

NMED 3300(A) // Theory and Aesthetics of Digital Games

COURSE OUTLINE (version 1.0)

Spring 2012, Lecturer: David Clearwater

M/W: 10:00-10:50am; F: 11:00-11:50 F (lab): 12:00-12:50pm

Room: W866; **Lab:** W721, **Office:** W886, **Office hours:** Fri.: 2-4:30pm (or by appt.)

Email: cleada (a) uleth . ca **Teaching Website:** <http://people.uleth.ca/~cleada/>

(see QR code at right)



Over the last four decades, the videogame has become an increasingly important medium in terms of popularity, economic significance, and cultural impact. This course aims to provide a structural and analytical framework for the study of this emerging medium. Because videogames are relatively new, we will explore ways to study, analyze and theorize about videogames within a Fine Arts/Humanities context. As with popular culture generally, a major question is whether video games warrant the sustained attention and critical investigation that we devote to works of literature, visual art, cinema, or music. Therefore, we will explore video games for their uniqueness as a medium but also in terms of similarities with other aesthetic artifacts. Topics to be explored will include: history and origins, aesthetics and interpretation, genre, interactivity and narrative, character development, game play, mise-en-scene, and social issues such as gender and violence. **Note:** due to technical limitations, we will be focusing almost exclusively on games from the major consoles.

Pre-requisites: DRAMA 3030 and third-year standing (a minimum of 60.0 credit hours).

Recommended Background: An intermediate level of experience with video games (console, PC, or online).

Structure for Each Lecture:

Mondays and Wednesdays will consist of lectures. Fridays will be broken into two sessions. The first will take place in W866 where we will discuss particular genres and look at select examples. The second session will take place in W721 and will consist of hands-on gameplay (1 hour) of the games covered earlier in class.

Required Text/Readings/Course Materials:

1. Select readings (online/electronic database)
2. James Newman, *Video Games*, 2004. ISBN: 0-415-28192-X (available from UofL Bookstore).
3. Mark J. Wolf, ed. *The Medium of the Video Game*, 2001. ISBN: 0-292-79150-X (available from UofL Bookstore).
4. **Optional:** Headphones (for use in W721).

Grading:

Exam: Game Criticism, Industry Stats., Genre	Feb. 6	15%
Genre Essay (8-10 pages)	Mar. 14	20%
Critical Review/Research Essay Proposal (2 pages, plus biblio.)	Mar. 23	10%
Presentation (10-15 minutes + handout)	Apr. 4, 11, 13, 16, or 18	15%
Critical/Historical Analysis and Research Essay (12 pages + biblio.):	Apr. 20	25%
Attendance / Participation:	n/a	15%

I will be using the following letter grade/percentage equivalencies for all exams/assignments:

	Excellent			Good			Satisfactory			Poor		Fail
Letter	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
Percent	100-95	94-90	89-86	85-82	81-78	77-74	73-70	69-66	65-62	61-58	57-51	50-0

Students with Disabilities:

Students with learning disabilities should contact me in the first two weeks of the semester if any special circumstances/needs are required.

LECTURE SCHEDULE & TOPICS

Week 1: Jan. 9, 11: Introduction to the Course, Lecture Schedule, Readings, Assignments

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Genre Discussions / Play Sessions Schedule

Areas of Game Analysis (NMED 3300 Game Criticism/Analysis Conceptual Map)

Jan. 13 (Genre): Introduction to Genre Theory (2D Shooters) / Introduction to W700&W721

Week 2: Jan. 16, 18: Game Studies & Theory, History, and Industry Stats

Newman, James. "Why Study Videogames?" In *Videogames*, 1-7. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Newman, James. "What is a Videogame?" In *Videogames*, 9-28. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Kent, Steven L. "Super Mario Nation." In *The Medium of the Video Game*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf, 35-48. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

"Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry." Entertainment Software Association [U.S.A.], 2011.

http://www.theesa.com/facts/pdfs/ESA_EF_2011.pdf.

Optional Readings:

Wolf, Mark J. and Bernard Perron. "Introduction." In *The Video Game Theory Reader*, eds. Mark J. Wolf and Bernard Perron, 1-24. New York: Routledge, 2003.

