

Fall 2026 - MRTS 4660.001/5260.001: *Gender and Gaming*

Monday 11:10am - 2:00pm in RTFP 135 (or Willis Library 236, 250H, or 251S)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00am-1:00pm in RTFP 224, or by appointment; remote by request

### **Course Description:**

2014 was a big year for video games, video game industries, and video game cultures. It is when tensions between actors in and around video games finally erupted into what is now known as #GamerGate, where some people pushed back against the increasing strides feminist and casual players made in the 2000s to question what constitutes gamers and games. Since then things have only gotten more complicated! This class approaches the intersections of gaming, gender, sexuality, and race by looking at some of the historical, designed, and discursive origins of the gamer identity, how it led to #GamerGate, and what has happened since.

### **Required Materials:**

- Readings
  - all undergraduate readings are available for free
  - resources on the web - linked URLs provided in this syllabus
  - eBooks through the UNT library - embedded “eLibrary” links provided in this syllabus
- Games
  - Game of your choice (for the short paper)
  - Game/practice/object of your choice for research project

### **Assignments:**

- ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY - A 200-500 word annotation for each course reading/game/video. Each entry provides 1) the complete citation in MLA, Chicago, or APA style, 2) a summary of the text’s argument, and 3) an explanation of connected readings/concepts from this and other courses that you have experienced. (See: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/common\\_writing\\_assignments/annotated\\_bibliographies/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/index.html)). To submit your weekly Annotated Bibliography you must reply to the appropriate Discussion Thread on Canvas. You will also need to submit your entire Annotated Bibliography at the end of the semester through TurnItIn, so you should write in a word processor and copy/paste each week’s entries to Canvas. *Keep in mind the class AI policy.* Weekly entries must be posted by 11:59pm on the Friday after class meets. *The lowest score will be dropped.*
- ARCADE ETHNOGRAPHY NOTES - 3+ pages of notes from your visit to an arcade. These ethnographic field notes need to use thick description by having both descriptive observations and interpretive/reflective considerations.
- SHORT PAPER - Analysis of Representation (2-3 pages; *GRAD*: 3-5 pages). Using the theories of representation we cover during weeks 1-4 analyze the representation of gender, race, class, and/or sexuality within a game of your choice. *This paper can be revised.*
- GROUP POSTER PROJECT: MAGAZINE ANALYSIS + POSTER PRESENTATION - As a group you will analyze 12 magazine issues. Your group will decide what to analyze, code it, create a poster about your findings, and finally present the poster to the class.

- **RESEARCH PROJECT** - A multi-step research project focused on an object of your choice that is related to gaming and gender. Proposal + Bibliography (10 sources - 5+ must be scholarly; *GRAD*: 16 sources - 8+ scholarly), Annotated Bibliography, and Culminating Work (5-7 page paper, 8-15 minute video essay; *GRAD*: 7-15 pages or 15-30 minutes). Alternate formats acceptable with consultation.

**Formula for Final Grade:** Attendance & Participation (20%), Annotated Bibliography + Arcade Ethnography Notes (10%), Short Paper (15%), Group Poster Project (25%), Research Project - Proposal + Bibliography (5%), Research Project - Annotated Bibliography (5%), Research Project - Essay (20%)

### **Late or Missed Assignments:**

Most late work is accepted for one week after the original deadline (peer review and end of term work not accepted late), but will be marked down by one grade point (A→B, etc). Work submitted after the one-week grace period will be marked down by two grade points (A→C, etc). Unsubmitted work will receive a 0. Exceptions may be granted for religious holy days, for active military service, for official university functions, for pregnancy/parenting under Title IX, and for medical or family emergencies. In the event of emergencies, documentation (e.g., doctor's note) must be provided within 1 week following the absence. Upon returning to class you have 1 week to reschedule the exam and/or submit the assignment

### **Attendance and Participation:**

Attendance is mandatory. Attendance may be taken at the beginning and/or end of each class. *Four or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course.* In addition to being in a seat, your grade depends on active participation during class. If you are unable to participate during class please talk to me to work out alternate strategies for participation. Discussing theories during office hours can count as participation!

### **Questions:**

If you have any questions, ask them! Short/simple questions are best through email; long/complex questions are best through office hours. Grades may only be disputed in person during office hours.

### **Problems:**

Please talk to me if you have any problems. Email me immediately if readings are no longer available through the eLibrary, or if the links provided are dead. That said, searching for the text through the library portal (or scholar.google.com) will often solve any broken link problems.

