

Syllabus

COMM 3513: Video Games and the Individual (Hybrid Delivery) Spring 2019

Instructor: Dr. Teresa Lynch

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Office Hours: Thursdays 10:30am – 12pm and by appointment

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Office Hours: Mondays 1:00pm – 2:00pm and by appointment

CLASS MEETING

Wednesdays & Fridays, 10:20am – 11:05am in Pomerene Hall 150

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Bowman, N. D. (2018). *Video games: A medium that demands our attention* (Ed.). New York: Routledge. (ISBN: 978-0-81537-687-9; [Hardcover](#) \$124.69 on Amazon; [eBook](#) purchase \$49.46 or rental from \$27.48)

You must have access to a computer/laptop to download and play some of the games I assign this semester. The games I assign should have compatibility with non-gaming machines. However, if you have technological difficulties with running any of the games, it is your responsibility to contact the course TA, Michael Gilbert (gilbert.611@osu.edu) and coordinate a time with him to visit my lab to play the game on one of the lab computers (see technology policy for more information).

I will provide other required media content, materials, and readings via Carmen throughout the semester.

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

Stereotypes about video games and those who play them are widespread in contemporary society. News reports and popular media representations depict gamers as lazy, socially awkward, sexist, obese, and violent. Politicians and other interested parties portray video games as dangerously overrun with violent, sexual, and immoral content from which they must protect children. But, do these notions align with the reality of contemporary video games and those who play them?

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This class addresses that question by examining critical and social scientific perspectives on the uses, effects, and nature of video game play. To that end, in this course students will...

...increase their knowledge of:

- Video game history and important moments that influenced game development.
- The characteristics, technology, content, and usage of video games.
- Theories and methods used in studying video games.
- The positive and negative outcomes associated with gameplay for players.

...gain skills in:

- Distinguishing between social scientific and other ways of knowing about video games.
- Articulating and evaluating the content of games and research on the effects of games.
- Applying scholarly concepts in analyzing game content and game research.

TEACHING APPROACH

My leadership and instruction in the classroom is an important part of my role as a professor here at The Ohio State University. This course serves as an introduction to better understanding a topic of professional and personal interest for me, video games. This makes for what I hope you will find a fun and meaningful class. Despite being a fun course, I maintain high standards for my own performance as the instructor and, consequently, will ask the same of you. Success in any undertaking requires consistent dedication. Learning in your college classes is no different and the grade you earn in this course will reflect your effort. If you find yourself struggling to achieve what you are here to accomplish then *please* come speak with me so that I might help you strategize your approach to my class. My door is open.

Some of the topics we will cover might make you uncomfortable. I encourage you to get out of your comfort zone (within reason) and learn something new. Some topics might be controversial and you might find yourself disagreeing with me – wonderful! I strive to highlight the value of course topics by discussing how they matter in cultural, historic, economic, political, and practical contexts. I invite my students of all backgrounds and perspectives to engage with me in conversation in class or during office hours. We can learn a great deal by communicating.

ASSESSMENTS

Below you will find a list of all of the types of assessments in this course. I will provide more details and specific instructions as applicable about each assessment in Carmen well in advance of the deadline.

- **Exams:** I will administer two, non-cumulative exams each containing some combination of multiple choice, true/false, and matching style questions. Questions will include material covered in lecture, in the readings, and in hybrid materials. We will hold a review session for each exam. I will design the questions to assess your definitional understanding of course content and ability to accurately apply, interpret, and evaluate human communication and behavior through the lens of course concepts.

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- **Online Reflection Activities (ORAs):** These activities guide you through some set of tasks based a broad theme from the course. For instance, these tasks might ask you to watch something (e.g., news media, TED talk) or play something (e.g., a specific type of video game) and then respond to prompts about the task you completed. I will grade these activities as pass (if the response indicates engagement with the material)/fail (if the response does not indicate engagement with the material), but I reserve the right to penalize with partial or no credit for substandard work.
- **Presentations:** Once this semester you will deliver a poster presentation on a topic that you will select from a bank of options I provide in Carmen. The topic for this presentation will ultimately form into an essay (see below) that you submit, but this assignment will give you the opportunity to work through your idea. During the presentation, you will pitch your idea to small groups of peers over and over until we are out of time. Your peers will evaluate you on your preparedness to discuss your idea. I will grade you on your professionalism.
- **Essays:** Once this semester you will write a short essay applying a social scientific theory in analysis of a particular video game or aspect of game player behavior selected from a bank of options I provide in Carmen. You will publish your essay to a discussion board for the entire class to read. I will grade your essay using a rubric that aligns with the instructions I will provide you. A peer in the class will review your work publicly.
- **Peer Review (PR):** Twice this semester you will review an assigned peer’s essay publicly using the course discussion board. Reviewing requires that you find fault(s) with the submission and make an argument about how the work might be improved. I will grade the reviews as pass/fail. However, I reserve the right to penalize with partial credit or no credit for substandard work.

