

Game Studies: Players, Culture, and Industry

MRTS 3630

Fall 2026

Instructor Information	TA Information
Dr. Cameron Irby Email: Cameron.Irby@unt.edu (or message through Canvas) Office & Hours: RTFP 289, Mondays, 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM	N/A

Class Information

Room: RTFP 135 on Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:35 AM to 10: 55 AM

What You'll Be Learning

As an introduction to the academic field of game studies, you will be introduced to some of the theories and methods used to study analog and digital games. We will approach games from different disciplinary viewpoints and from different moments in their production, distribution, and reception. You will learn to read theoretical texts, critically play games, and write thoughtful analyses of each. As the counterpart to ENGL 3225 (Game Studies: Games, Play and Stories), this course utilizes a social sciences lens to reveal how and why video games matter to people and the world not simply as entertainment, but as a communicative medium.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to...

- Strategically read large amounts of theoretical and technical text.
- Compose a mixture of descriptive and analytic writing.
- Recall a variety of academic and industry perspectives on analog and digital games that you will have obtained through careful reading of complex sources.
- Apply academic and industry theories to the analysis of an individual game.
- Play games with a focus on developing audio-visual, ludic, and critical literacies.
- Elaborate on how games matter as a medium, a commodity, a form of communication, a social practice, a human problem, a means of learning, and an art form.

Course Materials

No textbooks are assigned for the course, as I am all too aware of how strenuous textbooks can be for one's financial well being. Instead, all assigned readings will be made available for free via Canvas. All supplemental media for this course will also be available on Canvas or in class, including my slides and other notable resources. This course does *require the use of a computer and Internet* for online assignments and for engaging with the course materials. If this may be an issue for you, please remember that you have access to the University's library network, which can provide both for you. If this requirement impacts your participation in this class, we can discuss alternatives. Additionally, **projects in this course may require you to play games outside of class**. If you do not already have games at home to use, I will provide a list of free or affordable options for your consideration.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty

By participating in this class, you agree to abide by all the standards of academic integrity as found in the [UNT Honor Code](#). In keeping with [UNT policy on AI](#), this course prohibits the use of large language models (LLMs) or other “AI” services to complete assignments, projects, and papers. As such, I also do not use AI services to develop any of my course materials or grade anyone’s work.

Accommodations

I endeavor to make this class accessible to every student, and I pledge to do my best to make this class fit your needs. Regardless of ability or documentation, I can provide multiple points of access to course materials and adjust content formats (e.g. increasing font size). If you need special arrangements for a documented disability, please contact the [Office of Disability Access](#), who can inform me on how best to proceed. If you would like to share pertinent medical information, request special arrangements for class seating, or need special assistance in the event of a building evacuation, please contact me within the first two weeks of class or as soon as an issue arises.

Basic Needs & Security

If you are struggling to secure food or housing, please contact the Dean of Students for support. For immediate food assistance, visit the UNT Food Pantry. For emergency housing needs, contact the [Dean of Students Office](#) or [United Way of Denton County](#). The Student Affairs website also has links to additional [Wellbeing and Safety Services](#). As your instructor, I am ready and able to make course accommodations and assist in providing resources based on your circumstances. If you are comfortable with doing so, please let me know if and when you need help.

Instructor Availability & Response Time

As an adjunct faculty member, I do not have an established office and commute to campus on Mondays and Wednesdays. However, I host “office hours” in [Location] from 12:30pm to 2:30pm on Mondays. Feel free to drop in and chat with me face-to-face during this time. If you would like to make a virtual appointment via Teams, please contact me via email or Canvas. I also generally respond to emails within 24 business hours. If I do not answer your query within 24 hours, you are welcome to remind me, though note that I am a human being who needs sleep and a weekend, too!

Subject to Change Statement

I reserve the right to modify the course requirements and other related policies as circumstances may dictate, and with sufficient notification to all students. Even your professor can have an unanticipated emergency, and the university (or the community at large) may experience an emergency that requires changing the class schedule or requirements. Any changes will also be posted to Canvas.

Campus Resources

You will be writing constantly throughout the semester, and you may find that you want or need help revising your work. I can do my best to assist during office hours, but I have limited time. I thus encourage you to sign-up for in-person or online tutoring at the [UNT Writing Center’s website](#). Academic writing takes time to learn, and even I have to ask for help sometimes! I also highly recommend visiting the [Media Library](#), which houses the UNT Library’s non-print and audiovisual collections (including tabletop games and video games) and [The Nest](#), an eSports and game design space. Since you will need to play games outside of class, this would be a great place to do so or to play a few games with your peers—for research purposes, of course.

Assignment Summaries

Attendance/Participation: 10%

Regular attendance ensures that you have thorough knowledge of the course material. However, I would rather you come to class late than not at all, so your participation in the course will be tracked through a sign-out sheet. Failing to sign out will be registered as an absence without sufficient evidence of participation.