"Essential Facts About the Canadian Computer and Video Game Industry." Entertainment Software Association of Canada, 2011. <http://www.theesa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Essential-Facts-2011.pdf>.

"Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry." Entertainment Software Association [U.S.A.], 2011.

http://www.theesa.com/facts/pdfs/ESA_Essential_Facts_2010.PDF.

Jan. 20 (Genre): Genre Discussion/Play Session: Vintage, Classic, Arcade

Week 3: Jan. 23, 25: Video Games as Art... Interpretation and Criticism

Huber, William. "Ka as shomin-geki: Problematizing Videogame Studies." DiGRA, Level Up conference Proceedings, November 2003. <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/05150.02055.pdf>.

Aarseth, Espen. "Playing Research: Methodological Approaches to Game Analysis." DAC Conference Proceedings (Online), 2003. Available at <http://hypertext.rmit.edu.au/dac/papers/Aarseth.pdf>.

Also, check out previous NMED 3300 essays at the GamePlay Archive under "Undergraduate Essays": <http://gameplay-archive.org/studentessays.html>.

Optional Readings:

Bateman, Chris. "What Is A Game? An Excerpt From Imaginary Games." Gamasutra.com (Nov. 25, 2011).

http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6555/what_is_a_game_an_excerpt_from_.php.

Poulsen, Diana. "Art and Video Games: Intersections." Gamasutra.com (July 12, 2011).

http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6428/art_and_video_games_intersections.php.

Hoeger, Laura and William Huber. "Ghastly Multiplication: Fatal Frame II and the Videogame Uncanny." DiGRA, Situated Play Conference Proceedings, September 2007. <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/07313.12302.pdf>.

Jenkins, Henry. "Games, The New Lively Art" (Online). Available at

<http://web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/GamesNewLively.html>.

Burke, Timothy. "Middlebrow Video Game Criticism." Easily Distracted (blog).

<http://weblogs.swarthmore.edu/burke/?p=209>. June 19, 2006.

Newman, James. "Manufacturing Fun: Platforms, Development, Publishing and Creativity" In *Videogames*, 29-48. New York: Routledge, 2004.

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Jan. 27 (Genre): Genre Discussion: Action: Shooters, FPS, TPS, MTS

Week 4: Jan. 30, Feb. 1: Genre Theory: Aesthetics, Audiences and Videogames

Wolf, Mark J.P. "Genre and the Video Game." In *The Medium of the Video Game*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf, 113-134. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

Clearwater, David. "What Defines Videogame Genre? Thinking about Genre Study after the Great Divide," *Loading...*, vol. 5, no. 8 (2011). <http://journals.sfu.ca/loading/index.php/loading/article/view/67>.

"Genre Definitions (Video Games)". Moby Games. Available at <http://www.mobygames.com/glossary/genres/>.

Optional Readings:

Chandler, Daniel "An Introduction to Genre Theory" (1997). Available at:

http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf or

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/intgenre.html>.

Mittell, Jason. "A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory." *Cinema Journal* 40, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 3-24. <http://0-www.jstor.org.darius.uleth.ca/stable/1350192>.

Poole, Steven. "The Origin of Species." In *Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Video Games*, 29-58. London: Fourth Estate, 2000.

Takahashi, Dean. "The Xbox Takes Shape." In *Opening the Xbox: Inside Microsoft's Plan to Unleash an Entertainment Revolution*, 149-162. Roseville, CA: Prima Publishing, 2002.

Takahashi, Dean. "Industrial Design" and "Finishing the Industrial Design." In *The Xbox 360 Uncloaked: The Real Story Behind Microsoft's Next-Generation Video Game Console*, 179-184, 212-224. SpiderWorks, 2006.

Feb. 3 (Genre): Genre Discussion: Driving/Racing (Simulations/Fantasy)

Week 5:

Feb. 6: Quiz: Criticism, Genre, Industry Stats.

