

City University of Hong Kong

**Information on a Course
offered by School of Creative Media
with effect from Semester A in 2015 / 2016**

Part I

Course Title: Analysis and Criticism of Computer Games

Course Code: SM6328

Course Duration: One semester (13 weeks)

No. of Credit Units: 3 units

Level: P6

Medium of Instruction: English

Prerequisites: (Course Code and Title) Nil

Precursors: (Course Code and Title) Nil

Equivalent Courses: (Course Code and Title) Nil

Exclusive Courses: (Course Code and Title) Nil

Part II

1. Course Aims:

Drawing on the paradigm of game studies, this course focuses on the methods, techniques, and vocabularies for analysis, interpretation and critical review of computer games, and the contexts and purposes in which these are used. Through lectures and hands-on exercises, involving analysis of computer games and secondary materials such as computer game reviews in the media, students will be provided with the skills and techniques to analyse computer games, the knowledge on which critical judgements and scholarly assertions can be based, and the vocabulary with which to express these. The games to be analysed range from mainstream AAA titles to contemporary independent art game projects. Upon completion of this course the students will be able to critically examine, evaluate and compare computer games, and, to situate a given computer game in the contexts of genre, history, aesthetics and technology and formulate their

observations into an informed review. Students will also be able to identify and evaluate the categories and purposes of analysis and criticism itself (e.g. commercial product review, critique of an artwork, scholarly interpretation), and to partake in contemporary debates within the discourses of game analysis and criticism (e.g. concerning with the “gameness” of computer games). Teaching and learning activities are centred around lectures on the theories and methods of game analysis and criticism, supported by close-playing game analysis workshops during tutorials or as independent work.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

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

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)
1.	Apply the appropriate methods, techniques, theories, and vocabularies for analysis and critique of computer games	
*2.	Describe and reflect on the key positions in the debates concerning computer game criticism	
3.	Identify and describe the different categories and purposes of game analysis and game criticism	
*4.	Generate their own scholarly informed and historically aware game analyses, critiques, and reviews	

*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)

ILO No	TLAs	Hours/week (if applicable)
CILO 1-4	Lectures	
CILO 1, 3, 4	Game analysis exercises, essays, and reflection papers	
CILO 1-4	Final essay	

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)

ILO No	Type of assessment tasks/activities	Weighting (if applicable)	Remarks
CILO 1-4	In-class participation		
CILO 1-4	Presentations		
CILO 1-4	Short reflection papers		
CILO 1-4	Final essay (in-depth game review)		

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. 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• 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. Essay and Short Paper

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, and to construct a well-organized argument and analysis. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lied in a student’s self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal experience.

Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definitions	Description
A+ A A-	4.3 4.0 3.7	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excellent grasp of research material, able to explain key concepts, assumptions and debates• Rigorous organization, coherent structure, distinct thesis, properly argued with strong narrative• Insightful interpretation of the subject matter with distinct themes and thesis• Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize• Ability to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools• Strong bibliography suggesting breadth and depth of coverage and informed insights
B+ B B-	3.3 3.0 2.7	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Firm grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts and assumptions• Reasonable organization, balanced structure, adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand• Clear ideas which keep to the point, clear-cut subject, ability to interpret opinions independently• Organized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic
C+ C C-	2.3 2.0 1.7	Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts• Fair organization, weak structure, adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand• Relevant points to the subject matter, fair ability to interpret opinions• Unorganized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic
D	1.0	Marginal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loose grasp of materials, cannot explain key concepts• Poor organization and structure, weak content, limited use of resources• Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions• Insufficient and/or unorganized bibliography
F	0.0	Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor grasp of materials• No organization and structure, inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources• Irrelevant points to the subject matter, minimal ability to interpret opinions• Irrelevant bibliography

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

Part III

Keyword Syllabus:

game studies, game analysis, game criticism, game hermeneutics

Recommended Reading:

Journal articles

Aarseth, E. (2004). "Playing Research: Methodological approaches to game analysis." In: *Game Approaches Conference 28-29 2003* Spilforskning.dk 2004. ISBN 87-990066-1-8

Aarseth, E. (2012) "A Narrative Theory of Games." In *FDG 2012 Proceedings of the International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games*, 129–33. Raleigh, North Carolina: ACM Press.

Consalvo, M. & Dutton, N. (2006). "Game analysis: Developing a methodological toolkit for the qualitative study of games." *Game Studies* 6 (1)

Elverdam, C. & Aarseth, E. (2007) "Game Classification and Game Design." *Games and Culture* 2 (1): 3–22.

Leino, O.T. (2012). "Death Loop as a Feature." *Game Studies* 12 (2)

Malliet, S. (2007). "Adapting the Principles of Ludology to the Method of Video Game Content Analysis." *Game Studies* 7 (1)

Wolf, M.J.P. (1997.) "Inventing Space. Toward a Taxonomy of On- and Off-Screen Space in Video Games." *Film Quarterly* 51 (Fall): 11–23.

Books

Dovey, J. & Kennedy, H.W. (2006). *Game Cultures: Computer Games As New Media: Computer Games as New Media*. McGraw-Hill.

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., Smith, J.H. & Tosca, S.P. (2013) *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*. Routledge.

Wolf, M.J.P. & Perron, B. (2003). *The Video Game Theory Reader*. Psychology Press.