GRADING

The grade for this course is based on 2 exams, 4 ORAs, 1 essay, 1 presentation, and 2 peer reviews.

Item	Total %
Exam I	25%
Exam II	25%
Online Reflection Activities (ORAs)	20%
Essay	15%
Presentation	5%
Peer reviews	10%

Below are the point ranges for each corresponding course letter grade determined by OSU standards. I will not round grades.

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A 93.00-100%	B 83.00-86.99%	C 73.00-76.99%	D 60.00-66.99%
A- 90.00-92.99%	B- 80.00-82.99%	C- 70.00-72.99%	E 0-59.99%
B+ 87.00-89.99%	C+ 77.00-79.99%	D+ 67.00-69.99%	

COURSE POLICIES

- **Email policy:** It is my general policy that you should reserve email for extenuating circumstances because I prefer to communicate with you face to face and am typically overwhelmed with email. Please do not use Carmen messaging for communicating as I do not check this regularly and it is unreliable. Students are welcome to email me (lynch.659@osu.edu) to set up an appointment to discuss issues related to the course if they are unable to attend my office hours (which you do not need an appointment for and are first come, first served). In any email communication, students must put “COMM3513” in the subject line and demonstrate professional courtesy in their message. Emails that do not adhere to this policy may not receive a response.
- **Attendance, tardiness, and disruptions:** You are required to be in class on your presentation day and on exam days. Tardiness or leaving class early is unacceptable as it disrupts the learning experience of your colleagues. In the event that you must enter or leave during lecture, do so as quickly and quietly as possible. I will not tolerate disruptions (both online and in the classroom) including talking during lecture, inappropriate technology use, threatening behavior, or inappropriate language/derogatory speech. I expect that all students in this course will maintain civility, professionalism, and decorum while in the classroom and in our online interactions. I reserve the right to dismiss any student who is non-compliant with this policy. Additionally, I reserve the right to report disruptive students to the Dean of Students and/or University Police.
- **Late submissions:** **All deadlines are firm**, but I accept late work. I will penalize any work submitted beyond the deadline stipulated in the syllabus by 25% off the earned grade per day.
- **Missed exam or presentation:** **All exam dates and presentation dates are firm. I do not offer make-up exams or presentations**, so students should plan to be in class on time those days. If your personal circumstances are extenuating enough to result in your inability to attend class on those days, you should schedule an appointment to discuss the issue with me and request accommodation. I will not look kindly on requests made simply due to lack of preparedness or professionalism.
- **Technology:** Students may use laptops and tablet devices for academic purposes during class. I will dismiss any student disrupting or distracting others (including me) with their technology use during lecture. Students must also use technology outside of the classroom because it is a hybrid delivered course. Students must regularly check their OSU email account, the Carmen course page for information, materials, updates, and to organize group work. Additionally, because some of the assignments in the course require you to download and play a video game, you must have a laptop or personal computer to use to complete those assignments. If you do not have this technology, I can make my on-campus research lab available to you, but you must coordinate

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with me. In the event that you generally have access to this sort of technology, but you have an issue with using it for a particular assignment, you must inform me/the course TA **by Wednesday at the start of class (10:20am) ahead of the ORA deadline** so that we have time to assist you.

- **Professionalism:** You must ensure that the work you submit is correct and submitted. Turning in corrupted, improperly formatted, or late submissions is unacceptable. You are responsible for ensuring that you complete your work according to the stipulated guidelines and properly submit it with time to account for technology failures. You must ensure that you are able to complete assignments using the assigned technology (i.e., game platforms) and inform your instructors by the deadline stipulated in the technology policy if you encounter problems. Failure to conduct yourself at this level of professionalism may result in your inability to earn points in the course.
- **Grading disputes:** Grading is, like many things in life, a subjective activity. If you feel that I have undervalued your effort, you may always make an appeal to me to reconsider your grade. To enter into a grade dispute, you must bring a written statement with the specific reasons for your grade challenge and what accommodation you are requesting of me. You may only appeal a grade within 1 week of grade release as documented in Carmen. I will not discuss your grade with you immediately before, during, or immediately following class for privacy and clarity in our communication.
- **Peer evaluation and public work:** The structure of this course incorporate public posting of your assignments and peer review/evaluation. If you are not comfortable with this, I recommend you drop this course as I will not make any accommodations to this structure.
- **Tentative nature of syllabus:** This syllabus represents an agreement between the students and the instructor, Dr. Teresa Lynch. Students enrolled in this class agree to the terms of the syllabus and understand that the policies, schedule, and deadlines outlined within it are subject to the instructor's modification with notice via Carmen to students.