Feb. 8: Analysis and Research Essay, Citation Style & Essay Formatting

Feb. 10 (Genre): Genre Discussion: Action: Hack 'n' Slash, Platformers, Fighting/Beat-'em-ups

Week 6: Feb. 13, 15 Narrative vs. Gameplay

Wolf, Mark J.P. "Narrative in the Video Game." In *The Medium of the Video Game*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf, 93-111. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

Newman, James. "Narrative and Play, Audiences and Players" In *Videogames*, 91-106. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Optional Readings:

Pearce, Celia. "Towards a Game Theory of Game." In *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, eds. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan, 143-153. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.

Poole, Steven. "Never-Ending Stories." In *Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Video Games*, 103-124. London: Fourth Estate, 2000.

Frasca, Gonzalo. "Simulation versus Narrative: Introduction to Ludology." In *The Video Game Theory Reader*, eds. Mark J. Wolf and Bernard Perron, 221-235. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Feb. 17 (Genre): Genre Discussion: Action-Adventure, RPGs, Movie/TV/Animation

-- Reading Week: Feb. 20 – 25, No classes --

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Week 7: Feb. 27, 29 Character(s) and Player(s)

Newman, James. "Videogame Players." In *Videogames*, 49-69. New York: Routledge, 2004.
Newman, James. "Videogame Players and Characters." In *Videogames*, 127-144. New York: Routledge, 2004.
Newman, James. "The Myth of the Ergodic Videogame." *Game Studies* 1, no. 2 (July 2002).
<http://www.gamestudies.org/0102/newman>.

Optional Readings:

Windels, Joel. "Scary Game Findings: A Study of Horror Games and Their Players." Gamasutra.com (Sept. 7, 2011).
http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6480/scary_game_findings_a_study_of_.php.
Rouse, Richard. "What Players Want" (Excerpt). In *Game Design: Theory and Practice*, 1-8. Plano, Texas: Wordware Publishing, 2001.
Poole, Steven. "False Idols." In *Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Video Games*, 149-167. London: Fourth Estate, 2000.

Mar. 2 (Genre) Genre Discussion: Alternative & National: 'Weird,' Art, Japanese Gaming

Week 8: Mar. 5, 7 Space, Mise-en-Scene, Sound Design

Newman, James. "Videogames, Space and Cyberspace." In *Videogames*, 107-125. New York: Routledge, 2004.
Coulianos, Filip. "Pacing and Gameplay Analysis in Theory and Practice." Gamasutra.com (Aug. 3, 2011).
http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6447/pacing_and_gameplay_analysis_in_.php.
Nutt, Christian. "A Cyber-Renaissance in Art Direction." Gamasutra.com (Aug. 22, 2011).
http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6462/a_cyberrenaissance_in_art_.php.

Optional Readings:

Gibbons, William. "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams: Popular Music, Narrative, and Dystopia in *Bioshock*." *Game Studies* 11, no. 3 (December 2011). <http://gamestudies.org/1103/articles/gibbons>.
Wolf, Mark J.P. "Space in the Video Game." In *The Medium of the Video Game*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf, 51-75. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.
Ruch, Adam. "World of Warcraft: Service or Space?" *Game Studies* 9, no. 2 (November 2009).
<http://gamestudies.org/0902/articles/ruch>.
Adams, Ernest. "The Construction of Ludic Space." Level-Up Conference Proceedings, DiGRA, 2003.
<http://www.digra.org/dl/db/05150.52280>.

Mar. 9 (Genre): Genre Discussion: Party, Music/Rhythm/Dance

Week 9:

Mar. 12: Class Cancelled... work on Genre Assignment

Mar. 14: Genre Assignment Due, Open Genre Discussion

Mar. 16 (Genre): Genre Discussion: Survival/Horror

Week 10: Mar. 19, 21 Social Gaming: Online / Multiplayer Experiences

Newman, James. "Social Gaming and the Culture of Videogames." In *Videogames*, 145-162. New York: Routledge, 2004.
Thompson, Clive. "Game Theories." *The Walrus* 1, no. 5 (June 2004): 39-47.
<http://www.walrusmagazine.com/articles/2004.06-economics-game-theories/1/>

Optional Readings:

Castronova, Edward. "Virtual Worlds: A First-Hand Account of Market and Society on the Cyberian Frontier." Center for Economic Studies and Institute for Economic Research, Working Paper. December 2001.
<http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=294828>.

