USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS - INTERACTIVE MEDIA AND GAMES

CTCS-505 SURVEY OF INTERACTIVE MEDIA - Rev 1.2b

Instructor: Jeff Watson

Office Location: SCI 201J

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: remotedevice@gmail.com

Twitter: @remotedevice

Student Assistants: Kevin Wong

Office Location: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Email: kevinjwo@usc.edu

Twitter: @ThatKevinWong

Day and Time: Mon 2:00 - 4:50

Location: SCI 207

Units: 2.0

Prerequisites: N/A

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The tangled relationship between theory and practice presents us with something of a chicken-and-egg problem. On the one hand, we could say that all action emerges out of theory: we observe the world, generate various hypotheses about how things might work, then take action accordingly. But we could say with equal authority that it is action that comes first, for it is only through observing and interpreting the consequences of our actions – that is, through *experimentation* – that we ever really learn anything. Without action, there is no meaning, for there is nothing to make meaning *with*.

It is the position of this course that both these perspectives are true. Theory and practice are two sides of the same coin – or, perhaps more accurately, two steps in the same cycle. Enriching one enriches the other. Indeed, the one simply does not exist without the other. Whether we acknowledge it or not, our art and design practice always both informs and is informed by the contexts within which it occurs. The more we can be aware of where our work comes from, where it is heading, and what it does to the world it inhabits, the better designers and wiser artists we will be.

The primary focii of this course are the historical origins and theoretical contexts of interactive media and games. Our main objective is to deepen and broaden our awareness of the cultural, social, economic, and political implications and possibilities inherent to and latent in contemporary interactive media. Of particular interest are questions related to the functioning of narrative, the affordances of play and procedurality, and conceptions of space, time, and bodies. The first third of the course will entail the development of a common language for discussing these matters, using the concept of the situation, defined here as "an opportunity to act," as a starting point for addressing interactive media from three perspectives: play, narrative, and space. The

final two-thirds of the course will build on this foundation through an exploration via student-led discussions of a set of related themes.

REQUIRED TEXTS

You should acquire a copy of Salen and Zimmerman's *The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology* (MIT Press, 2005). Additional readings are available via links included in the syllabus below or materials provided in class. During weeks 6-14, you will lead class discussions and will be responsible for providing readings to your fellow students (see below for more info).

#CTCS505

In the hopes of generating some discussion that might go beyond our little class, we're going to experiment with using a hashtag and your own blogs in place of the more commonly-used "class blog" format. Consequently, **you will need your own blog and Twitter account for this class**. If you don't have a blog, set one up for free with Tumblr or Wordpress. The global hashtag for the course is *#CTCS505*. See below for info on the other hashtags we'll be using.

Recommended Reading

The following books are recommended as starting points for research.

- Aarseth, Espen J. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature.* The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

- Anthropy, Anna. *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters*. Seven Stories Press, 2012.

- Bogost, Ian. *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*. The MIT Press, 2007.

- ---. *How to do Things With Videogames*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

- Costikyan, Greg. *Uncertainty in Games.* The MIT Press, 2013.

- Flanagan, Mary. *Critical Play: Radical Game Design*. The MIT Press, 2009.

- Fullerton, Tracy. *Game Design Workshop (3rd Edition)*. CRC Press, 2014.

- Galloway, Alexander R. *Gaming: Essays On Algorithmic Culture*. 1st ed. Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2006.

- Harrigan, Pat, and Noah Wardrip-Fruin. *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*. The MIT Press, 2006.

- ---. *Second Person: Role-Playing and Story in Games and Playable Media*. The MIT Press, 2010.

- ---. *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*. The MIT Press, 2009.

- Juul, Jesper. *Half-Real: Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. illustrated edition. The MIT Press, 2005.

- McGonigal, Jane. *Reality is Broken*. Penguin, 2011.

- Montfort, Nick. *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction*. The MIT Press, 2005.

- Montfort, Nick, and Ian Bogost. *Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System*. The MIT Press, 2009.

- Pearce, Celia, and Artemesia. *Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds*. The MIT Press, 2009.

- Salen, Katie and Eric Zimmerman. *Rules of Play*. The MIT Press, 2003.

- Wardrip-Fruin, Noah. *Expressive Processing: Digital Fictions, Computer Games, and Software Studies*. The MIT Press, 2009.

- Wark, McKenzie. *Gamer Theory*. Harvard University Press, 2007.

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly blog posts

Once per week during Weeks 2 through 14, you must write a brief (150-300) word blog post responding to the readings and/or theme of the week. Each post will be graded out of 4, and your grade for this component will be based on your 10 highest-graded posts. Write in whatever voice feels right for the topic. Feel free to (and please do) include videos or images. Use your posts to bring our attention to relevant theorists, creators, news items, or projects that *inform*, *influence*, *inspire*, or *irritate* you relative to the theme and readings of the week (Steve Anderson calls this "4xi" – see hashtags below). Publish your post to your own blog (if you don't have one, set one up using Tumblr, Wordpress, or a similar service), and then tweet the link, along with a snappy title, using the hashtags, #CTCS505 **and** #4xi. Your finished tweet should look something like this:

> *Reflections on games and narrative http://bit.ly/lqT6zt #CTCS505 #4xi*

Your weekly blog post must be tweeted by 5pm on the Sunday before class. This will give us all time to look at each other's work before we meet.

