



Course ATCM 4334.HN1
Course Title Topics in CMS: Games and Social Justice (CV Honors)
Professor Dr. Josef Nguyen (he/him/his)
Term Spring 2022
Meetings Tuesdays, 4:00-6:45PM in ATC 3.605

Professor's Contact Information

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Please allow up to 24 hours for responses to emails
Office Location ATC 3.617
Office Hours By appointment
Office Phone 972.883.7552

General Course Information

Restrictions Collegium V Honors

Description This course investigates how games are always deeply political—both as artifacts of as well as interventions in existing socioeconomic and cultural systems of uneven power, violence, oppression, care, support, and justice. Students will critically explore the political stakes of representation, participation, and worldmaking through game design, game playing, and gaming cultures. Students will also develop their own 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 discussions, methods, and theories for investigating games, gaming practices, and social justice
- Advance 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
- Integrate both theory- and practice-based knowledges
- Explore and participate in the work of critical, political, activist, and art games

Required Texts & Materials Course readings, assignments, and other materials are available via Box.
Course announcements will appear on eLearning, on Discord, and by email.

MS Teams will be used for the online class meeting of Week 01 to orient everyone to class protocol as smoothly as possible.

Discord will be used for any online class meetings starting Week 02 as well as to facilitate community during and outside of class. To join the class Discord server, please email the instructor with your Discord handle and four-digit tag (username#0000).

Course Policies

Grading	Thoughtful Class Engagement	50%
Criteria	Assignment 01: Games and Social Justice Primer	10%
	Assignment 02: Gaming Trope Mapping	15%
	Assignment 03: Gaming Intervention	25%

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 Conduct It is our responsibility to work together to produce a classroom environment where everyone can share, discuss, and question the materials at hand as well as contribute their own work respectfully and productively. Conflicting perspectives are unavoidable. To ensure that participants feel comfortable contributing a diverse set of thoughts, comments, and views, we will not use oppressive or harmful language, tolerate harassment, personal attacks, and other forms of actions that unduly distract from the educational mission 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 in good faith. 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, ability, class, etc... Address people by their names, pronouns, and other identifiers that they disclose. Avoid insisting on imposing identity markers onto others. Allow people to self-identify as they feel comfortable.

What you share with and create for this class reflects not only you as both a student and a civic subject, but it also reflects on me as your instructor, the class as a learning community, and UT Dallas as an academic institution.

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

Requirements Related to Public Health Measures UT Dallas will follow the public health and safety guidelines put forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and local public health agencies that are in effect at that time during the Spring 2022_semester. Please consult [\[utdallas.edu/covid/\]](https://utdallas.edu/covid/).

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. Excessive misuse of technology in the classroom will result in an absence for the day.
- Class Materials** The instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course; however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- Class Recordings** Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- Late Work** Late work will be penalized 10% (a full letter grade) for each 24-hour period beyond the deadline and will not receive written feedback by default. For written feedback on a late assignment, please send an email request. If you need an extension, let me know in advance so we can make arrangements.
- Academic Honesty** All work must be original for this class. Plagiarism is using the words and materials of others as if they were your own. It is a serious offense with consequences. Use proper citation to indicate the use of other people's work to strengthen your own. All suspicions of plagiarism will be investigated. Please consult [utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm].
- 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."*
- Academic Support Resources** *The information contained in the following link lists the University's academic support resources for all students. Please go to [go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources].*
- 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 review the sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) grading option and withdrawal from class. Please go to [go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies] for these policies.*

Assignments & Academic Calendar

UNIT 0: BEGINNINGS

Week 01: Tuesday, 18 January 2022 (on MS Teams)
Getting Started IN CLASS:
Overview of Syllabus, Class Protocol, and Introductions

