



**Course** HONS 3199.HN5  
**Course Title** Collegium V Honors Readings – Toy Cultures  
**Professor** Dr. Josef Nguyen (he/him/his)  
**Term** Spring 2024  
**Meetings** W, 4:00-4:50PM in CB 1.223

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### **PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Email Address** [josef.nguyen@utdallas.edu](mailto:josef.nguyen@utdallas.edu)  
Please format and address all emails regarding the class professionally, include the course information in the subject line, and allow up to 24 hours for responses (and longer for weekends)

**Office Location** ATC 3.617  
**Office Phone** 972.883.7552  
**Office Hours** By email appointment, with in-office and online options

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### **GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION**

**Restriction** Collegium V Honors students only

**Course Description** This Collegium V Honors Reading Course investigates toys as historically and culturally situated technologies of play that negotiate and contest dominant and normative cultural identities, meanings, and relations. Thinking broadly, the course will explore toys of various kinds and in various contexts in order to consider how toys operate as social mediators of meaning and value, including in constructing and shaping conceptions of childhood and adulthood, of work and play, and of the past and the future. Key focus will be paid to the social and material practices of play, the production, advertising, and consumption of toys, toys as markers and as makers of identity, and the meanings that we generate with toys.

**Learning Outcomes** Students will:

- Develop facility with sociohistorically situated close textual analysis of a range of media texts and cultural artifacts
- Advance proficiencies in critical thinking, research, and writing
- Incorporate insights from existing scholarship and media production into their own research and creative practice

**Required Texts & Materials** *Toy Story* (Pixar, 1995) [film]  
*The Lego Movie* (Warner Bros., 2014) [film]  
*Little Inferno* (Tomorrow Corporation, 2012) [digital game]

All other course readings, assignments, and materials are available via Box.

Course announcements are handled on eLearning and sent via email.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

<b>Grading Criteria</b>	Thoughtful Class Engagement	40%
	Personal Toy Reflection Paper	15%
	Toy Cultures Journal	15%
	Toy Cultures Zine	30%

### **Accommodations and Academic Support**

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](mailto: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.

*Additionally, the information contained in the following link lists the University's academic support resources for all students.*

*Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources>.*

### **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.

## HONS 3199.HN5: Collegium V Honors Readings – Toy Cultures

<b>Class Attendance</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<b>Technology in the Classroom</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Class Materials</b>	<p>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 AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation.</p> <p>Additionally, 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.</p> <p>Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the <a href="#">Student Code of Conduct</a>.</p>
<b>Late Work</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Academic Honesty</b>	<p>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 [<a href="http://utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm">utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm</a>].</p>
<b>Comet Creed</b>	<p><i>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:</i></p> <p><i>“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”</i></p>
<b>UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures</b>	<p><i>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 <a href="#">credit/no credit</a> grading option and withdrawal from class.</i></p> <p><i>Please go to <a href="http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies">http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies</a> for these policies.</i></p>

**ASSIGNMENTS & ACADEMIC CALENDAR**

**Week 01: Wednesday, 17 January 2024**

**Getting Started** IN CLASS:  
Syllabus Overview  
Class Introductions

**Week 02: Wednesday, 24 January 2024**

**Toys as Playthings** BEFORE CLASS:  
READ: Miguel Sicart, “Toys,” *Play Matters*

**Week 03: Wednesday, 31 January 2024**

**Toys as Scripts** BEFORE CLASS:  
READ: Robin Bernstein, “Scriptive Things,” *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*

**Week 04: Wednesday, 7 February 2024**

**Toys as Commodities** BEFORE CLASS:  
READ: Ellen Seiter, “Children’s Desires/Mother’s Dilemma: The Social Contexts of Consumption,” *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture*

IN CLASS:  
Introduce Personal Toy Reflection Paper

**Week 05: Wednesday, 14 February 2024**

**Work on Paper** **NO CLASS MEETING**

**Personal Toy Reflection Paper due by 11:59PM**

**Week 06: Wednesday, 21 February 2024**

**Toys as Training** BEFORE CLASS:  
READ: Gary Cross, “Shaping the Child’s Future,” *Kids’ Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood*

IN CLASS:  
Introduce Toy Cultures Journal

**Week 07: Wednesday, 28 February 2024**

**Toys and Labor\*** BEFORE CLASS:  
READ: James Douglas, “The Pixar Theory of Labor,”  
[[theawl.com/2015/07/the-pixar-theory-of-labor/](http://theawl.com/2015/07/the-pixar-theory-of-labor/)]  
WATCH: *Toy Story* (Pixar, 1995)

**Week 08: Wednesday, 6 March 2024**

**Toys and Humanness\*** BEFORE CLASS:  
WATCH: Monstrum, “From Innocent Toys to Nightmare Fuel: The Evolution of Creepy Dolls” (2023),  
[[youtube.com/watch?v=tSwty8ASJto](https://youtube.com/watch?v=tSwty8ASJto)]  
WATCH: Kimbra, “Settle Down” (2010),  
[[youtube.com/watch?v=rBxmidwDy2Y](https://youtube.com/watch?v=rBxmidwDy2Y)]

**SPRING BREAK** **Wednesday, 13 March 2024**  
**NO CLASS MEETING**

**Week 09: Wednesday, 20 March 2024**

**Toys and Creation\*** BEFORE CLASS:

READ: Colin Fanning and Rebecca Mir, “Teaching Tools: Progressive Pedagogy and the History of Construction Play,” *Understanding Minecraft: Essays on Play, Community and Possibilities* (Ed. Nate Garrelts)

WATCH: *The Lego Movie* (Warner Bros., 2014)

IN CLASS:

Introduce Toy Cultures Zine

**Week 10: Wednesday, 27 March 2024**

**Toy Modding,** BEFORE CLASS:

**Part I\*\***

WATCH: Igor Vamos, “The Barbie Liberation Organization” (1994),  
[\[youtube.com/watch?v=DzTWF1jVwH4\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzTWF1jVwH4)

EXPLORE: @socalitybarbie (2015), [\[instagram.com/socalitybarbie\]](https://www.instagram.com/socalitybarbie)

**Week 11: Wednesday, 3 April 2024**

**NO CLASS MEETING**

**Week 12: Wednesday, 10 April 2024**

**Toys and Collecting\*\*** BEFORE CLASS:

READ: Steven E. Jones, “Collecting *Katamari Damacy*,” *The Meaning of Video Games: Gaming and Textual Strategies*

PLAY: *Little Inferno* (Tomorrow Corporation, 2012)

**Week 13: Wednesday, 17 April 2024**

**Toy Modding,** BEFORE CLASS:

**Part II\*\***

READ: Chris York, “Someone Installed See-Saws at the US-Mexico Border So Kids Can Play Together,”

[\[huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/see-saws-us-mexico-border\\_uk\\_5d4023d4e4b0db8affae339e\]](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/see-saws-us-mexico-border_uk_5d4023d4e4b0db8affae339e)

EXPLORE: Wafaa Bilal, *Domestic Tension* (2007),

[\[wafaabilal.com/domestic-tension/\]](https://wafaabilal.com/domestic-tension/)

**Week 14: Wednesday, 24 April 2024**

**Workshop** IN CLASS:

Workshop

**Week 15: Wednesday, 1 May 2024**

**Work on Zine** **NO CLASS MEETING**

**FINALS WEEK** **Toy Cultures Zine due Friday, 10 May 2024 by 11:59PM**

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