Lingnan University
Department of Visual Studies

Course Title: Videogame Theory and Analysis
Course Code: VIS 3003
Recommended Study Year: 3 or 4
No. of Credits/Term: 3
Mode of Tuition: Lecture and tutorial
Class Contact Hours: 2 hours lecture per week, 1 hour tutorial per week
Category in Major Programme: Programme Elective
Prerequisite(s):   N/A
Co-requisite(s):   N/A
Exclusion(s):   N/A
Exemption Requirement(s):   N/A

Course Description

Videogames are increasingly accepted as an art form with cultural legitimacy similar to film
or television. This course aims to improve student understanding of videogames as artworks,
with a focus on learning to write formal analyses of videogames. Students will first learn
theories about aspects of videogames such as gameplay, narrative, and aesthetics. With these
theories, students will learn to analyze in writing how particular videogames achieve their
effects.

This course does not involve creating, designing, or programming videogames, and requires
no technical skills. Students do not need to own or purchase any videogame equipment for
the class. Registered students will be able to access Lingnan-owned videogame consoles and
computers to play assigned games
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Aims

- To enhance student understanding of videogame theory, including concepts such as
  play, game, and videogames, as well as the concepts of narrative, representation, and
  rules
- To understand how visual studies concepts such as genre, conventions, audience, and
  historical context can be used to understand videogames
- To teach students how to write formal analyses of artworks
- To improve students' ability to analyze theoretical arguments and to use concrete
  examples as evidence to support or critique theories

Learning Outcomes

1. Accurately describe, analyze, and evaluate a variety of videogame theories on topics including:
   a. Play, games, and rules
   b. Narrative and representation
   c. Player comprehension, attention, and emotional response
2. Illustrate, evaluate, and critique videogame theories using specific examples
3. Write effective analyses of videogames that meet academic standards of argument, evidence, organization, and justification

Assessment

Assessment will include four components:

Response papers:	15%
Class participation:	20%
Midterm quiz:	25%
Final paper:	40%

- Response papers (15%): students will write weekly responses to assigned reading or assigned videogame play based on prompts provided by the instructor.
- Class participation (20%): student participation is evaluated on multiple factors including attendance, participation in discussion, and tutorial presentations.
- Midterm quiz (25%): the quiz will test student understanding of the concepts discussed in the readings and lecture.
- Final paper (40%): students will write a 1500+ word paper analyzing one or more specific videogame of their choice (subject to assignment requirements).
- Final Grade Scale: A = 93%, A- = 90%, B+ = 87%, B = 83%, B- = 80%, C+ = 77%, C = 73%, C- = 70%, D = 60%, F = <60%
- NOTE: detailed criteria for all assignments will be on the Moodle website

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Outcomes will be assessed using response papers, class participation, exams, and papers.

Assessment Method:
- Response papers: Learning outcomes 1a, 1b, 1c, 2
- Class participation: Learning outcomes 1a, 1b, 1c, 2
- Midterm exam: Learning outcomes 1a, 1b, 1c, 2
- Final paper: Learning outcomes 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 3

Indicative Content

This course will address topic such as:

- How are videogames similar to and distinct from other art forms?
- How can videogames be understood as games, narratives, and aesthetic objects?
- What mental processes do players use to understand and respond to videogames?

- To what degree can videogame creators determine the player's experience, and to what degree do players create their own experience of videogame play?
- How can we evaluate an analysis of a videogames' meanings or effects?

Teaching Method

Lectures, discussion, student presentations, and classroom group work.

Required Reading

Selections from the following sources will be provided to students in electronic form:

Fernández-Vara, Clara. *Introduction to Game Analysis*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
Juul, Jesper. *Half-Real : Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005.
Salen, Katie, and Eric Zimmerman. *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004.
Salen, Katie, and Eric Zimmerman. *The Game Design Reader : A Rules of Play Anthology*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006.
Yee, Nick. *The Proteus Paradox: How Online Games and Virtual Worlds Change Us―And How They Don't*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
Wolf, Mark J. P., ed. *Video Games and Gaming Culture: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016.
Yee, N. "The Psychology of Massively Multi-User Online Role-Playing Games: Motivations, Emotional Investment, Relationships and Problematic Usage." *Avatars at Work and Play*, 2006, 187–207.

Important Notes

(1)　Students are expected to spend a total of 9* hours (i.e. 3* hours of class contact and 6* hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
(2)　Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is "the presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student's own work". Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
(3)　Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
(4)　To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on https://pla.ln.edu.hk/.
* Numbers of hours are subject to adjustment for individual courses.