

**City University of Hong Kong  
Course Syllabus**

**offered by School of Creative Media  
with effect from Semester A 2017 /18**

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**Part I Course Overview**

**Course Title:** Analysis and Criticism of Computer Games

**Course Code:** SM6328

**Course Duration:** One semester

**Credit Units:** 3

**Level:** P6

**Medium of Instruction:** English

**Medium of Assessment:** 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 Course Details

### 1. Abstract

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)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Apply the appropriate methods, techniques, theories, and vocabularies for analysis and critique of computer games		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2.^	Describe and reflect on the key positions in the debates concerning computer game criticism		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3.	Identify and describe the different categories and purposes of game analysis and game criticism		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4.^	Generate their own scholarly informed and historically aware game analyses, critiques, and reviews		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		100%			

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

A1: Attitude

*Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.*

A2: Ability

*Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.*

A3: Accomplishments

*Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.*

### 3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.						Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
Lectures	Lectures on game analysis and criticism, with in-class playings of games followed by discussion	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Game analysis excercises, essays, and reflection papers	Independent game analysis and criticism excercises making use of assigned readings and resulting in short papers and/or presentations	✓		✓	✓			
Final essay	Final essay: an analysis and/or a critique of a game (or in exceptional cases a series of games)	✓	✓	✓	✓			

### 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.						Weighting	Remarks
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Continuous Assessment: 100%								
In-class participation	✓	✓	✓	✓			5	
Presentations	✓	✓	✓	✓			20	
Short reflection papers	✓	✓	✓	✓			30	
Final essay (in-depth game review)	✓	✓	✓	✓			45	
Examination: 0% (duration: , if applicable)							100%	

## 5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. In-class participation	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate class discussion and comment on other points</li> <li>In-depth pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials</li> <li>Interpret others' views with an open mind and ready to negotiate</li> <li>Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and synthesis with informed views</li> <li>Constructively critical, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points</li> <li>Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials</li> <li>Interpret opinions effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attentive in in-class participation, listening with comprehension, but only infrequently contributing</li> <li>Adequate pre-class preparation but little familiarity with peer reports and other materials</li> <li>Fair ability in interpreting opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people's views</li> <li>Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials</li> <li>Poor ability in interpreting opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher</li> <li>No pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials</li> <li>Minimal ability in interpreting opinions</li> </ul>
2. Presentation	This assessment will grade on content and fluency of presentation. Students should show their co-operation to conduct a well-organized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rich, informative content, excellent grasp of the material with in-depth and extensive knowledge of the subject matter</li> <li>Rigorous organization, coherent structure,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate content with firm grasp of the material that informs the audience on a subject matter</li> <li>Reasonable organization, balanced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate content with comprehensive grasp of the material demonstrating basic knowledge of the subject matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weak content, loose grasp of the general ideas with some knowledge of the subject matter</li> <li>Poor organization,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate content, fail to identify the general ideas with knowledge of the subject matter</li> <li>No organization, structure or/and</li> </ul>

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>and systematic exposition with a strong sense of narrative</li> <li>• Superior presentation skills: distinct pronunciation, fluent expression and appropriate diction, exact time-management</li> <li>• Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>structure and composition</li> <li>• Good verbal communication: comprehensible pronunciation, fluent expression and diction, fair time-management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fair organization, weak structure and composition</li> <li>• Fair presentation skills: acceptable pronunciation, expression and diction, fair time-management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>structure and composition</li> <li>• Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, poor time-management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>composition</li> <li>• Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, minimal time-management</li> </ul>
3. Final Essay	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent grasp of research material, able to explain key concepts, assumptions and debates</li> <li>• Rigorous organization, coherent structure, distinct thesis, properly argued with strong narrative</li> <li>• Insightful interpretation of the subject matter with distinct themes and thesis</li> <li>• Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firm grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts and assumptions</li> <li>• Reasonable organization, balanced structure, adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand</li> <li>• Clear ideas which keep to the point, clear-cut subject, ability to interpret opinions independently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts</li> <li>• Fair organization, weak structure, adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand</li> <li>• Relevant points to the subject matter, fair ability to interpret opinions</li> <li>• Unorganized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loose grasp of materials, cannot explain key concepts</li> <li>• Poor organization and structure, weak content, limited use of resources</li> <li>• Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions</li> <li>• Insufficient and/or unorganized bibliography</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor grasp of materials</li> <li>• No organization and structure, inadequate content, no/irrelevant use of resources</li> <li>• Irrelevant points to the subject matter, minimal ability to interpret opinions</li> <li>• Irrelevant bibliography</li> </ul>

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
		issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools</li> <li>• Strong bibliography suggesting breadth and depth of coverage and informed insights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic</li> </ul>	bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic		

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

**Part III Other Information** (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

**1. Keyword Syllabus**

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

game studies, game analysis, game criticism, game hermeneutics

**2. Reading List**

**2.1 Compulsory Readings**

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

	<u>Journal articles</u>
1.	Aarseth, E. (2004). "Playing Research: Methodological approaches to game analysis." In: <i>Game Approaches Conference 28-29 2003</i> Spilforskning.dk 2004. ISBN 87-990066-1-8
2.	Aarseth, E. (2012) "A Narrative Theory of Games." In <i>FDG 2012 Proceedings of the International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games</i> , 129–33. Raleigh, North Carolina: ACM Press.
3.	Consalvo, M. & Dutton, N. (2006). "Game analysis: Developing a methodological toolkit for the qualitative study of games." <i>Game Studies</i> 6 (1)
4.	Elverdam, C. & Aarseth, E. (2007) "Game Classification and Game Design." <i>Games and Culture</i> 2 (1): 3–22.
5.	Leino, O.T. (2012). "Death Loop as a Feature." <i>Game Studies</i> 12 (2)
6.	Malliet, S. (2007). "Adapting the Principles of Ludology to the Method of Video Game Content Analysis." <i>Game Studies</i> 7 (1)
7.	Wolf, M.J.P. (1997.) "Inventing Space. Toward a Taxonomy of On- and Off-Screen Space in Video Games." <i>Film Quarterly</i> 51 (Fall): 11–23.
	<u>Books</u>
8.	Dovey, J. & Kennedy, H.W. (2006). <i>Game Cultures: Computer Games As New Media: Computer Games as New Media</i> . McGraw-Hill.
9.	Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., Smith, J.H. & Tosca, S.P. (2013) <i>Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction</i> . Routledge.

**2.2 Additional Readings**

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Nil
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