

City University of Hong Kong

**Information on a Course
offered by School of Creative Media
with effect from Semester A in 2012 / 2013**

Part I

Course Title: Critical Ludology: Games, Playability and New Media Art

Course Code: SM6323

Course Duration: One semester (13 weeks)

No. of Credit Units: 3 units

Level: P6

Medium of Instruction: English

Prerequisites: NIL

Precursors: NIL

Equivalent Courses: NIL

Exclusive Courses: NIL

Part II

1. Course Aims:

The study of games is a new and rapidly expanding field of academic research, which is closely connected to the rapid development of computer games as a cutting-edge art form. This course introduces students to the basic theoretical questions and vocabulary concerning games and play, and their application into analytic, critical and creative purposes. Rather than focusing exclusively on digital games, a broad spectrum of contemporary and historical game/play activities will be discussed. Special attention will be paid to the medium-specific qualities in certain forms of play. The theoretical insights will be applied into game analysis, criticism, modification, and design exercises. Through these exercises the course explores questions related to the role of games/play in new media art, the representational potential of games, and the use of games in critical discourses and interventionist practices.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

No.	CILOs
1.	Describe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different forms of play • The formal constituents of games and their relationship to the metaphor of a game and the activity/attitude of play • Game/play-like features in historical and contemporary forms of human culture
2.	Extend a game by modifying its formal constituents (e.g. adding/subtracting/modifying rules, constraints, goals, and winning and losing conditions) and/or medium-specific qualities
3.	Differentiate between transmedial and medium-specific elements of games (in e.g. mechanical and digital games) and design games that make use of the medium-specific potential.
4.	Analyse contemporary computer games with methods of structural analysis and close-playing
5.	Describe, analyze and create games that simulate actual or fictional processes and recognise the potential of such games for social critique and intervention
*6.	Use concepts of game and play to describe, analyze and create: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New media artworks with personal style/ signature • Games where the boundary between play and daily life becomes blurred. Design games for public or everyday spaces.

*Negotiated Learning Outcome (NLO) explicitly articulating the elements of Discovery oriented learning.

3. Teaching and learning Activities (TLAs)

(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)

TLAs	ILO No
Lectures	CILO 1
Game analysis, modification and design workshops and presentations of workshop results	CILO 1-6
Final project	CILO 1-6
Readings	CILO 1-6

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities

(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)

Type of assessment tasks/activities	Weighting (if applicable)	ILO No	Remarks
Participation in in-class discussions	15%	CILO 1-6	
Presentations	25%	CILO 1-6	
Written reactions to readings	10%	CILO 1-6	
Final project	50%	CILO 1-6	

5. Grading of Student Achievement:

Refer to Grading of Courses in the Academic Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Degrees.

100% coursework and in-class participation

Grading pattern : Standard (A+AA-...F)

Grading is based on performance in assessment tasks / activities

A. Class Participation and Performance

This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the tutorial sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to his/her peer members.

Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definitions	Description
A+ A A-	4.3 4.0 3.7	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate class discussion and comment on other points - In-depth pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Interpret others' views with an open mind and ready to negotiate - Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and synthesis with informed views - Constructively critical, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues
B+ B B-	3.3 3.0 2.7	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points - Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Interpret opinions effectively
C+ C C-	2.3 2.0 1.7	Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attentive in in-class participation, listening with comprehension, but only infrequently contributing - Adequate pre-class preparation but little familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Fair ability in interpreting opinions
D	1.0	Marginal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people's views - Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Poor ability in interpreting opinions
F	0.0	Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher - No pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Minimal ability in interpreting opinions

Note: All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

B. Presentation

This assessment will grade on content and fluency of presentation. Students should show their co-operation to conduct a well-organized presentation with their own argument and evidence from readings and notes. The threshold of 'discovery' lied in a student's self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.

Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definitions	Description
A+ A A-	4.3 4.0 3.7	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rich, informative content, excellent grasp of the material with in-depth and extensive knowledge of the subject matter - Rigorous organization, coherent structure, and systematic exposition with a strong sense of narrative

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Superior presentation skills: distinct pronunciation, fluent expression and appropriate diction, exact time-management – Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize
B+ B B-	3.3 3.0 2.7	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adequate content with firm grasp of the material that informs the audience on a subject matter – Reasonable organization, balanced structure and composition – Good verbal communication: comprehensible pronunciation, fluent expression and diction, fair time-management
C+ C C-	2.3 2.0 1.7	Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adequate content with comprehensive grasp of the material demonstrating basic knowledge of the subject matter – Fair organization, weak structure and composition – Fair presentation skills: acceptable pronunciation, expression and diction, fair time-management
D	1.0	Marginal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Weak content, loose grasp of the general ideas with some knowledge of the subject matter – Poor organization, structure and composition – Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, poor time-management
F	0.0	Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inadequate content, fail to identify the general ideas with knowledge of the subject matter – No organization, structure or/and composition – Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, minimal time-management

Note: All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

C. Reaction Paper

This assessment will grade on rationality, clarity and fluency of argument and comment. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lies in a student’s ability to negotiate a position that is informed, defensible, and standing on personal insight.

Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definitions	Description
A+ A A-	4.3 4.0 3.7	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rich content, excellent ability to interpret and integrate various resources – Rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition – Precision in argument, well defined and reasoned points of view grounded in insightful interpretation of existing literature – Readiness to respond to peer opinion and other views initiated in class discussion – Discussion shed light on new dimensions of the issue
B+ B B-	3.3 3.0 2.7	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand – Reasonable organization with balanced structure and composition – Clear elaboration of ideas that sticks to the point, with clearly differentiated issues, ability to interpret opinions independently – Sufficient responses to peer comments to sustain a discussion

C+ C C-	2.3 2.0 1.7	Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand – Fair organization with adequate structure and composition – Relevant points made to the subject matter in question – Ability to respond to other statements and engage in class discussion
D	1.0	Marginal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Weak content, limited use of resources – Poor organization, structure and composition – Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions – Ability to respond to other comments in simple terms
F	0.0	Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources – No organization, structure or/and composition – Irrelevant points to the subject matter, no ability to interpret opinions – Fail to respond to other comments

Note: All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

D. Final Project

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, execute creative ideas and projects. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lies in a student’s proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned authorship.

Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definitions	Description
A+ A A-	4.3 4.0 3.7	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature – Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium – Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production – Innovative exploration by combining knowledge from different disciplines (e.g. mathematics, psychology, physics, anthropology, etc.) to create an inter-disciplinary project – Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment
B+ B B-	3.3 3.0 2.7	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium – Ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration – Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/ suggestions
C+ C C-	2.3 2.0 1.7	Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium – Limited ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration – Adjustment of plans and strategies in response to

			resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available
D	1.0	Marginal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium – Marginal ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration – Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available
F	0.0	Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium – Fail to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration – Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Note: All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

Part III

Keyword Syllabus:

Games, play, ritual, rules, constraints, player, simulation, representation, game contract, magic circle, game world, ludology, Game Studies, game analysis, game design, game ontology, tactical games

Recommended Reading:

Text(s):

Roger Caillois: *Man, Play and Games*

Johan Huizinga: *Homo Ludens. A study of the play-element in culture*

Jon Dovey & Helen Kennedy: *Game Cultures – Computer Games as New Media*

Jesper Juul: *Half-Real: Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*

Katie Salen & Eric Zimmerman: *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*

David Sudnow: *Pilgrim in the Microworld: Eye, Mind and the Essence of Video Skill*

Ian Bogost: *Persuasive Games. The Expressive Power of Videogames.*

Online Resources:

DiGRA Digital Library www.digra.org/dl

Game Studies journal www.gamestudies.org

Eludamos Journal www.eludamos.org