### **VPN:**

The readings are available digitally, but they often require you to be on campus, or to sign in as if you were on campus so that you do not have to pay for the materials. The most common way this happens is through using a VPN (virtual private network). Detailed instructions on setting up a VPN on your computer, tablet, or phone can be found here: [https://itss.untssystem.edu/sites/default/files/campus\\_vpn.pdf](https://itss.untssystem.edu/sites/default/files/campus_vpn.pdf).

**TurnItIn:**

By taking this course students agree that certain required assignments will be subject to submission for textual similarity and AI review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

**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. Using ChatGBT and other forms of AI writing tools is a similar form of academic integrity violation. While some classes utilize AI writing, this class does not. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated. As a minimum, plagiarizing will result in failure for the assignment. It might also result in further sanctions at the university level. Familiarize yourself with the UNT policy at: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>.

**AI Usage:**

As stated in the Academic Integrity policy above, this class does not allow the use of Generative AI tools like Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, etc. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. However, some AI adjacent writing tools like Grammarly are allowed with provisions for the use of writing polish. As noted above in the TurnItIn policy, all work is subject to submission for textual similarity and AI review. In accordance with the UNT Honor Code, if you use Grammarly or a similar writing assistance tool you must disclose your use and submit a clean, initial draft of your paper. Both your initial draft and your final, Grammarly assisted draft must be submitted to TurnItIn. *It is mandatory that you disclose your use and that TurnItIn not detect any use of AI in your initial draft.*

**Disability Accommodations:**

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.

If you require or think you may require accommodations for disabilities, please register with UNT's Office of Disability Accommodation at 940-565-4323, Sage Hall Suite 167, or <https://>

[disability.unt.edu/](http://disability.unt.edu/). If you do not register and request we cannot make arrangements to fit your needs.

### Emergency Notification and 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.

### A Note About Our Inclusive Learning Environment Within the Current Socio-Political and Industrial Moment:

I value the diverse perspectives students bring to our campus, but of equal importance, the game industries benefit from a plurality of perspectives and audiences. As a corollary, if we as a class explore issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion from a critical standpoint within an educational and industrial framework it's important that we do so with care for each other. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together; and the game industries progress with all of us together.

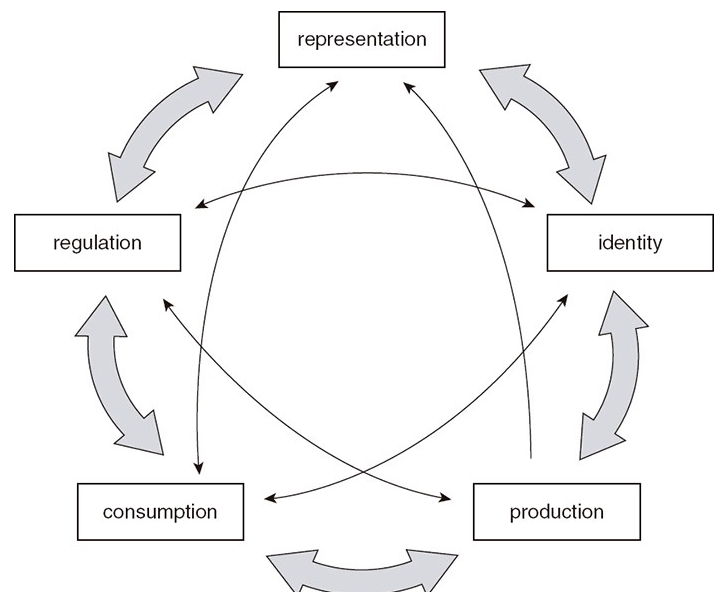
**Content Warning:** This class requires that you are willing to explore issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion from a critical standpoint within an educational framework. If you are unable or unwilling to do this you should think about enrolling in a different class.

**Graduate Level:** Students taking this course at the graduate level must fulfill additional requirements that are denoted in this syllabus by the (**GRAD**) notation. We will also meet at additional times as necessary.