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Lastowka, Greg. "Virtual Justice." Gamasutra.com (Dec. 1, 2011).

http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6560/virtual_justice.php.

Kelly, R.V. "MMORPG Culture." In *Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games*, 24-45. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004.

Miller, Jonathan. "Pwned! Online Gaming's Lexicon of Smack Talk." IGN (Online), June 16, 2006.

<http://xbox.ign.com/articles/713/713115p1.html>.

Mar. 23: **Proposal: Critical/Historical Analysis and Research Essay Due**

Genre Discussion: Sports, Multiplayer, MMORPGs

Week 11: Mar. 26, 28 Games, Meaning, Culture (and Ethics?) Part I

Tews, Rebecca. "Archetypes on Acid: Video Games and Culture." In *The Medium of the Video Game*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf, 169-182. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

Perdue, Brandon. "Ethical Dilemmas and Dominant Moral Strategies in Games." Gamasutra.com (Aug. 18, 2011).

http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6460/ethical_dilemmas_and_dominant_.php.

Optional Readings:

Schulzke, Marcus. "Moral Decision Making in *Fallout*." *Game Studies* 9, no. 2 (November 2009).

<http://gamestudies.org/0902/articles/schulzke>.

Poole, Steven. "The Prometheus Engine." In *Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Video Games*, 215-241. London: Fourth Estate, 2000.

Mar. 30 (Genre) **Genre Discussion:** Persuasive Games: Serious, Educational (DGBL), Advergimes

***Food Force* (U.N. World Food Programme, 2005)**

Install and play: *Food Force* (created by the United Nation's World Food Programme). The original Promotional Brochure (pdf) is available here: http://people.uleth.ca/~cleada/docs/Food_Force.pdf.

Also, check out the official website: <http://www.food-force.com> (No longer active: go here

<http://www.wfp.org/how-to-help/individuals/food-force>). Save the file to your hard drive and then open the file to install the game.

[Windows Installation File](#) | [Mac Installation File](#)

Right click on the above link and select 'Save link as...' or 'Save target as...' and save it to your hard drive before installing.

***McDonald's Videogame* (Molleindustria, 2006)**

You can play *McDonald's Videogame* (created by Molleindustria [<http://www.molleindustria.org/en/home>] in Italy) online

(<http://www.mcvideogame.com/index-eng.html>) or you can install it to your hard drive. To play locally, unpack/unzip the executable file to your hard drive and play. A Windows, Mac and a Flash Version (for Flash enabled browsers) are available:

[Windows Zip File](#) | [Mac HQX file](#) | [Flash Version \(Zip file\)](#)

You should also check out the website (to see what else Molleindustria is up to) and read what the creators have to say about the game: <http://www.mcvideogame.com/why-eng.html>.

Week 12: Apr. 2 Games, Meaning, Culture (and Ethics?) Part II

Stuart, Keith. "Where is Game Violence Going?" Games Blog, *Guardian Unlimited*, March 11, 2005.

http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/games/archives/2005/03/11/where_is_game_violence_going.html.

Weissenberger, Daniel. "Full Spectrum Warrior (Review)." *Game Critics*, September 1, 2004.

<http://www.gamecritics.com/review/fullspect/main.php>.

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Weissenberger, Daniel. "Shellshock: Nam '67 (Review)." *Game Critics*, October 20, 2004.

<http://www.gamecritics.com/review/shellshock/main.php>.

Jones, Scott. "Manhunt (Review)." *Game Critics*, January 28, 2004. Available at

<http://www.gamecritics.com/review/manhunt/main.php>.

Bracken, Mike. "Manhunt (Review)." *Game Critics*, February 4, 2004. Available at

http://www.gamecritics.com/review/manhunt/2nd_op.php.

Butts, Steve. "Deus Ex: Invisible War Review (Excerpt)." IGN, December 1, 2003.

<http://pc.ign.com/articles/442/442591p1.html>.

Fahey, Rob. "Comment: Do We Really Need Games Like Manhunt?" GamesIndustry.biz (Feb. 8, 2004). Available at

http://www.gamesindustry.biz/content_page.php?section_name=pub&aid=3916.

