



Course ATEC 4373.001
Course Title Topics in Game Development:
Games and Social Justice
Professor Josef Nguyen
Term Spring 2017
Meetings Mondays, 4:00-6:45PM in ATC 2.101

Professor's Contact Information

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Office Location ATC 1.513
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Office Hours Mondays, 2:00-3:00PM; Tuesdays, 5:00-6:00PM; and by appointment
Other Information Please allow up to 24 hours for responses to emails
Please do not leave voicemail messages on the office phone

General Course Information

Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, & other restrictions ATEC 3353 – Game Studies, or
EMAC 2322 – Theories of Emerging Media and Communication, or
Instructor permission

Course Description This course investigates how games are always political—both as artifacts of as well as opportunities for reimagining existing socioeconomic, material, and cultural forces. Students will play and analyze a range of games informed by readings in social justice by paying attention to uneven distributions of power, violence, opportunity, and care across individual and social differences.

Students will also develop their own social interventions by pursuing original research projects, game designs, and other cultural productions informed by commitments to social justice.

Learning Outcomes Students will:

- Become familiar with a range of discussions, methods, and theories for investigating and understanding games, gaming practices, and social justice
- Develop proficiencies in critical game design and game studies
- Incorporate insights from existing scholarship in game studies and in social justice into their own research and creative practice
- Draw on both theory and practice-based knowledges, investigating how to integrate them together
- Explore and participate in the work of critical, political, activist, and art games

Required Texts & Materials Lucas Pope, *Papers, Please*, [<http://papersplea.se>]
Toby Fox, *Undertale*, [<http://undertale.com>]
anna anthropology, *Dys4ia*, [<https://w.itch.io/dys4ia>]

All readings, free games, and other materials will be available online through the learning management system.

Course Policies

Grading Criteria

3 Critical game analyses (roughly 500 words each)	30%
Intervention proposals (3 pitches)	10%
Final project (research paper, critically-designed game, or other game-related intervention)	40%
Class participation and discussion	20%

Accommodation

Students with disabilities are encouraged to utilize the on-campus resources at the Office of Student AccessAbility. You can contact the office at 972-883-6104 or by email: studentaccessability@utdallas.edu. Their office is located in the Student Service Building (SSB), suite 3.200. They can provide documentation and details for accommodations to address your individual needs. If you need any special accommodations to complete this course successfully, please provide me with this information as soon as possible, so we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Classroom
Citizenship**

It is our responsibility to work together to produce a classroom environment where everyone can share, discuss, and question the materials being discussed respectfully.

Disagreements and conflicting perspectives will, unavoidably, emerge. To ensure that participants feel comfortable voicing a diverse set of thoughts, comments, and views, we will not use oppressive language, tolerate harassment, personal attacks, and other forms of actions and expressions that unduly distract from the educational mission at-hand and inflict emotional, physical, or psychological harm on those involved.

Part of the role of encouraging a diverse learning environment is acknowledging that individuals should feel safe and respected to contribute to the classroom. This involves not only allowing everyone opportunities to contribute their thoughts but to be mindful of how we recognize and address others. Do not assume things about others' identities, backgrounds, or experiences—whether that is age, race, gender, sexuality, class, etc... Refer to people by the names, pronouns, and other identifiers that they prefer. Avoid insisting on imposing identity markers onto others. Allow people to self-identify as they feel comfortable.

Please discuss with me any concerns you have regarding an unsafe or hostile classroom environment, particularly if something arises that causes distress.

**Respectful and
Respectable
Content**

Since you will be creating original projects in this class, it is in your best interest to be thoughtful about the design choices you make regarding narrative, graphics, and other elements of the game that shape the presentation of the core mechanics you are developing. Remember that what you create for this class reflects not only you as a game designer, a student, and a civic subject, but it also reflects on me as your instructor, the class as a development group, and UT Dallas as a community.

In this spirit, avoid creating game content that is gratuitously and graphically violent as well as potentially harmful and insensitive to the experiences and communities of others without clear critical thought and commentary. Inclusion of specific bodies, cultures, communities, and experiences in your games should be done respectfully and respectably.

