Game 230: History of Computer Games

3 Credit Hours
Spring 2018
Online
Email: gnelson4@gmu.edu

Instructor: Georgia Nelson
Phone: (703) 380-2337
Office Hours: By Appointment
Office: None (Remote Adjunct)

Course Description
This course provides a comprehensive survey of the history of video games. The class begins by exploring ancient games, early mechanical novelty machines, pinball and computers. The bulk of the class examines arcade games, modern console games, and game hardware. This class will detail the people, the technology, and the companies that have made video games the multi-billion dollar industry that it is today. Hands-on study and analysis will include writing about, discussing, and playing games past and present.

Learning Outcomes
Students who complete this course will:
[A] Have a broad understanding of the significant early video games
[B] Be able to identify the advances in the technologies that shaped the games industry
[C] Be able to write effectively about the history of computer games/video games
[D] Be able to identify and discuss key persons in computer gaming history
[E] Understand the lineage of notable companies and games in the game industry

Requirements and Evaluation
Due to its online nature, participation is a major part of this class. We will play, analyze, and discuss video games, hardware, and peripherals. Students should be prepared to discuss the games and assigned readings on a weekly basis. In order to have a successful class experience, we must maintain a non-competitive environment. Posting in the forums, posting videos of your responses to questions, screen captures of your gameplay, writing chapter summaries, and papers will be the bulk of your experience.

Each student is required to research a retro game and write a design document explaining their redesign of the game for the modern era. The "retro" game should be one that was published before 1995. Students are encouraged to consider two important notes on their design documents:

1. Choose a retro game in which there is ample information from which to glean - e.g. choosing Pong may lead to madness, but it could also let you get extremely creative.
2. Choose a game that is interesting to you and would like to learn more about, or one that you've always dreamed of modernizing.
The course work will help guide you through the design document process. This should be a FUN learning exercise - one that allows you to learn more about the game of an older era and to give it your own footprint with a modernized design.

**Required Texts and Materials**

**Grading**
Grading will be based upon a combination of activities. The bulk of your grade will be your Final Research Paper, which you will work on throughout the course. Participation in the weekly course discussions and class activities online are also a big aspect of your grade followed closely by the mid-term examination and quizzes.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Design Document</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
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**GMU Add/Drop Policy**
The last day to drop this class with no tuition liability is **Monday, January 29th, 2018**. It is the student’s responsibility to check to verify that they are properly enrolled as no credit will be awarded to students who are not.

**Honor Code, Copyright, & Computing Policies**

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code:* Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

You are expected to adhere to all University policies and guidelines during your participation in this course. All work must be your own. Inappropriate use of the work of others is a George Mason University Honor Code violation. Please review the University’s website for information on following: Honor Code and Judicial Procedures; Copyright/Fair Use; and Responsible Use of Computing.

**If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations** please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Students must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester, and the specific accommodation will be arranged through the Disability Resource Center.

**You are encouraged to sign up for the Mason Alert System** by visiting the website [https://alert.gmu.edu](https://alert.gmu.edu). An emergency poster exists in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises and that further information about emergency procedures exists on [http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert](http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert).
University Libraries

University Libraries provides resources for distance students. Please see http://library.gmu.edu/distance and http://infoguides.gmu.edu/distance_students.

Writing Center

The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing: http://writingcenter.gmu.edu

You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the Online Writing Lab (OWL).

Counseling and Psychological Services

The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students’ personal experience and academic performance (Visit: http://caps.gmu.edu/).

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the “Buckley Amendment,” is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. For more information, please visit http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy.
Course Outline and Class Schedule

The outline and schedule are subject to change. All students will be notified when changes are to be made. Our weeks will begin on Mondays and end at 11:59pm ET on Sundays.