Optional Readings:

Stuart, Keith. "State of Play: Is There a Role for the New Games Journalism?" Games Blog, *Guardian Unlimited*, February 22, 2005.

http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/games/archives/game_culture/2005/02/state_of_play_is_there_a_role_for_the_new_games_journalism.html.

Stuart, Keith. "Ten Unmissable Examples of New Games Journalism." Games Blog, *Guardian Unlimited*, March 3, 2005.

http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/games/archives/game_culture/2005/03/ten_unmissable_examples_of_new_games_journalism.html.

Apr. 4: Presentations & Group Discussion

Apr. 6: Stat. Holiday... class cancelled

Apr. 9: Stat. Holiday... class cancelled

Apr. 11: Presentations & Group Discussion

Apr. 13: Presentations & Group Discussion

Apr. 16: Presentations & Group Discussion

Apr. 18: Presentations & Group Discussion

Apr. 20: Critical/Historical Analysis and Research Essay Due

Apr. 21-30 Final Exam Period (NO FINAL EXAM IN THIS COURSE)

ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: For all written assignments, include a **title page** with the following information:

- your full name and email address
- course name and number (Theory and Aesthetics of Digital Games, NMED 3300 A)
- my name, the name/number of the assignment, and your title for the assignment

Assignments are due at the beginning of class. **Use an 11 pt. font with 1.5 line-spacing for all assignments.**

Citation Style/Essay-Formatting:

Use the Turabian/Chicago citation style for all written assignments. I will discuss this citation style (based on the Chicago Manual of Style) in class and there is a brief guide available on my website that gives examples for common citation materials. As well, there is a guide describing proper formatting for essays which will also be covered in class. You can access these materials here:

http://people.uleth.ca/~cleada/citation_essay_guides.html

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Quiz: Game Criticism, Industry Stats., Genre: **15%** **Feb. 6**

This quiz will cover the readings, handouts and lectures pertaining to videogame criticism (Week 3), Industry Statistics (Week 2), and Genre Theory (Week 4). The quiz will cover the following readings (listed by author or title): Videogame Criticism: Aarseth, Huber; Industry Stats: "Essential Facts about the Computer and Video Game Industry (2011);" Genre: Wolf, Clearwater, Moby Games. The exam will likely include multiple choice questions, matching, short answer, and fill-in-the-blanks but I will discuss the exact nature of the exam in class.

Genre Essay: **20%** **Mar. 14**

Eight to ten pages (11 pt. font, 1.5 line spacing) + **bibliography/gameography** (separate page)

The objective of this essay is to explore the concept of genre and apply it to videogames; in particular, a single videogame genre. At the beginning of the essay, you should define genre and genre studies: the variety of ways it is used (and by whom) and the variety of ways that it is defined. Since 'genre' is not very well understood within videogame studies, you should also look to how genre is generally understood and defined with regard to other media (see the essay by Daniel Chandler listed under 'Optional Readings'). You should devote one to two pages for this general discussion of genre.

For the remainder of the essay, I would like you to choose a particular videogame genre (see note below) and to briefly discuss how you think the genre should be defined and the rationale for such a definition. You should consider the following: 1) history of the genre and prominent titles; 2) dominant or recurring aspects concerning the genre's aesthetics and gameplay; 3) remarks on the type(s) of player or audience(s) involved with the genre; 4) discussion of hardware and ludic context(s); 5) major developers and publishers; 6) popularity of the genre, demographics, perhaps including sales figures. I want you to be as specific as possible and in order to arrive at a 'definition' of the genre you have chosen, you might also want to very briefly compare it to other (similar) genres for illustrative purposes.

Note: The Final Critical/Historical Research Essay (due at the end of the term) is a major aspect of the course. Therefore, if—at the beginning of the semester—you have an idea of the game (or genre) that you might want to use for the Final Essay, you might want choose that genre for Genre Essay.

Proposal: Critical/Historical Analysis and Research Essay **10%** **Mar. 23**

Two pages (11 pt. font, 1.5 line spacing) + **bibliography/gameography** (separate page)

Note 1: Re-read the description of the Critical/Historical Analysis and Research Essay (below)

Note 2: I would strongly recommend that you choose a game that you are already very familiar with and have played before (*do not* select a game that is slated for release later in the semester.)