OSU POLICIES OBSERVED IN THIS COURSE

- **Academic misconduct.** All work should be your original work. You must use citations when presenting ideas that are not your own using APA style. You must complete all submitted work by yourself. You may not reuse work from a past or current semester. 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 <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

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- **Disability services.** Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292-3307, slds@osu.edu; slds.osu.edu. *Students with a documented disability can meet with me privately during the first three weeks of class to coordinate reasonable accommodations.*
- **Sexual misconduct/relationship violence.** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu.
- **Diversity.** 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.
- **Copyright disclaimer.** The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.
- **Student life issues:** As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766). CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766) and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.
- **Student academic services.** Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services' website provides support for student academic success. Information on advising issues such as tutoring,

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transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors can be obtained through this website. The site is: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

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Week	Date	Topic; <i>Resource, material, reading</i>	Due Fridays at 11:59pm
1	W 1/9	Why study human interaction with games? <i>Syllabus</i>	
	F 1/11	A brief history of games and the industry <i>Lowood, 2006</i>	
	Online	<i>Methods Crash Course</i>	Introductions
2	W 1/16	Making sense of video games research <i>Raff, 2017</i>	
	F 1/18	Video games as demanding technologies <i>VG Ch. 1 (Bowman)</i>	
	Online	<i>Material shared in Carmen with ORA instructions</i>	Group 1 & 2: ORA Group 3: Off
3	W 1/23	Games & Cognition <i>VG Ch. 2 (Green)</i>	
	F 1/25	Group 1 Presentations Group 2 & 3 Presentation Judges	
	Online	<i>Material shared in Carmen with ORA instructions</i>	Group 1: Off Group 2 & 3: ORA
4	W 1/30	Games & Emotion <i>VG Ch. 4 (Grizzard & Francemore)</i>	
	F 2/1	Hands on horror – fear experiences in games <i>Lynch & Martins, 2015</i>	
	Online	<i>TBD</i>	Group 1: Essay Group 2 & 3: Off
5	W 2/6	Games & Behavior <i>VG Ch. 6 (Eden et al.)</i>	
	F 2/8	Being the change you want to see in the virtual world <i>Ahn et al., 2015</i>	
	Online	<i>TBD</i>	Group 1: Off Group 2 & 3: PR
6	W 2/13	Games & Morality <i>VG Ch. 7 (Hodge et al.)</i>	
	F 2/15	Is it immoral if it's all digital? <i>Grizzard et al., 2014</i>	
	Online	<i>Material shared in Carmen with ORA instructions</i>	Group 1: Off Group 2 & 3: ORA
7	W 2/20	Review for Exam I	
	F 2/22	Exam I	
	Online	--	Nothing online, prepare for exam

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8	W 2/27	Games & Representation <i>Tompkins & Lynch, 2018</i>	
	F 3/1	Group 2 Presentations Group 1 & 3 Presentation Judges	
	Online	<i>Material shared in Carmen with ORA instructions</i>	Group 1 & 3: ORA Group 2: Off
9	W 3/6	Games & Sociality I <i>VG Ch. 8 (Peña)</i>	
	F 3/8	Games as digital utopias, but only for some <i>Gray, 2012</i>	
	Online	<i>TBD</i>	Group 1 & 3: Off Group 2: Essay
10	3/13, 3/15	✂ <i>SPRING BREAK</i> ✂	
11	W 3/20	Games & Sociality II <i>VG Ch. 9 (Consalvo et al.)</i>	
	F 3/22	Playing with the enemy <i>Fox & Tang, 2017</i>	
	Online	<i>TBD</i>	Group 1 & 3: PR Group 2: Off
12	W 3/27	Games & Experience <i>VG Ch. 10 (Kryston et al.)</i>	
	F 3/29	Too good to care <i>Matthews, 2015</i>	
	Online	<i>Material shared in Carmen with ORA instructions</i>	Group 1 & 3: ORA Group 2: Off
13	W 4/3	Games & eSports <i>VG Ch. 11 (Brown et al.)</i>	
	F 4/5	Group 3 Presentations Group 1 & 2 Presentation Judges	
	Online	<i>Material shared in Carmen with ORA prompt</i>	Group 1 & 2: ORA Group 3: Off
14	W 4/10	Games & Streaming <i>VG Ch. 12 (Velez et al.)</i>	
	F 4/12	Researching Epic games <i>Guest speaker Isaac T. Knowles, Senior Statistical Data Analyst at Epic Games</i>	
	Online	<i>TBD</i>	Group 1 & 2: Off Group 3: Essay
15	W 4/17	Review for Exam II	
	F 4/19	Exam II	Group 1 & 2: PR Group 3: Off