

# **Communication and Virtual Gaming**

## **COMM 4320**

UNT ONLINE COURSE  
Winter Session 2025 - 2026  
**(December 15, 2025 – January 9, 2026)**

### **Instructor Contact**

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Virtual Office Hours: Tuesday 12:00 – 3:00 PM; by appointment

### **Communication Expectations**

Office hours will be maintained through Canvas. You can also schedule one to one Zoom session with me during office hours with prior notice. Additional time outside office hours are available by appointment. It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to schedule an appointment outside of office hours with instructors, and give me at least 48 hours advanced notice of needing a virtual meeting. If you have a private question, please contact me via email and I will respond within 24 hours on weekdays (usually sooner). Please do not expect a response over the weekend. Please use my office phone number as a last resort - but, also, please use it if you need to! Normally, I will return feedback on all written assignments within 3 working days after the due date. Additional communication policies and netiquette for your course are mentioned in the course policy section.

### **Welcome to UNT!**

As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. UNT's full Non-Discrimination Policy can be found in the UNT Policies section of the syllabus.

### **Course Description**

With more than half of the adult population of the nation involved, virtual gaming has already transcended the boundary of mere entertainment. Now-a-days, we use virtual game spaces for social interaction and community development, to perform tasks, to engage in teamwork, and to use them for learning and education. There are questions, speculations, anxieties, and excitement about virtual gaming. What are the factors that transformed video games? Why are people so engaged in gaming activities? How can we use gaming for our benefit? How different are gamers from each other? Does virtual gaming reflect our real-world personality or change it? And the list continues.

This is an introductory course in games studies that covers basic topics in games from an interdisciplinary perspective. It is designed to explore fundamental ideas related to games and gamers from socio-cultural, psychological, and technological viewpoint.

By looking into the history of games, socio-psychological perspectives of sports and games, and the influence of technology on our daily life, this course will shed light into virtual gaming. We will learn the ways to understand games and gamers, and to apply that knowledge in various contexts.

The goals of this course are:

- To develop basic understanding of virtual gaming environment through lessons and activities.
- To learn positive and negative consequences of virtual gaming by analyzing current research.
- To enhance understanding of the role of gaming technologies in communication, specifically focusing on how they change the nature of communication and on their impacts on people's lives and on society.
- To develop analytical abilities to conduct game evaluation by critically analyzing gamer's interests and motives.
- To improve written communication and analytical abilities by developing reports on virtual environment effectiveness through structural analysis of a game.
- To improve creative idea generation skills by identifying drawbacks of a current game environment through analyses and by providing solutions to those problems.
- To develop written communication skills by analyzing games and reporting.

I hope to help you meet these objectives through the following:

- Discussions of reading and lecture materials
- Situation analyses to ensure that you are grasping material
- Three small projects

### **Course Readings**

There is no text book for this course. Course readings will be posted electronically using Canvas.

## **Course Technology & Skills**

### **Technical Skill Requirements**

You will need basic understanding and operational skills to work using computer and the Internet for this course. Basic skills include but not limited to using a web based educational platform (for us Canvas), using MS Office Word, downloading and uploading files, and sending and receiving emails.

### **Technical Assistance**

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

**UIT Help Desk:** UIT Student Help Desk site (<http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm>)

**Email:** [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

**Phone:** 940-565-2324

**In Person:** Sage Hall, Room 130

**Walk-In Availability:** 8am-9pm

**Telephone Availability:**

- Sunday: noon-midnight

- Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight
- Friday: 8am-8pm
- Saturday: 9am-5pm

**Laptop Checkout:** 8am-7pm

For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328) (https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328)

## Rules of Engagement

Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors. Here are some general guidelines:

- While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law will not be tolerated.
- Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in any communication online or face-to-face, even when their opinion differs from your own.
- Ask for and use the correct name and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
- Speak from personal experiences. Use “I” statements to share thoughts and feelings. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or other individual’s experiences.
- Use your critical thinking skills to challenge other people’s ideas, instead of attacking individuals.
- Avoid using all caps while communicating digitally. This may be interpreted as “YELLING!”
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm in emails or discussion posts as tone can be difficult to interpret digitally.
- Avoid using “text-talk” unless explicitly permitted by your instructor.
- Proofread and fact-check your sources.
- Keep in mind that online posts can be permanent, so think first before you type.

See these [Engagement Guidelines](https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) (https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) for more information.

