

Game Culture, Fall 2011
IT University of Copenhagen

Instructor: T.L. Taylor (tlaylor@itu.dk)

Course website: <https://blog.itu.dk/MSPK-E2011/>

Time/Location:

Tuesdays, 8-9 individual supervisions (by appointment)

Tuesdays, 9-12, room 2A20

Thursdays, 10-14 independent project work

Content:

This course will examine computer games from a cultural and sociological perspective. Using a variety of theoretical & methodological approaches (drawn from the humanities and social sciences) a range of topics will be discussed in an attempt to understand not only the internal workings and social dynamics of computer games, but their place in the broader culture. The course language is English.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

After successful completion of the course the student should be able to:

- Demonstrate, through discussion and written work, an understanding of major areas within sociological computer game research.
- Situate that analysis within a broader social theory framework.
- Identify, for their final research paper, an empirical question/problem/domain in the social/cultural analysis of computer games.
- Select an appropriate method for its examination.
- Undertake a scholarly literature review relevant to the research area.
- Carry out that original research.
- Provide the analysis and argumentation via a substantial research paper.

Learning Activities:

Lectures, discussion (including peer-led sessions), groupwork, and classroom exercises will constitute the bulk of the weekly in-class teaching. Students are required to write a substantial original research paper (based on empirical data) for the class that addresses one of the themes dealt with throughout the term. An ungraded mid-term assignment involving a literature review for that paper is required to proceed to examination. Finally, students will be doing a number of blogging assignments throughout the term that are then handed in with the final research paper.

This is a graduate level course and as such, all students are expected to attend in-class sessions and fully participate in group exercises, come prepared (having done the reading,

bringing it to class, and being ready to participate in discussion), complete the blogging and presentation assignments, and be working at a serious level commensurate with a graduate education.

All students should be familiarized with the ITU's academic conduct & plagiarism policy (available online at the university website). If in doubt as to what constitutes appropriate quoting and citation practices you should speak with the professor. Note that you are also not allowed to dual-submit work (i.e. submitting the same paper, project, etc. for grading in more than one course). Any violation of the university policy on academic integrity will result in disciplinary action.

Assessment Form & Description:

Mandatory midterm assignment of a preliminary literature review is due Oct 25. A final portfolio (3 copies) including a piece of original research and copies of blog entries is due to the Exam Office, Dec 14 by 15:00. Exam format is external examiner, 7-point marking scale, C1: Written work without oral exam.

Reading Material: Available at course website (see email for password).

Schedule:

Aug 30: *Introduction*

Sept 6: *Assemblage, Actors, and Politics*

- Latour, "Where are the Missing Masses?"
- Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics"
- Giddings, "Playing with Non-Humans"

Sept 13: *Embodied & Material Play*

- Dovey & Kennedy, "Bodies and Machines"
- Simon, "Geek Chic"
- Kirkpatrick, "Controller, Hand, Screen"

Sept 20: *Reconfiguring Interior and Exterior Lives*

- Turkle, "Computer Games as Evocative Objects"
- Flynn, "Geography of the Digital Hearth"
- Lally, "The Domestic Ecology of Objects"
- Poster, "Everyday (Virtual) Life"

Sept 27: *Performance & Audience*

- McCrea, "Watching Starcraft, Strategy, and South Korea"
- Lin and Sun, "The Role of Onlookers"
- Lowood, "It's Not Easy Being Green"

Oct 4: *Gender & Gaming I*

- West & Zimmerman, "Doing Gender"
- Hargreaves, "Femininity or 'Musculinity': Changing Images of Female Sports"
- Connell, "Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity"
- Pascoe, "Making Masculinity"

Oct 11: *Gender and Gaming II*

- Lin, "Body, Space, and Gendered Gaming Experiences"
- Yee, "Maps of Digital Desire"
- Jenkins, "Complete Freedom of Movement"

Oct 18: *No class, fall holiday*

Oct 25: *Race and Sexuality in Games*

- Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes"
- Leonard, "Virtual Gangstas, Coming to a Suburban House Near You"
- Shaw, "Putting the Gay in Games"

Mandatory mid-term (prelim lit review) due at start of class.

Nov 1: *Emergent Play & Control*

- Steinkuehler, "The Mangle of Play"
- Jakobsson, "Playing with the Rules"
- Chen, "Communication, Coordination, and Camaraderie in World of Warcraft"
- Montola, "The Invisible Rules of Role-Playing"

Nov 8: *Rationalization and Instrumentality in Play*

- Henricks, "Max Weber and the Rationalization of Play"
- Jakobsson, "The Achievement Machine"
- Silverman & Simon, "Discipline and Dragon Kill Points in the Online Power Game"

Nov 15: *Co-creative Culture & Labor*

- Postigo, "From Pong to Planet Quake"
- Jenkins, "Interactive Audiences?"
- Dovey & Kennedy, "Interventions and Recuperations?"
- Dyer-Witherford and de Peuter, "Immaterial Labor"

Nov 22: *Managing Play*

- Lessig, "Cyberspaces"
- Grimmelmann, "Virtual Borders"
- Lastowka, "Jurisdiction"

Nov 29: *Research presentations & peer feedback on paper drafts*

Dec 6: *Research presentations & peer feedback on paper drafts*

Dec 13: *No class, final portfolio preparation*

Dec 14: *Exam due by 15:00*

Case study exercises & blogging

Over the course of the term we will have six groups present case studies related to the subject of a particular week's readings. These will be prepared in advance of the Tuesday session and formally presented there. They will be used as a core discussion tool that week. In addition to engaging with the case in the class, everyone will be doing a blog write-up reflecting on it before the end of Thursday that week. The case team will provide a brief write-up and their own analysis also on the blog. All blog entries will be submitted as part of your final portfolio.

Case team

Prepare for the session:

- Find a compelling case "out in the wild" that speaks to the themes of the week's readings. For example, if the session is on managing play you might choose to look at an IP battle or EULA/ToS in a specific game.
- Create an overview and presentation of the case which covers the following -
 - Presentation of facts, including any outcomes
 - Highlight core critical issue(s) (with an eye on the readings)
- Prepare three discussion questions for the group to take up.

During the session:

- Give your presentation of the case (including showing any images/video/etc.). Try to keep it to no more than 15 minutes.
- Lead the discussion using the questions you've prepared (and any follow-ups as conversation unfolds).

After the session on the blog:

- Provide a brief (collective) write-up of the case.
- Include your judgment/analysis/reasoning.
- 800 words minimum.

Respondents

During the session:

- Actively engage with the presentation and questions. This is a two-way venture and it is not the responsibility of the case team to drive the entire conversation.

After the session on the blog:

- Submit a blog response to the case. If it fruitfully intersects your own empirical research, feel free to tie that in. 400 words minimum.