

Game Culture Syllabus, Spring 2010

Mondays 13:45-15:45 in room 2A12, Lab time at your discretion, though I reserve the option to require your attendance at a guest lecture, etc. during our scheduled 16:00-18:00 lab period. I will, however, notify you in advance in such an instance.

Teacher: T.L. Taylor (tlrtaylor@itu.dk) (office: 4B04, phone: 7218 5035).

Description: This course will examine computer games from a cultural and sociological perspective. Rather than focusing on tasks like level construction, it will explore the ways culture, socialization, and values are a part of gaming. 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. Topics include: embodiment and play, avatars as social and personal artifacts, social processes and interaction, games as communication spaces and virtual worlds, management and governance, intellectual property debates, co-creative activities, political/ideological analysis of games, gender and race in gaming, design & values, cheating/griefing/protest, network culture, social context of rules production, and science technology studies and computer game research.

Intended learning outcomes: After successful completion of the course the student should be able to -

- 1) Demonstrate an understanding of major theoretical approaches from sociology, media studies, communication, and the humanities to examining computer games.
- 2) Apply a variety of methodological approaches to analyzing the social/cultural aspects of computer games.
- 3) Identify sociological and cultural trends in the development and use of computer games.
- 4) Identify a question/problem in the social/cultural analysis of computer games, select an appropriate method for examination, and carry out an original research project or create a design document based on scholarly research.

Learning activities: Lectures, discussion, groupwork, and classroom exercises will constitute the bulk of the weekly in-class teaching. Active student participation is required. Students are also required to write an original paper for the class that addresses one of the themes dealt with throughout the term.

Students are expected to come to the course having read the weekly assigned material, engage in classroom discussions, undertake original academic analysis, and apply theories showing critical understanding of the course materials.

Exam: Course examination will be based on a final original research paper due 25 May at 15:00 in the Exam Office (3 copies). Additional details on the requirements will be provided as the course progresses.

Literature: The course compendium should be purchased from the KUA Bookstore and brought to every class session.

Software: All students must participate in some multiplayer space (an MMOG, XboxLive, Second Life, etc.).

Schedule:

Jan 25, 16:00-18:00 (special time for intro week) – *Introduction*

Feb 1 – *Technology and Culture*

- Bijker and Law, “General Introduction”
- Winner, “Do Artifacts Have Politics?”
- Crawford and Rutter, “Digital Games and Cultural Studies”

Feb 8 – *Embodied Play*

- Dovey & Kennedy, “Bodies and Machines”
- Lahti, “As We Become Machines”
- Bayliss, “Notes Toward a Sense of Embodied Gameplay”

Feb 15 – *Avatars and Identity*

- Turkle, “Aspects of the Self”
- Taylor, “Living Digitally”
- Haraway, excerpt from “A Cyborg Manifesto”

Feb 22 – *Assemblage and Actors*

- Latour, “Where are the Missing Masses?”
- Giddings, “Playing with Non-Humans”
- Taylor, “The Assemblage of Play”

March 1 – *Gender & Gaming I*

- Bornstein, “Naming all the Parts”
- Hargreaves, “Femininity or ‘Musculinity’: Changing Images of Female Sports”
- Pascoe, “Making Masculinity”

March 8 – *Gender and Gaming II*

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

March 15 – *Race and Sexuality in Games*

- Leonard, “Virtual Gangstas, Coming to a Suburban House Near You”
- Shaw, “Putting the Gay in Games”
- Sundén, “Play as Transgression”

March 22 – *Emergent Play*

- Steinkuehler, “The Mangle of Play”
- Jakobsson, “Playing with the Rules”
- Silverman & Simon, “Discipline and Dragon Kill Points in the Online Power Game”

March 29 – *No class, paper prep*

Final paper topic selection due

April 5 – *No class, Spring break*

April 12 – *Game Communities*

- Jakobsson & Taylor, “Sopranos Meets EQ”
- Wellman & Gulia, “Virtual Communities As Communities”
- Lockard, “Progressive Politics, Electronic Individualism and the Myth of Virtual Community”

April 19 – *Modding & Machinima*

- Jenkins, “Interactive Audiences?”
- Postigo, “From Pong to Planet Quake”
- Dovey & Kennedy, “Interventions and Recuperations?”
- Lowood, “Found Technology”

April 26 – *Managing Play*

- Lessig, “Cyberspaces”
- Grimmelmann, “Virtual Borders”
- Koster, “Declaring the Rights of Players”

Final paper abstract due

May 3 – *Professional Computer Gaming & eSports* – Guest lecture: Emma Witkowski

- Rambusch, et.al., “Exploring eSports”
- Reeves, Brown, and Laurier, “Experts at Play”
- Additional article to be distributed

May 10 - *Console Culture* – Guest lecture: Mikael Jakobsson

- Taylor, L. “Platform Dependent”
- Jakobsson, to be distributed

May 17 – *No class, finalize paper*

May 25 at 15:00 – **Final paper due to exam office (3 copies).**