In the proposal, you will describe the game you have chosen, its genre (a very brief summary of your Genre Essay), and the main concepts that you will use to create your analysis of the game. For the main concepts, consult the handout, "Areas of Game Analysis," and use those that best suit the game you have chosen. Also, identify those concepts/authors covered in class that you plan to use to construct your essay. And, finally, you should discuss (or try to develop) the central thematic that you will use for the analysis of the game you have chosen.

You are required to conduct your own research by (re)playing the game you have chosen and by using the library catalogue and electronic databases, online review/archive sites, etc., to build your bibliography. **Write a two-page proposal (11 pt. font, 1.5 line-spacing) where you discuss the game you have selected and the main concepts you intend to cover. Include all relevant materials in your bibliography/gameography (separate page).** While this proposal is not binding, and you should expect your topic to evolve, I don't suggest you change your topic entirely.

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Presentation: **15% Apr. 4, 11, 13, 16, or 18**

Approx. 10 to 15 minutes + handout (one to two pages)

As preparation for the final essay (see below), you are responsible for a short (10-15 minutes) in-class presentation to be scheduled in April (see dates listed above) where you will present a summary of your findings related to the game that you have selected and the central thematic you will use in the final essay. **Provide a handout** for each person in the class that includes specific information about the game (full title, date of initial release, developer, and publisher), photos, illustrations and anything else you feel will help illustrate the approach you are taking for the essay. As well, please try to **provide in-game footage** of gameplay (this will have to be very brief) in order to demonstrate the game to the class. For the in-game footage you can use online videos (make sure to download them, use a site such as KeepVid (<http://keepvid.com/>) to grab YouTube or other videos) or you can use the DVD recorders in W700 to record materials in standard definition. The presentation will be short and informal, with the goal of informing fellow students about the game and the approach you are taking for the final essay, as well as to solicit ideas and suggestions from the class. Aim for ten minutes for your introduction of the game and the approach you are taking for the Critical/Historical Analysis and Research Essay and five minutes for questions and class discussion.

Critical/Historical Analysis and Research Essay: **25% due Apr. 20**

Twelve pages (11 pt. font, 1.5 line spacing) + **bibliography/gameography** (separate page)

The final Critical/Historical Analysis and Research Essay is the culmination of the course. You are to select a game and write a twelve page essay where you: 1) situate the game within its historical/contemporary context, 2) provide a discussion and analysis of the game's genre (using materials from Assignment 2), and 3) provide an aesthetic analysis and discuss the game using some of the concepts we cover in class and in the readings. You may also consider using a central theme to tie all elements of your essay together.

Consult the 'Handout on Game Analysis' for guidance. You should describe the development and publishing details, the game and its genre (use research results from the Genre Essay) and discuss the game in terms of any of the following concepts: gameplay, ludic context, hardware, narrative/story, characters, space and mise-en-scene, politics, simulation, meaning, etc. Again, consult the 'Handout on Game Analysis' as this will provide you with a detailed framework from which to work.

The goal with this assignment is to develop the idea of videogame criticism; that is, to not only describe the game in question but, more importantly, to describe the various meanings it puts forth for its audience and how we can situate the title within its genre and within its larger cultural context. You should consult William Huber's essay, "Ka as Shomin-geki: Problematizing Videogame Studies" (week 3), as a general model of analysis and criticism applied to a video game title. Also, check out previous NMED 3300 essays at the GamePlay Archive under "Undergraduate Essays": <http://gameplay-archive.org/studentessays.html>.

A major requirement of the assignment is to conduct research on the game (history, existing reviews, articles on the production history of the game, etc.) in addition to fully (re)playing the game and conducting an aesthetic analysis. Another major requirement is to situate the game within a theoretical dimension (reference to concepts and ideas from the class readings and even other research in appropriate subject areas) as this relates to the main concepts you are using for the analysis.

Note: Include any illustrations, maps, screenshots, etc. in a separate appendix at the end of the essay.