Finally, if possible, please connect your Twitter to your Facebook and other social media accounts such that your writing gets as wide an audience as possible. Further, **make sure to follow everyone in the class. <u>Read, comment on, and retweet each other's insights!</u>**

NB: For your Labor Day (Week 2) response, please post something responding to the lecture and in-class discussion from Week 1.

Final Paper

The primary deliverable for this course is a 20-30 page critical paper on a topic that is important to you. A detailed description of this assignment will be provided midway through the semester.

Presentation

Working in small groups, you will lead the discussion in each class during Weeks 6-14. We will determine the themes for each class during the first class, and I will provide a list of resources from which each group can draw as they plan their class. Groups are invited to bring in their own readings, examples, and interpretations to augment the provided resources. **Groups must tweet their reading list to the class via the #CTCS505 hashtag on the Friday before their session**. We will discuss this in much greater detail in the first and second classes. The point here is to enable us all to leverage each other's expertise and honor our individual goals and voices as we explore this vast topic space.

Assessment breaks down as follows:

Assignment	Grade	Due Date
Blog posts (weekly)	**20%**	**Multiple**
Final Paper	**40%**	**December 1 or 8***
Presentation	**30%**	**Variable**
Participation	**10%**	**N/A**
Total	**100%**	

* Final papers submitted on December 1 will be returned with full feedback. Final papers submitted after December 1 will receive minimal feedback. The absolute latest deadline for submitting final papers is midnight, December 8.

SCHEDULE

Readings specified for each week should be read in advance of the class.

Week	Date	Theme & Assignments	Readings
1	**August 25**	**INTRODUCTION: LANDSCAPE SCAN** **In class: Introductions, Tweeping, syllabus development**	
2	**September 1**	**LABOR DAY** **No class.** **Due (5pm August 31): Weekly blog post**	
3	**September 8**	**PLAY** **In class: Presentation scheduling** **Due (5pm the night before): Weekly blog post**	• Roger Caillois, "The Definition of Play: The Classification of Games" (SZ, 122) • Jesper Juul, "The Game, The Player, The World" http://www.jesperjuul.net/text/gameplayerworld/ • Brian Sutton-Smith, "Play and Ambiguity" (SZ, 296) • Johann Huizinga, "Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon" (SZ, 96) • Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" http://itu.dk/~miguel/ddp/Deep%20play%20Notes%20on%20the%20Balinese%20cockfight.pdf

4	September 15	**NARRATIVE** **Due (5pm the night before): Weekly blog post**	• Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality" http://remotedevice.net/ctcs-505/bruner-narrative-construction.pdf • Kenneth Burke, "Questions and Answers About the Pentad" http://remotedevice.net/ctcs-505/Burke_questions-and-answers-about-the-pentad.pdf • Henry Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture" http://web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/games&narrative.html • Jesper Juul, "Games Telling Stories?" http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/juul-gts/ • Greg Costikyan, "Games, Storytelling, and Breaking the String" http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/firstperson/storyish
5	September 22	**SPACE** **Due (5pm the night before): Weekly blog post, Group I readings for Week 6**	• Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Excerpt) • Celia Pearce, "Narrative Environments from Disneyland to World of Warcraft" http://remotedevice.net/2b15/pearce-narrative-environments.pdf • Guy Debord, "Theory of the Derive" http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm • Bonnie Ruberg, "Big Reality: A Chat With 'Big Game' Designer Frank Lantz" http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/130264/big_reality_a_chat_with_big_.php?print=1 • Mia Consalvo, "There is no magic circle" http://remotedevice.net/ctcs-505/mia_2009.pdf
6 ... 14	September 29	**TBD (TOPICS SELECTED DURING WEEK 3 - SEE SUPPLEMENTARY SCHEDULE DOCUMENT)** **In class: Presentations, discussions** **Due (5pm the night before): Weekly blog post**	• **Each group will provide a reading list to the class one week before their assigned presentation day. Readings must be provided in hard copy in class the week before (unless you can collectively come up with a better system).**

15	December 1	**SYNTHESIS/BUFFER DAY**
		In class: pizza
		Due: Final Paper (absolute last day to hand in: December 8)

BOILERPLATE

Boilerplate is "any text that is or can be reused in new contexts or applications without being greatly changed from the original" (Wikipedia). That's what this section contains. If you've taken a course at USC before, you've probably read much of this material already. If not, find below a set of reminders about important things like plagiarism (don't do it), attendance (it's mandatory), disabilities (if you have one, DSP can help you out), citation guidelines (use APA 5th[h] edition), and other matters.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to an SA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

DSP Website: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook (http://scampus.usc.edu), contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can

be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html.

Fair Use

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. In keeping with section 107 of the Copyright Act we recognize four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

Citation Guidelines

All projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. The style we use is APA 5th edition (see http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/).

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. Please activate your course in Blackboard with access to the course syllabus. Whether or not you use Blackboard regularly, these preparations will be crucial in an emergency. USC's Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at http://blackboard.usc.edu.

Disruptive Student Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.