**Discussions:** Every week we will have discussion topics in the forums. Discussions may involve evaluating a game we've played, quick topic research, or video analysis. It is expected that students make *initial* responses by Wednesday evenings at 11:59pm EST. You have until the end of the week to make two *substantial* responses to your fellow classmates’ posts. Failure to post your initial response in time will result in half credit for participation that week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session # and Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Ancient Games and Pinball</td>
<td>● Reading: Replay Chapters 1-2&lt;br&gt;● Watch: Rise of the Video Game: Level 1</td>
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<td>Jan 22 - Jan 28</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Bringing Games Into the Home</td>
<td>● Reading: Replay Chapters 3-5&lt;br&gt;● <strong>Design Document:</strong> Submit your preferred retro game to re-design (<em>due February 4</em>)</td>
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<td>Jan 29 - Feb 4</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Console Gaming Boom</td>
<td>● Reading: Replay Chapters 6-7&lt;br&gt;● Watch: Rise of the Video Game: Level 2&lt;br&gt;● <strong>Quiz 1</strong> (<em>covering Weeks 1-3</em>)</td>
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<td>Feb 5 - Feb 11</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Controversy in Gaming</td>
<td>● Reading: Replay Chapter 8&lt;br&gt;● <strong>Design Document:</strong> Submit your design overview (<em>due February 18</em>)</td>
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<td>Feb 12 - Feb 18</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Video Games on the World Stage</td>
<td>● Reading: Replay Chapters 9-10&lt;br&gt;● Watch: Rise of the Video Game: Level 3&lt;br&gt;● <strong>Quiz 2</strong> (<em>covering Weeks 4-5</em>)</td>
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<td>Feb 19 - Feb 25</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Enter the Macintosh and Nintendo</td>
<td>● Reading: Replay Chapters 11-14</td>
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<td>Feb 26 - Mar 4</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>From Sims to Tetris</td>
<td>● Reading: Replay Chapters 15-16&lt;br&gt;● <strong>Midterm Examination</strong> (<em>covers topics from Weeks 1 through 6</em>)</td>
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<td>Mar 5 - Mar 9</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>***Spring Break!!!</td>
<td>There will be no work required this week. Please continue to work on your design document as needed and enjoy your recess!</td>
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<td>Mar 10 - Mar 18</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Sonic Enters the Arena &amp; Additional Controversy in USA</td>
<td>● Reading: Replay Chapters 17-18&lt;br&gt;● Watch: Rise of the Video Game: Level 4</td>
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| Week 10 | Mar 26 - Apr 1 | CD-ROMS (*those things you had before Steam*) | ● Reading: Replay Chapter 19  
● **Design Document**: Rough Draft (*due April 1*) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Week 11 | Apr 2 - Apr 8 | 3D Games, PlayStation, and Music Games OH MY! | ● Reading: Replay Chapters 20-22  
● **Quiz 3** (covering Weeks 8-10) |
| Week 12 | Apr 9 - Apr 15 | Virtual Worlds and Virtual Lives | ● Reading: Replay Chapters 23-24  
● Review design document rough draft feedback!  
● Watch: Rise of the Video Game: Level 5 |
| Week 13 | Apr 16 - Apr 22 | Online Gaming Advances | ● Reading: Replay Chapters 25-26  
● **Quiz 4** (*covering Weeks 11-12*) |
| Week 14 | Apr 23 - Apr 29 | The Rise of Indie Development | ● Reading: Replay Chapters 27-28  
● Continue working on your final design document! |
| Week 15 | April 30 - May 6 | **!!! Review Week !!!** | ● Reading: None  
● **Final Design Document** (*due May 6*) |
Design Document Guidelines

Your design topic must be based on a redesign of an older game, which was published before 1995. As stated in the syllabus, it is important that you select a game that (a) has ample content available to provide you with content to redesign and "rework" for the modern era of gaming and (b) is something interesting to you that allows you to grow your knowledge in that game and genre. This is meant to be a FUN exercise to let you learn about an older game and repurpose its gameplay to work for a more modern audience (e.g. how would players enjoy Pong today?).

Grading Rubric:

Grading for the research paper will be heavily placed on the final result; however, you are still responsible for turning in the intermediate steps. These assignments are meant to guide you through the design document writing process and should not be skipped.

Game Selection: 10%
Design Goals and Basic Ideas: 10%
Rough Draft: 20%
Final Design Document: 60%

Requirements of your design document:

- If you do any research and have citations, you must use APA formatting
  - (Note: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/ is an excellent guide!)
- Must follow the provided Game Design Document Template (see course files)