UNIT I: ON GAMES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Week 02: Tuesday, 25 January 2022 (on Discord)
On Constructing Difference BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”
READ: Ed Chang, “Cards against Humanity Is ___: Playing with and Playing up Difference in Games,” [firstpersonscholar.com/cards-against-humanity-is/]
TAKE: Project Implicit, choose and take at least 3 of these tests: Gender-Career IAT; Sexuality IAT; Race IAT; Disability IAT; Weight IAT; Age IAT, [implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html]
IN CLASS:
Introduce Assignment 01: Games and Social Justice Primer

Week 03: Tuesday, 1 February 2022 (on Discord)
On Social Justice and Equity BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (CW – contains discussion of anti-Black violence, sexual assault)
READ: Nancy Fraser, “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation”
PLAY: Momo Pixel, *Hair Nah*, [hairnah.com/]
PLAY: Carly A. Kocurek and Allyson Whipple, *Choice: Texas*, [playchoicetexas.com/]

Week 04: Tuesday, 8 February 2022
On Approaching Games BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Janine Fron, Tracy Fullerton, Jacquelyn Ford Morie, and Celia Pearce, “The Hegemony of Play”
READ: Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum, “Groundwork for Values at Play” and “Uncovering Values at Play,” in *Values at Play in Digital Games*
EXPLORE: Yoko Ono, *Play It by Trust*, [ludwigmuseum.hu/en/work/play-it-trust]
EXPLORE: Setz, *Communist Mario*, [romhacking.net/hacks/2365/]
PLAY: Peter Brinson and Kurosh ValaNejad, *The Cat and the Coup*, [thecatandthecoup.com/] (CW – contains militaristic and gun imagery)

Week 05: Tuesday, 15 February 2022
On Games and Social Justice BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Anna Anthropy, "Making the Games," in *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters: How Freaks, Normals, Amateurs, Artists, Dreamers, Drop-outs, Queers, Housewives, and People Like You Are Taking Back an Art Form*
READ: Amanda Phillips, "Game Studies for Great Justice"

Week 06: Tuesday, 22 February 2022
Work on Assignment 01 **NO CLASS MEETING**
Assignment 01: Games and Social Justice Primer due by 11:59PM

UNIT II: REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSION

Week 07: Tuesday, 1 March 2022
"Gamers" and "Non-Gamers" BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Shira Chess, "Contextualizing Player Two," in *Ready Player Two: Women Gamers and Designed Identity*
READ: Kishonna Gray, "The 'Problem' of Intersectionality in Digital Gaming Culture," in *Intersectional Tech: Black Users in Digital Gaming*
LISTEN: *Not Your Mama's Gamer* Podcast, "Episode 2: Who Ya Callin' Hardcore?" [nymgamer.com/?page_id=53]
WATCH: Nintendo 3DS – Play as You Are Ad Campaign, [youtube.com/watch?v=F38nz8Bfeq4&list=PL7IEKACz2ybZf39_9Vb-p7ZF30A6yN2Es]
EXPLORE: Mark C. Barlet and Steven D. Spohn, "Includification: A Practical Guide to Accessibility," The AbleGamers Foundation, [accessible.games/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/AbleGamers_Includification.pdf]

IN CLASS:

Introduce Assignment 02: Gaming Trope Mapping

Week 08: Tuesday, 8 March 2022
Diverse Representation Matters BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Jennifer Malkowski and TreaAndrea M. Russworm, "Introduction: Identity, Representation, and Video Game Studies beyond the Politics of the Image," *Gaming Representation: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Video Games* (eds. Malkowski and Russworm)
READ: Adrienne Shaw, "Diversity without Defense: Reframing Arguments for Diversity in Games," [kinephanos.ca/2017/diversity-without-defense/]
WATCH: Feminist Frequency, "Damsel in Distress: Part 1 - Tropes vs Women in Video Games," [youtube.com/watch?v=X6p5AZp7r_Q]
(CW – do not read the terrible comments)
BRING: Example of what you consider a progressive representation of a marginalized identity in games