## Course Requirements

### Mini Analyses

These are individual written assignments. Two times during the semester you will be asked to provide an answer to a specific question or an analysis based on a gaming issue. Each of these exercises will pose a different problem for you to solve. You will solve the problem through research, analysis, and evaluation. (130 points total)

### Class Engagement Activities

We will cover a lot of interesting ideas, theories, and cases this semester, and what really makes a course like this one work is your engagement with the class. You will engage by offering your ideas, questions, reactions, and practical suggestions in response to the questions during class discussions, and

by participating in analyses. On six occasions this semester, you will have an opportunity to earn points for successfully completing an engagement activity through discussion boards. If you attend class regularly and have thoroughly read and follow the instructions, you should excel. (70 points total)

**Below is the summary table of your assignments:**

| Summary Table of Assignments |                        |                                  |
|------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Assignment</b>            | <b>Points Possible</b> | <b>Percentage of Final Grade</b> |
| Mini analyses                | <i>130 points</i>      | <i>65%</i>                       |
| Class Engagement Activities  | <i>070 points</i>      | <i>35%</i>                       |
| Total Points Possible        | <i>200 points</i>      | <i>100%</i>                      |

### **Grade determination**

The points in this class are based on the assignments discussed above. Your final grade is based entirely on the sum of those points assigned in the class, and I will adhere rigidly to those points. The points correspond to the following university guidelines: An A is reserved for excellent work; a B is for above average performance; a C is awarded for average work; a D simply means passing, and an F indicates below average, non-passing work.

Final grades will be:

180 - 200 = A

160 - 179 = B

140 - 159 = C

120 - 139 = D

000 - 119 = F

### **Late Work**

Except under the most extreme circumstances (and documentation of those circumstances is required), late work will be penalized. If you encounter an emergency situation of some kind, it is best to communicate with me about it earlier rather than later. ***Late submissions will be graded for half credit.*** This is a severe penalty, but it is better than zero points. It is not fair to others who met the deadlines if I accept your's late. **I will not accept any submissions more than one day late.** Also, no longer are Internet troubles and computer problems reasonable excuses for late papers. I suggest knowing the equipment well enough and allowing ample time in case of problems.

### **Turnaround Time**

I aim to return graded work to you within three working days from the due date. When this is not possible, I will send an announcement to the class.

### **Grade Disputes**

You are required to wait 24 hours before contacting me to dispute a grade. Within that time, I expect that you will review the assignment details and reflect on the quality of the work you turned in. If you would still like to meet, email me to set up a zoom meeting (I cannot discuss grades over email). You should come to our scheduled meeting with specific examples that demonstrate that you earned a higher grade than you received. If you miss your scheduled meeting, you forfeit your right to a grade dispute. **If you do not contact me to schedule a meeting within 48 hours of receiving your grade, you also forfeit your right to a grade dispute.**

## Course Policies

### Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is vital for your success in this course. The course arrangement offers guided self-paced learning. Therefore, daily attendance is not required. However, there is an expectation to check the course Canvas regularly for announcements and updates. All activities have specific deadlines. Students are required to meet those deadlines.

**Health issues impact on Attendance:** While daily attendance is expected as outlined above, it is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community. Please contact me if you are unable to check canvas postings, complete an activity, or take a test on time because you are ill. It is important that you communicate with me prior to being absent so I may make a decision about accommodating your request.

### Netiquette

Engaging in this online course in a professional and respectful manner is your responsibility and also a part of your learning. Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct an online class or other students' opportunity to learn or engage in academic discussion through discussion boards is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be blocked from participating in the online classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>.

Always remember that using computers and other technologies sometimes could be frustrating due to unforeseen problems. Learning, working, and communicating online are often challenging because of impersonality, higher demand for self-management and time management, and technology challenges. Be patient, respect others, and seek help in case of a problem or a difficulty. For general "netiquette" rules, you can refer to sources such as this: **The Core Rules of Netiquette:** <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>.

### Incomplete

Grades of Incomplete are governed by university policy. A faculty member can award an Incomplete only in cases where students meet these conditions: (1) the student has completed 75% of the work for the semester, and (2) the grade is warranted by a military or medical excuse.

### Academic Integrity Policy

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Policies and procedures regarding adjudication of acts of academic dishonesty are available in the UNT Policy Manual at <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>.

**Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools:** Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. All work submitted in this course must be your own. Contributions from anyone or anything else- including learning support platforms cannot be used for course assignments except as explicitly authorized by the instructor. Artificial intelligence (AI) language models, such as ChatGPT, QuillBot, Grammarly Premium, and online assignment help tools and services, such as Chegg® or EduBirdie are examples of online learning support platforms. All sources, must be properly quoted and cited every time they are used (including any AI generated material). Online help tools and services have their place in helping to make our lives easier; these tools can also hurt your capacity to engage in critical thinking. Please talk with me before using any of these tools for this class to ensure that we're in agreement as to how they will affect your work. Submitting all or any part of an assignment statement to an online learning support platform and submitting it as your own work for this class is prohibited. Incorporating any part of an AI generated response in an assignment without proper citation is also prohibited. Failure to do so constitutes an academic integrity violation, and I will follow UNT's policy in those instances.

## **UNT Policies**

### **ADA Policy**

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website](https://disability.unt.edu/) (<https://disability.unt.edu/>).

### **Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)**

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

### **Emergency Notification & Procedures**

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

### **Retention of Student Records**

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however,

information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

### **Acceptable Student Behavior**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's Code of Student Conduct (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>) to learn more.

### **Access to Information - Eagle Connect**

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: [my.unt.edu](https://my.unt.edu). All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail Eagle Connect (<https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect>).

### **Student Evaluation Administration Dates**

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" ([no-reply@iasystem.org](mailto:no-reply@iasystem.org)) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website (<http://spot.unt.edu/>) or email [spot@unt.edu](mailto:spot@unt.edu).

### **Sexual Assault Prevention**

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at [oeo@unt.edu](mailto:oeo@unt.edu) or at (940) 565 2759.

### **Student Verification**

UNT takes measures to protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance education courses by verifying student identity, protecting student privacy, and notifying students of any special meeting times/locations or additional charges associated with student identity verification in distance education courses.

See UNT Policy 07-002 Student Identity Verification, Privacy, and Notification and Distance Education Courses (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002>).

### **Use of Student Work**

A student owns the copyright for all work (e.g. software, photographs, reports, presentations, and email postings) he or she creates within a class and the University is not entitled to use any student work without the student's permission unless all of the following criteria are met:

- The work is used only once.
- The work is not used in its entirety.
- Use of the work does not affect any potential profits from the work.
- The student is not identified.
- The work is identified as student work.

If the use of the work does not meet all of the above criteria, then the University office or department using the work must obtain the student's written permission.

### **Transmission and Recording of Student Images in Electronically-Delivered Courses**

1. No permission is needed from a student for his or her image or voice to be transmitted live via videoconference or streaming media, but all students should be informed when courses are to be conducted using either method of delivery.
2. In the event an instructor records student presentation, he or she must obtain permission from the student using a signed release in order to use the recording for future classes in accordance with the Use of Student-Created Work guidelines above.
3. Instructors who video-record their class lectures with the intention of re-using some or all of recordings for future class offerings must notify students on the course syllabus if students' images may appear on video. Instructors are also advised to provide accommodation for students who do not wish to appear in class recordings.

Example: This course employs lecture capture technology to record class sessions. Students may occasionally appear on video. The lecture recordings will be available to you for study purposes and may also be reused in future course offerings.

No notification is needed if only audio and slide capture is used or if the video only records the instructor's image. However, the instructor is encouraged to let students know the recordings will be available to them for study purposes.

## **Academic Support & Student Services**

### **Student Support Services**

#### *Mental Health*

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- Student Health and Wellness Center (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- Counseling and Testing Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- UNT Care Team (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- UNT Psychiatric Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)



- Individual Counseling (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling>)

#### *Chosen Names*

A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. Below is a list of resources for updating your chosen name at UNT.

- UNT Records
- UNT ID Card
- UNT Email Address
- Legal Name

*\*UNT eulDs cannot be changed at this time. The collaborating offices are working on a process to make this option accessible to UNT community members.*

#### *Additional Student Support Services*

- Registrar (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- Financial Aid (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- Student Legal Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- Career Center (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- Multicultural Center (<https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center>)
- Counseling and Testing Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- Pride Alliance (<https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance>)
- UNT Food Pantry (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>)

#### *Academic Support Services*

- Academic Resource Center (<https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources>)
- Academic Success Center (<https://success.unt.edu/asc>)
- UNT Libraries (<https://library.unt.edu/>)
- Writing Lab (<http://writingcenter.unt.edu/>)

### **Disclaimer**

**This syllabus should not be considered a binding contract on the part of the instructor, who reserves the right to change any aspect of the course without prior notice.**