry data indicate that more than 155 million Americans play video games. Of these gamers, the average age is 35 years old and 44% are women. Video games are a part of our shared culture and this class is focused on social scientific investigations into the effects (good and bad) associated with video game use.

This class begins with an introduction to the topic and provides a foundation for understanding the nature of video games in contemporary society. From there, the class will discuss different methods (and methodological issues) associated with studying video games before diving into the causes of and consequences of video game use. As a student in this class, your grade will be determined based on exams and a group-based research project that address an unanswered issue in the contemporary video games literature

Textbook:

Kowert, R. & Quandt, T. (Eds.). (2016). *The Video Game Debate: Unraveling the Physical, Social, and Psychological Effects of Digital Games*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Additional Readings: Supplementary readings are posted on Carmen (<https://carmen.osu.edu/>).

Course Objectives:

At the completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Understand the different methodological approaches that are used to study video games.
2. Articulate the positive and negative outcomes that are associated with video game use.
3. Design, conduct, analyze, interpret, and share the results from a quantitative empirical study of video game uses and effects.
4. Articulate a scientific position on topics such as: video game violence, video game addiction, and the applicability of video games for cognitive training.

Grade Distribution:

This class has 100 possible points. Exams and assignments are weighted as follows:

Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	20%
Research Proposal	10%
Research Instrument Design	10%
Research Presentation	20%

Letter Grade Distribution:

You must attempt each assignment and exam in order to receive a grade. Your final grade will be determined based on the combined score of the course exams and assignments. The grading distribution is as follows:

≥ 93.0	A	73.0 - 76.9	C
90.0 - 92.9	A-	70.0 - 72.9	C-
87.0 - 89.9	B+	67.0 - 69.9	D+
83.0 - 86.9	B	60.0 - 66.9	D
80.0 - 82.9	B-	≤ 59.9	E
77.0 - 79.9	C+		

Exams:

Bring a scantron form and #2 pencil to each exam. The exam dates are noted on the course schedule (see below). Each exam will include multiple choice and true/false questions. The exams are cumulative in the sense that the course material builds on concepts from previous weeks. However, each exam will only focus on lecture and reading materials for the given time period. A study guide is not available, but the lecture slides for each week will be posted to Carmen.

Assignments:

This class requires that you complete several group assignments. Your grade on each assignment will be determined by the overall quality of your group's output. Each member of your group will receive the same grade, so it is important that you work together in order to earn the best grade possible. **Detailed instructions for each assignment are posted to Carmen.**

Research Proposal: This class will seek to extend our scientific understanding of video games by conducting an original research project. In a group of five students, you will identify a gap in our understanding of video games and propose a research study designed to bridge this gap. This proposal will be no more than four pages long and must cite five scientific sources.

Instrument Design: Successful research studies begin with careful planning. It is important to visualize how you hypothesize how your data will look and design research instruments that allow for precisely recording the exact information you require. In this assignment, your group will develop the materials necessary to test your research questions. These materials may include experimental procedures, survey instruments, or other quantitative observation techniques.

Research Presentation: Reporting your research findings is a crucial step in advancing our scientific understanding of human communication phenomena. Your group will present a scientific poster

detailing: (1) what you found and (2) how it conforms to what you expected.

Extra Credit:

Participate in a Research Study: Conducting scientific research is crucial to the mission and purpose of the School of Communication at The Ohio State University. You can earn 1 point of extra credit for each 0.5 hours of research participation (up to 4 points total) that you complete in School of Communication research studies. You must sign up for studies at: <https://osucomm.sona-systems.com/>. Be sure to read the detailed instructions on the SONA site. An alternative assignment is available if you do not wish to participate in a research study. Importantly, missing your research appointment or quickly clicking through surveys and giving researchers fake data will not earn participation credit. A non-research participation alternative is available if you wish to earn extra credit, but do not want to participate in a research study.

Give a Game Analysis Presentation: Interactivity is a fundamental characteristic of video games. Importantly, interactivity can be characterized along multiple dimensions (Weber et al., 2014). As part of this assignment, you will give a 15-minute presentation to the class where you demonstrate different types of interactivity within a video game. You will then submit a 2-page written report where you explain how your chosen game fits within the six different dimensions of interactivity identified by Weber and colleagues. You may earn up to 6 points of extra credit for this assignment; however *only the very best presentations and summaries will earn the maximum score*. If you wish to present a game, you must sign-up by the end of the second week of instruction.

How to Succeed:

Show up: My lectures may touch on some of the course readings, but most will focus on material that is not in the readings. It would be boring (and an insult to your intelligence) if you read a chapter only to hear me explain it to you again in lecture. You will be tested on material that is only covered in lecture.

Do the readings: Since my lectures will not focus on material not covered in the readings, it is critical that you do the class readings. The exams will include questions that are only discussed in the assigned reading.