SPRING BREAK Monday, 14 March 2022 – Friday, 18 March 2022
NO CLASS MEETING

Week 09: The Limits of Representation Tuesday, 22 March 2022
BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Robert Yang, “‘If You Walk in Someone Else’s Shoes, then You’ve Taken Their Shoes’: Empathy Machines as Appropriation Machines,” [blog.radiator.debaacle.us/2017/04/if-you-walk-in-someone-elses-shoes-then.html]
READ: Bo Ruberg, “Straight-washing ‘Undertale’: Video Games and the Limits of LGBTQ Representation,” [journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/1516] (CW – contains discussion of homophobia)
READ: Josef Nguyen, “Reconsidering Lost Opportunities for Diverse Representation”
BRING: Example of what you consider a complicated representation of a marginalized identity in games that others regard as progressive

Week 10: Playing with and Because of Others Tuesday, 29 March 2022
BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Patrick Jagoda, “Gamification and Other Forms of Play”
READ: Alenda Chang, “Nonhuman,” in *Playing Nature: Ecology in Video Games*
PLAY: McKinney, *SPENT*, [playspent.org/]
PLAY: Molleindustria, *Phone Story*, [phonestory.org] (CW – contains militaristic and gun imagery, suicide)

Week 11: Work on Assignment 02 Tuesday, 5 April 2022
NO CLASS MEETING
Assignment 02: Gaming Trope Mapping due by 11:59PM

UNIT III: INTERVENTIONS IN GAMING

Week 12: Remaking Games Tuesday, 12 April 2022
BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Mohini Dutta, “Designing for the Other: Serious Games, Its Challenges, and Mindful Play,” [firstpersonscholar.com/designing-for-the-other/]
READ: Alexandrina Agloro, “An Alternate Reality Game, Participatory Politics, and the Color of Civic Engagement,” [public.imaginingamerica.org/blog/article/an-alternate-reality-game-participatory-politics-and-the-color-of-civic-engagement/]
READ: Elizabeth LaPensée, “Video Games Encourage Indigenous Cultural Expression,” [theconversation.com/video-games-encourage-indigenous-cultural-expression-74138]
PLAY: Elizabeth LaPensée et al., *When Rivers Were Trails*, [<https://indianlandtenure.itch.io/when-rivers-were-trails>]

IN CLASS:
Introduce Assignment 03: Gaming Intervention

Week 13: Tuesday, 19 April 2022

Replaying BEFORE CLASS:

Games

READ: Amber Muller, “Queering *Girl Talk* (The Board Game),”

[analoggamestudies.org/2015/07/queering-girl-talk-the-board-game/]

WATCH: NerdyGirlNetwork, “NGNW Episode 1: The Introduction,”

[youtube.com/watch?v=D1BUSCGAj1s]

WATCH: Joseph DeLappe, *Dead-in-Iraq*, [delappe.net/project/dead-in-iraq/] (CW – contains militaristic imagery, gun violence, reference to Islamophobia)

EXPLORE: Wafaa Bilal, *Domestic Tension*, [wafaabilal.com/domestic-tension/] (CW – contains militaristic imagery, gun violence, reference to Islamophobia)

Week 14: Tuesday, 26 April 2022

Reorganizing BEFORE CLASS:

Games

READ: Oscar Moralde, “From Passion to Power: Game Unions and Historical Lessons from Media Labor,”

[firstpersonscholar.com/tag/oscar-moralde/]

EXPLORE: LGBTQ Video Game Archive, [lgbtqgamearchive.com/]

EXPLORE: Meeple Like Us, [meeplelikeus.co.uk/]

EXPLORE: Different Games Collective, [differentgames.org/]

EXPLORE: Game Devs of Color Expo, [gamedevsofcolorexpo.com/]

Week 15: Tuesday, 3 May 2022

Work on **NO CLASS MEETING**

Assignment 03 **Work on Assignment 03: Gaming Intervention**

FINALS WEEK **Assignment 03: Gaming Intervention**

due Friday, 13 May 2022 by 11:59PM

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