Save File Journals: 20% total

To facilitate our in-class discussions, you will create journal entries that trace your current understanding of the week's topic and record your growing knowledge of the course materials. In addition, you will also keep a record of what games you have been playing and of your reactions to them. These responses can take the form of written text, podcasts, videos, or some equivalent form.

Projects 1-4: 15% each

Our course is divided into four major "modules," covering a group of related topics and associated readings. By the end of each module, you will submit a project that synthesizes our discussions and readings into an original work. You may be asked to write an argumentative essay, create a video essay, or whatever fits the module's overall theme, so be prepared to spend some time working on these!

Final Reflection: 10%

In lieu of a traditional final, you will be tasked with looking back on your time in this class and demonstrating your grasp on the course materials through a reflective essay. This essay will draw from our readings, your Projects, and your Save File Journals to showcase your understanding of those who play games, the ways culture creates & is created by games, and the industries that formed around them.

Grading Policy

As students, you are actively learning how to create academic work, and courses like this frequently find well-traveled students engaging with fresh faces just starting to figure out citation styles. Likewise, granular grading can lead to focusing on making work that looks "good" but lacks the critical thinking this course wants to encourage. To promote transparency in your grades and to encourage taking creative risks, all assignments will be graded along these guidelines (may differ between assignments & projects, so check Canvas for details):

If you believe a grade is applied in error, you may respond with a one-page paper detailing why your grade is incorrect. I will respond as soon as possible (within one week) with a final decision. Note that re-grading does not guarantee a better grade.

Absence Policy

Numerous reasons exist for not attending class, though, ranging from other university business to having tickets for a Hatsune Miku concert. I also do not want students who are ill to feel forced to choose between their health (and the health of the class!) or their grade. If you inform me of your absence prior to the start of class and provide [sufficient evidence in accordance with UNT policy](#), you may be excused and negotiate new due dates for your assignments. In addition, **all students in my classes are granted one (1) "freebie" absence, no questions asked.** You do remain responsible for turning in all assignments by their assigned date, and further unexplained or unexcused absences will lower this grade by half-a-letter grade each. Excessive absences (6 or more) could result in a failure to pass the course.

F - Failed to turn in anything.

D – Dissatisfactory work that does not meet set expectations.

C - Completed the assignment.

B - Completed the assignment and went **Beyond** by referencing class discussions.

A - Completed the assignment, went Beyond by referencing class discussions, and did **Amazing** by drawing citations and references from our readings.

Revision Policy and Late Work

This course features multiple projects that will significantly impact your final grade. At the same time, I am aware that life happens. Perhaps you missed a deadline due to illness or rushed to turn something in while dealing with a family emergency. In recognition of this, I offer a 72-hour grace period for all assignments wherein no penalties will be applied and work can be resubmitted without question. Following this, any late work will not be accepted without talking to me first. If you have verifiable cause (e.g. jury duty, illness) and provide sufficient evidence, we can negotiate a new deadline.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments Due
Week 1	8/17	Class Intro and Q&A	
	8/19	Let's Play: Variety Hour	
Week 2	8/24	"Fun"	Save File 1
	8/26	Let's Play: "Fun" Games	
Week 3	8/31	Game Design Crash Course	Save File 2
	9/2	Let's Jam: One-Page RPGs	
Week 4	9/7	Labor Day (No Class)	
	9/9	More Than Just "Fun"	Save File 3
Week 5	9/14	Media Effects: Violence	Save File 4
	9/16	Let's Play: "Violent" Games	Project 1 Due
Week 6	9/21	Media Effects: Addiction	Save File 5
	9/23	Let's Go: Gambling! (Sort Of)	
Week 7	9/28	Media Effects: Learning	Save File 6
	9/30	Let's Play: Edu-tainment	
Week 8	10/5	Social Gaming	Save File 7
	10/7	Let's Play: Together!	Project 2 Due
Week 9	10/12	Anti-Social Gaming	Save File 8
	10/14	Let's Play: ???	

Week 10	10/19	eSports & Streaming	Save File 9
	10/21	Let's Play: Online?	
Week 11	10/26	Making Games	Save File 10
	10/28	Let's Play: Games of All Sizes	Project 3 Due
Week 12	11/2	Localizing Games	Save File 11
	11/4	Let's Play: アンダーテイル	
Week 13	11/9	Selling Games	Save File 12
	11/11	Let's Play: Dogs and Stars	
Week 14	11/16	Class Choice	Save File 13
	11/18	Let's Play: Class Choice	
Week 15	11/23-29	Fall Break (No Class)	
Week 16	11/30	Catch-Up Week	Save File 14
	12/2	Catch-Up Week	Project 4 Due
Week 17	12/7	Finals Week (No Class)	
	12/9	Finals Week (No Class)	Final Reflection Due