Don't fall behind: We will cover a large amount of material this semester. You will quickly fall behind if you miss lectures or skip readings. Study as you go; do not try to cram before the exam.

Take good notes: Copying PowerPoint slides word-for-word is not effective! Just because you copied the definition of a key term does not necessarily mean that you understand this term. I will provide examples and context to help you understand the bigger picture. Jot these examples down and synthesize what these slides mean in your own words. To help, I will post my slides to Carmen after each lecture.

Ask questions and participate: This is an interactive class where you will learn from me, your peers, and by playing an active role in producing scientific knowledge. OSU students are very smart and I know you have valuable insights to share with the class. You might not always agree with what I say. EXCELLENT! Speak up and voice your opinion. An honest and frank discussion of ideas is what makes science better (and fun)!

Academic Integrity:

All work must be the original work of the student and not turned in to any other course prior to this one. Cheating on exams is unacceptable and will result in: (1) a zero grade, and (2) a formal report to the School of Communication and the Committee on Academic Misconduct. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct at <http://studentconduct.osu.edu>.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

School of Communication Diversity Statement:

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

Policy on Selling Course Materials:

Course materials (excluding examinations which may *never* be shared) and the intellectual content of the course itself are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0; <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>) license. This means that you are free to:

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NonCommercial: You may not use the material for commercial purposes.

Policy on Late Assignments or Missed Exams:

Each assignment will require a combination of in-class and out-of-class collaboration with your group partners. Assignments build on each other and it is crucial that you have these assignments completed by the due date. Accordingly, assignments turned in after the due date will receive a zero grade. Failure to complete one assignment will also result in a failure to complete future assignments. Therefore, you must complete all assignments, even if you do not turn in all assignments for class credit.

Students are expected to attend class on all posted exam dates. Make-up exams are not allowed, except under the following circumstances: illness, death in the family, participation in an official University activity, or another documented emergency. In such circumstances, the student is required to provide official documentation for the emergency or conflict. In absence of such documentation, missed exams will result in a grade of zero points.

Tentative Course Outline:

The weekly coverage might change as it depends on the progress of the class.

Week	Content
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• T: Introduction & Class Schedule• R: The Games Industry• Reading: Vorderer & Bryant Ch. 1, 22
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• T: History of Video Games• R: Future of Video Games• Reading: Kowert & Quandt Ch. 1, 2; Vorderer & Bryant Ch. 3• IMPORTANT: Sign up for a Game Analysis Presentation by Thursday.
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• T: Pulling it all Together• R: Lab Day, Research Proposal• Reading: None, work on your research proposals
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• T: Video Games Research Methods• R: Content Patterns in Video Games• Reading: Prot & Anderson, 2013; Weber et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2009 & 2011
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• T: Who Plays?• R: Theories of Why People Play• Reading: Williams, et al., 2008; Yee, 2006; Vorderer & Bryant Ch. 7, 8• IMPORTANT: Proposal due Thursday
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• T: Negative Effects, Video Game Violence• R: Are Video Games Really That Bad?• Reading: Kowert & Quandt Ch. 4; Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Sherry, 2001; Weber et al., 2006
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• T: Exam 1• R: Lab Day, Instrument Design• Reading: None, study for exam & work on research instrument(s)

Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T: Negative Effects, Video Game Addiction • R: Autumn Break, No Class • Reading: Kowert & Quandt Ch. 5; Craighead et al., 2015; Gentile, 2009; Van Rooij et al., 2014
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T: Video Games & Isolation • R: Video Games & Socialization • Reading: Kowert & Quandt Ch. 6, 8; Vorderer & Bryant Ch. 14; Williams et al., 2006 • IMPORTANT: Research instrument(s) due Thursday
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T: Positive Effects, Flow & Enjoyment • R: Positive Effects, Therapy • Reading: Weber et al., 2017; Sherry, 2004; Nikkelen et al., 2014
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T: Video Games & Cognitive Training • R: Exam 2 • Reading: Kowert & Quandt Ch. 8; Unsworth et al., 2015; Anguera, 2013
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T: Video Games & Learning • R: Lab Day, Data Collection • Reading: Kowert & Quandt Ch. 7; Vorderer & Bryant Ch. 25
Week 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T: Video Games & Health Communication • R: Lab Day, Data Analysis • Reading: Fox & Bailenson, 2009; Kato, 2010; Limperos, 2014
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T: Video Games & Politics • R: No Class, Thanksgiving • Reading: Ahn et al., 2014; Neys & Jansz, 2010; Schulzke, 2013
Week 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T: Video Games & Creativity • R: Research Presentations • Reading: Kowert & Quandt Ch. 10; Berh et al., 2015; Bowman, et al., 2015 • IMPORTANT: Upload a digital copy of your poster to Carmen by Thursday
Week 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T: Exam 3 • Enjoy Winter Break!