Attendance / Participation: **15%**

An attendance sheet will circulate at the beginning of each class. At the end of the term, you will receive a grade based on your attendance record, completion of class readings, mature and considerate conduct in class, questions and comments made during class, etc. All readings must be completed before the class for which they are assigned. **Six (6) or more absences** (with *or* without valid reason) **will result in a grade of 'F' for Attendance/Participation.** (If a medical condition persists for an extended period of time or if other extraordinary circumstances develop, then you should discuss this with me and with the Fine Arts Advising Office.)

I realize that not all students are as comfortable as others in speaking regularly during seminars. **I will accept other activities as participation.** For example, you can bring an interesting handout for the class (if possible, make enough copies for the entire class, give me a copy with your name on it) or send them to the class listserv (make sure the email is clearly written, with a proper subject line). Also, I am always looking for new and interesting articles for use in the course readings. Therefore, you can also submit interesting articles or essays (from scholarly journals, magazines, or websites, etc.) that you come across in your research by submitting a file folder with your final research essay that includes photocopies of interesting articles that you have found. For articles or essays to be considered **you must include** a separate page with the full bibliographic reference for each article/essay (author's name, title, source, volume numbers and/or date, and page numbers), along with your name, as well as clean copies/photocopies of each essay or article. Scholarly and/or peer-reviewed essays are given the most weight, non-peer reviewed but substantial essays are given less consideration while short journalistic and online articles are given the least consideration.

GamePlay Lab (W700/W721):

With registration in this course, you will be granted access to the W700 labs where many major consoles are available for you to use and where the Friday Genre Play Sessions will take place. You will need to bring your ID card as the lab has 'swipe' access only. Do not pull on the main door as the alarm will sound. W700 contains many different labs—the specific lab that we will be using is W721 (the former 'digital photography' lab). Therefore, **please be considerate of others using these labs and keep noise to a minimum.** Please note that food and drink are not allowed in W700. **ANOTHER IMPORTANT NOTE: only students with official access are allowed in the labs** (so, you cannot bring friends into the lab that are not in the class). Finally, make sure consoles and televisions are turned off when you are finished and that the area where you were working is clean and tidy.

Links & Online Resources

Reference Sites:

Dictionary of Video Game Theory: <http://www.half-real.net/dictionary/>

Wikipedia [www.wikipedia.org]: This can be a useful place to start with definitions and terms and research. Note: Wikipedia should only act as a reference guide or supplement and should not be relied upon as a primary or secondary source for research.

Online Review Sites:

There are many sites that provide online reviews and you probably have your own favorite. If not, here are some to try:

www.metacritic.com a good place to start, MetaCritic provides links to many different reviews (some available online) of games as well as film and music.

www.gamecritics.com Smaller site but very good reviews and second opinions.

www.gamespot.com Very extensive and comprehensive.

www.ign.com Very extensive and comprehensive.

Magazines and Academic Journals:

Edge Magazine <http://www.next-gen.biz/>: Very well-respected publication.

The Escapist <http://www.escapistmagazine.com>: An online videogame magazine.

Game Studies <http://www.gamestudies.org/>: Online academic journal.

Eludamos: Journal for Computer Game Culture <http://eludamos.org/>: Online academic journal.

Loading... <http://journals.sfu.ca/loading/index.php/loading/>: Canadian Online academic journal.

Games and Culture <http://0-gac.sagepub.com.darius.uleth.ca/>: Academic journal available through UofL Library.

Other Useful Sites:

Digital Games Research Association <http://www.digra.org/>: A non-profit organization devoted to the study and development of video games.

Gamasutra <http://www.gamasutra.com/>: An excellent site devoted to game development and critical understanding of gaming. Popular with many developers and those in the industry, the user comments are often just as interesting as the feature articles and news.

Games Industry Website <http://www.gamesindustry.biz/>]: Industry news, game charts, etc.

Hardcore Gaming 101 <http://www.hardcoregaming101.net/>: Excellent site for historical reviews and import titles.

International Game Developers Association <http://www.igda.org/>: Can be technical but has some good columns (Ivory Tower, Reality Panic, Culture Clash).

VidGame Chartz Network <http://www.vgchartz.com/> Sales figures and other statistics.

History:

International Arcade Museum <http://www.arcade-museum.com/>: Arcade history site

Moby Games <http://www.mobymobies.com/home>: historical archive and review project