Late Work

Late work will be penalized 10% (a full letter grade) for each 24-hour period beyond the deadline. If you need an extension, let me know well in advance, so we can make arrangements.

**Academic
Honesty**

All work must be original for this class. Unless you are specifically told to collaborate with classmates, complete your graded work individually. Plagiarism is using the

words and materials of others as if they were your own. It is a serious offense with serious consequences. Use proper citation to indicate the use of other people's work to support and strengthen your own. All suspicions of plagiarism will be investigated.

For more information on academic honesty, please consult <http://www.utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm>

Class Attendance Attend class regularly and in full. Any absences should include documentation of a valid excuse (family or medical emergency, for example). Unexcused absences may impact course grades. Discuss upcoming potential absences with me to make appropriate arrangements.

Arriving more than 30 minutes late or leaving more than 30 minutes early, without prior clearance, may be grounds for marking that day as an absence. Failure to prepare for class participation (such as not having done the necessary reading) will also be regarded as conditions for an absence.

Technology in the Classroom Laptops and computers can be used in the classroom solely for purposes directly pertinent to the activities and discussions at-hand. Do not use computers for other purposes, including but not limited to idle web-surfing, social media management, and completing work for other courses. The use of cell phones is prohibited during class time. I should not see them on your desk or in your hand at any point. Excessive misuse of technology in the classroom will result in an absence for the day.

Campus Carry For more on campus carry policy, see <http://www.utdallas.edu/campuscarry/>

Comet Creed *This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:*

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures *The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.*

Assignments & Academic Calendar

Week 1: Monday, 9 January 2017

Uneven Differences Read:

Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”
Ed Chang, “Cards against Humanity Is ___: Playing with and Playing up Difference in Games,” [<http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/cards-against-humanity-is/>]

Play:

Project Implicit, choose 3 of these tests: Gender-Career IAT; Sexuality IAT; Race IAT; Disability IAT; Weight IAT; Age IAT, [<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>]
merritt kopas, LIM, [<https://a-dire-fawn.itch.io/lim>]

Week 2: Monday, 16 January 2017

NO CLASS in Observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Week 3: Monday, 23 January 2017
Thinking Social Justice
Read:
Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color"
Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation"
Paul Kuttner, "The Problem with that Equity vs. Equality Graphic You're Using," [<http://culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equity-vs-equality-graphic/>]

Play:
Lucas Pope, *Papers, Please*, [<http://papersplea.se/>]

Week 4: Monday, 30 January 2017
Thinking about Games
Read:
Jane McGonigal, "What Exactly is a Game?," *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*
Ian Bogost, "Videogames and Ideological Frames"

Play:
Molleindustria, *Unmanned*, [<http://unmanned.molleindustria.org/>]
Peter Brinson and Kurosh ValaNejad, *The Cat and the Coup*, [<http://www.thecatandthecoup.com/>]

Week 5: Monday, 6 February 2017
Re-evaluating Design
Read:
Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum, "Groundwork for Values at Play" and "Uncovering Values at Play," *Values at Play in Digital Games*
Maryam Tohidi, William Buxton, Ronald Baecker, and Abigail Sellen, "Getting the Right Design and the Design Right"

Week 6: Monday, 13 February 2017
Gamers and Non-Gamers*
Read:
Janine Fron, Tracy Fullerton, Jacquelyn Ford Morie, and Celia Pearce, "The Hegemony of Play"
Adrienne Shaw, "On Not Becoming Gamers: Moving Beyond the Constructed Audience," [<http://adanewmedia.org/2013/06/issue2-shaw/>]

Play:
Toby Fox, *Undertale*, [<http://undertale.com/>]

Week 7: Monday, 20 February 2017
Gender and Sexuality*
Read:
Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins, "Chess for Girls? Feminism and Computer Games"
Amanda Phillips, "Welcome to MY Fantasy Zone: *Bayonetta* and Queer Femme Disturbance," in *Queer Game Studies* (eds. Bonnie Ruberg and Adrienne Shaw)

