

SM2259: GAME AND PLAY STUDIES

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Game and Play Studies

Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

Course Number

2259

Academic Unit

School of Creative Media (SM)

College/School

School of Creative Media (SM)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

The theory of play 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 is an introduction to the basic theoretical questions

concerning the nature of games and play. Rather than focusing exclusively on digital games, a broad spectrum of play activities will be discussed.

Students will reflect on fundamental concepts like “play” and “games” . Designing with constraints (rules or limitations) is a fruitful approach, not only to the design of games but also in cinema, literature, and other forms. Class discussions and exercises will encourage reflection on the nature, typology, and function of game rules. Students will analyze and modify existing games by changing their rules. The difference between play and everyday life will be considered through exercises that encourage students to design games for everyday public spaces. Social and cultural aspects of games will also be considered.

Although the nature of the course is essentially theoretical, students will be required to produce creative projects to fulfill course requirements. Students are free to choose their preferred creative medium. They can, for instance: design games or toys; create multimedia performances that play with urban space; or develop forms of play in literature, film, or interactive formats. The relationship between theory and practice will always be at the forefront. Students must demonstrate an ability to integrate critical reflection and practical creation; this is the core skill that this course aims to nurture.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Recognise and conceptualise (computer) games as a form of creative media		x	x	
2	Describe the different types of play and to classify games according to these types.		x	x	x
3	Describe the difference between the metaphor of a game and its underlying formal rules and analyze the formal rules of games.		x	x	x
4	Recognise and conceptualise how interactive and digital artworks make use ideas, metaphors and material forms of games		x	x	x
5	Theorize about the social implications of games, the relevance of narrative to game design and the methodology of game analysis.		x	x	x
6	Explore and theorize about how teaching and learning can become more playful or game-like.		x	x	x

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 real-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.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	In-class presentation about their research/creation proposals	In-class presentation and critique of student projects. Students write short documents describing their research and justifying their design decisions.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
2	Gameplay analysis discussion	Play games in class and discuss the nature of gameplay in terms of the rules and challenges of the game.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
3	Game modification exercise	Analysis of the rules of a simple board game and creation of a new game by modifying the rules of an existing game.	3, 4	
4	Discussion on play and creativity	To debate in class how to design a course on creative thinking using game principles.	6	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Writing Exercises	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	40	-	No
2	Oral Presentation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	60	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Minimum Continuous Assessment Passing Requirement (%)

0

Minimum Examination Passing Requirement (%)

0

Additional Information for ATs

The weightings is subject to change. The latest course information will be announced during the lesson.

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Game Modification Exercise / Final Project

Criterion

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.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- 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

Good (B+, B, B-)

- 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

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- 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

Marginal (D)

- 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

Failure (F)

- 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

Assessment Task

2. Research/creation proposals

Criterion

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.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- 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

Good (B+, B, B-)

- 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

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- 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

Marginal (D)

- 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

Failure (F)

- 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

Additional Information for AR

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

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

1. Basic concepts: “Play” , “Game” , and “Toy” .
2. The Magic Circle: Play vs. Everyday Life.
3. The typology of play.
4. Game rules and the nature of challenge.
5. Creativity and constraint: the Oulipo group and “potential” literature.
6. Digital games: their unique characteristics.
7. The study of games: aesthetic and social issues.
8. Interactive narrative: debates about the role of story in games and interactive projects.
9. Games as simulation systems.
10. Games, learning, and cognition.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Morris, Pam (ed). The Bakhtin reader : selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov (London ; New York : E. Arnold, 1994.)
2	Caillois, Roger. Man, play, and games (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 2001)
3	Huizinga, Johann. Homo Ludens : a study of the play-element in culture (London : Routledge, 1998)
4	Roopnarine, Jaipaul L. Conceptual, social-cognitive, and contextual issues in the fields of play (Westport, Conn: Ablex Pub., 2002).
5	Salen, Katie and Zimmerman, Eric. Rules of play : game design fundamentals (Cambridge, Mass. ; London : MIT Press, 2004).

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Sutton-Smith, Brian. The ambiguity of play (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997)