



ENGL 4200.001: MODERN RHETORICAL STUDIES

Topic: Games as Persuasion

MW 2:00 pm – 3:20 pm | Room: LANG 201
Professor Matthew Heard | Office: LANG 409J
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Office Hours: MW 1 pm – 2 pm

Catalog Description

3 hours. Study of theories, practices and questions raised after the “rhetorical turn” of the 20th century. Prerequisite(s): None.

Course Description

Rhetorical studies has changed profoundly throughout the 20th century, as practices of communication and habits of identification have been altered through revolutionary cultural, technological, and philosophical changes. In this class, we study these changes and consider how **practices of gaming**, particularly, give us new possibilities for acting persuasively on our communities and other audiences.

***Note:** additional syllabus policies posted to Canvas

Basic Information: Welcome to Rhetoric and Writing Studies at 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.

Required Materials

Most of our readings will come from these two books:

HEINRICHS, How to Argue With a Cat. [ISBN 9781635652741](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781635652741)

BOGOST, Persuasive Games. [ISBN 9780262514880](https://doi.org/10.1017/9780262514880)

Additionally, we will have other outside readings posted as PDF files on Canvas.

Absences:

Please plan to make it to class each class period, and please let me know in advance if you will need to miss a class. If you miss more than 10% of classes this semester (3 class periods), I may take points off of your participation grade. Additional absence policies are posted on our Canvas site.

Using Canvas:

I will post our class schedule each week on Canvas, including PDFs for any course readings not in our class textbooks. Please check Canvas before class and throughout the week for updates.

ASSIGNMENTS

Daily Grades and Participation: Our class requires participation and class discussion, and you will receive a grade for the daily work you do in class, including teamwork, discussion, and even just asking questions during lectures. Please plan to show up each class period having done the course readings and ready to ask questions and engage.

Game Briefs and Game Analyses: We will have short, informal writing assignments throughout the semester in order to practice using rhetorical concepts and enjoy others’ experiences with games.

Discussions and Quizzes: Online discussions will be frequent in our class. For each discussion, you will be expected to post a response to the discussion

board on Canvas that includes 3 major components: (1) a response to the question asked; (2) use of a specific class concept; and (3) specific evidence from another source or from your own experience. Quizzes will be given at intervals throughout the semester over course readings and class discussions, as well.

Persuasive Game Design Project: Our final project for the semester will be a class-based team challenge to create a persuasive game using rhetorical principles and concepts we develop in class this semester. Each student will have specific objectives and components to complete, and we will do much of this work in class in the final weeks of the semester.

%	Grading Totals - Weighted Category
25	Game Briefs and Game Analyses
20	Daily Assignments and Participation
25	Discussions and Quizzes
30	Persuasive Game Design Project
100	TOTAL

“Our choices are like ripples on water. They seem tiny and insignificant at the beginning, but they can become devastating tidal waves by the time they run their course.”
Sokrates, AC Odyssey

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Note: Course Schedule subject to change!

Detailed course schedule on Canvas

Week 1: Intro to Course; Prologue – Why Rhetoric?

Week 2: Labor Day; Prologue – Why Games?

World 1-1: What is Modern Rhetoric and What Does it Have to do with Playing Games?

Week 3: Ancient Rhetorics

Week 4: Modern Rhetorics through Games

Week 5: Procedural Rhetoric and Literacy

Week 6: Leveling Up Modern Rhetorics

World 2-1: How do we Analyze and Write About Games Persuasively?

Week 7: Games, Identity, and Culture

Week 8: Gaming Journalism

Week 9: Analyzing Games

Week 10: Writing About Games

World 3-1: How Do We Design and Build Games that Persuade?

Week 11: Game Design and Concepts

Week 12: Designing Persuasive Games

Week 13: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 14: Project Design

Week 15: Project Design and Presentations

Final Exam Week: Exam – Mon Dec 12 1:30-3:30p

Learning Objectives:

- Understand and use Modern Rhetorical Practices
- Use rhetorical practices to talk about games and analyze relevant social issues in gaming
- Intervene in relevant social issues through practices involving rhetoric and games as persuasion

ADA Accommodation

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 at disability.unt.edu.

Late Or Missed Assignments:

All papers are due by class time on the due date (or by the date specified in Canvas). Late work may not be counted, or may be penalized severely for each day late. It is up to you as a student to make arrangements with me. Additionally, I will not grade later major assignments from any students until all previous major assignments have been completed. Note that you cannot pass the course if you have not received a grade for all major assignments. Please meet with me as soon as possible if you miss a deadline for an assignment.

Note: if there is an unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time sensitive assessment activity, I might extend the time windows and provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation.

"Every school of thought and government has failed in this city, but i love it nonetheless. It belongs to me as much as it belongs to you."
-Kim, Disco Elysium

Academic Integrity

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.

Digital Components

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System and the use of an internet browser. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at Learn Anywhere (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

Note: A full, text-based syllabus for our course is available on Canvas.



"I suppose the human reaction would be to maintain "hope," a survival instinct. Having no choice, I shall emulate you."
- Subnautica Below Zero