Play:

Carly A. Kocurek and Allyson Whipple, *Choice: Texas*,
[<http://playchoicetexas.com/>]

Porpentine, *Cry\$tal Warrior Ke\$ha*,
[<http://aliendovecote.com/uploads/twine/kesha.html>]

Nicky Case, *Coming Out Simulator 2014*, [<https://ncase.itch.io/coming-out-simulator-2014>]

Mattie Brice, *Mainichi*, [<http://www.mattiebrice.com/mainichi/>]

Week 8: Monday, 27 February 2017

Ability and Disability*

Read:

Tobin Siebers, "Introduction," *Disability Theory*

Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell, "Disability in Its Social Context," *Digital Disability: The Social Construction of Disability in New Media*

Play:

Bennett Foddy, *QWOP*, [<http://www.foddy.net/Athletics.html>]

Find and play a one-button game (examples include *Flappy Bird* (dotGears) and *Geometry Dash* (Robert Topala))

Find and play an audio game, [<https://www.audiogames.net/>]

Week 9: Monday, 6 March 2017

Control, Consent, and Care*

Read:

Janet Murray, "Agency," *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*

Aaron Trammell and Emma Waldron, "Playing for Intimacy: Love, Lust, and Desire in the Pursuit of Embodied Design," in *Rated M for Mature: Sex and Sexuality in Video Games* (eds. Matthew Wysocki and Evan Lauteria)

Play:

Robert Yang, *Hurt Me Plenty*, [<https://radiatoryang.itch.io/hurt-me-plenty>]

merritt kopas, *HUGPUNX*, [<https://a-dire-fawn.itch.io/hugpunx>]

SPRING BREAK Monday, 13 March 2017

NO CLASS MEETING

Week 10: Monday, 20 March 2017

Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality*

Read:

Tanner Higgin, "Blackless Fantasy: The Disappearance of Race in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games"

David J. Leonard, "High Tech Blackface: Race, Sports Video Games and Becoming the Other"

Evan W. Lauteria, "Affective Structuring and the Role of Race and Nation in *XCOM*," [<http://analoggamestudies.org/2016/01/affective-structuring-and-the-role-of-race-and-nation-in-xcom/>]

Play:

Molleindustria, *Phone Story*, [<http://phonestory.org>]

Bring example of a custom character creator from a digital game (game, video footage, screenshots, other records)

Week 11: Monday, 27 March 2017
Blurring and Bending* Read: Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century"
Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Conciencia de la Mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness," *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Play:
anna anthropy, *Dys4ia*, [<https://w.itch.io/dys4ia>]

Week 12: Monday, 3 April 2017
Devising Interventions Bring three pitches for interventions to share and workshop

Suggested Resources:
anna anthropy, "Making the Games," *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters*
Marc C. Barlet and Steven D. Spohn, "Includification: A Practical Guide to Accessibility," The AbleGamers Foundation,
[http://www.includification.com/AbleGamers_Includification.pdf]
Game Accessibility Guidelines, "Game Accessibility Guidelines,"
[<http://gameaccessibilityguidelines.com/>]
"How to Do a Let's Play: 13 Steps (with Pictures)," wikiHow,
[<http://www.wikihow.com/Do-a-Let's-Play>]
Let's Play Social Justice, Explanatory Pages and Several Posts tagged with #letsplayers, [<http://letsplaysocialjustice.tumblr.com/>]
Mohini Dutta, "Designing for the Other: Serious Games, Its Challenges, and Mindful Play," [<http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/designing-for-the-other/>]

Week 13: Monday, 10 April 2017
Work on Interventions NO CLASS
Work on your interventions in preparation for workshopping

Week 14: Monday, 17 April 2017
In-Progress Workshop #1 First half of students update/workshop their interventions

Week 15: Monday, 24 April 2017
In-Progress Workshop #2 Second half of students update/workshop their interventions

Finals Week Monday, 8 May 2017
NO CLASS MEETING
Research papers and critical projects due by 11:59PM*
*Contact instructor to make arrangements for non-digital submissions

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.