### Schedule:

Week 1 – August 17 – Introduction: Gendered Circuits of Gaming Culture

- **Week 1 Annotated Bibliographical Entries**  
- due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas
- Reading:
  - Stuart Hall. 1997. "Introduction" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*: pp. 1-7.
  - (**GRAD**): Stuart Hall. 1997. Selections from "The Work of Representation" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*: pp. 15-51



## REPRESENTATION

### Week 2 – August 24 – Representation

- **Week 2 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- Readings
  - Anita Sarkeesian. “The Damsel in Distress: Part 1.” In *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*. <https://feministfrequency.com/video/damsel-in-distress-part-1/>
  - Anita Sarkeesian. “Jade.” In *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*. <https://feministfrequency.com/video/jade-beyond-good-evil/>
  - (**GRAD**): Amanda Phillips. 2020. “Gender, Power and the Gamic Gaze: Re-viewing *Portal* and *Bayonetta*.” In *Gamer Trouble: Feminist Confrontations in Digital Culture*. NYU Press: pp. 99-136. [[eLibrary](#)]

### Week 3 – August 31 – Gender

- **Week 3 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- Readings
  - The White House. “Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government.” *The White House*, Presidential Actions. January 20, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/>
  - Michael Z. Newman and John Vanderhoef. “Masculinity.” In Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron eds *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies*. pp. 380-387 [[eLibrary](#)]
  - Carrie Heeter. “Femininity.” In Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron eds *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies*. Routledge: pp. 373-379 [[eLibrary](#)]
  - (**GRAD**): Sara Salih. 2007. “On Judith Butler and Performativity.” in *Sexualities and Communication in Everyday Life: A Reader*. Sage Publications: pp. 55-68. [[pdf](#)]
  - (**GRAD**): Nicholas Taylor and Gerald Vorhees. 2018. “Introduction: Masculinity and Gaming: Mediated Masculinities in Play” in *Masculinities in Play*. Palgrave. [[eLibrary](#)]

*September 7 – Labor Day - No Class*

### Week 4 – September 14 – Intersectionality

- **Week 4 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- Readings
  - Lisa Nakamura. 2017. “Racism, Sexism, and Gaming’s Cruel Optimism.” In *Gaming Representation: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Video Games*. <https://lnakamur.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/racism-sexism-and-gamings-cruel-optimism.pdf>
  - Kristen J. Warner. 2017. “In the Time of Plastic Representation.” *Film Quarterly* 71(2). <https://filmquarterly.org/2017/12/04/in-the-time-of-plastic-representation/>
  - (**GRAD**): Dmitri Williams, Nichole Martins, Mia Consalvo, and James D. Ivory. 2009. “The Virtual Census: Representations of Gender, Race and Age in Video Games.” *New*

*Media and Society* 11(5): pp. 815-834. [<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444809105354>]

## IDENTITY & CONSUMPTION

### Week 5 – September 21 – Gaming in Gendered Spaces

- **Week 5 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- **ARCADE ETHNOGRAPHY NOTES - due by 11:59pm on Canvas on the Monday after class**
- Readings
  - Carly A. Kocurek. 2015. “The Microcosmic Arcade: Playing at the Cultural Vanguard.” In *Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade*. University of Minnesota Press: pp: 1-36. [[eLibrary](#)]
  - (**GRAD**) Henry Jenkins. 1998. “‘Complete Freedom of Movement’: Video Games as Gendered Play Spaces.” In *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games*. Edited by Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins. MIT Press: 262-297. [[eLibrary](#)] [[online](#)]

### Week 6 – September 28 – Construction of the Gamer Identity

- **SHORT PAPER - Analysis of Representation - due by 11:59pm on Canvas**
- (**GRAD**) Carly A. Kocurek. 2015. “Gaming’s Gold Medalists: Twin Galaxies and the Rush to Competitive Gaming” and “Play Saves the Day: TRON, WarGames and the Gamer as Protagonist.” In *Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade*. University of Minnesota Press: pp: 37-65; 115-149. [[eLibrary](#)]
- Films (choose and watch one of the following)
  - *Tron* (1982)
  - *WarGames* (1983)
  - *The Last Starfighter* (1984)

### Week 7 – October 5 – Advertising and Marketing to Boys and Men

- **Weeks 6+7 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- Amanda C. Cote. 2018. “Writing ‘Gamers’: The Gendered Construction of Gamer Identity in *Nintendo Power* (1994–1999).” *Games and Culture* 13(5): pp. 479-503. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1555412015624742>
- (in class) Retromags Database - <https://www.retromags.com>
- (in class) Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive - [[eLibrary](#)]
- (in class) Video Game History Foundation Library - <https://gamehistory.org/vghf-library-launch/>

### Week 8 – October 12 – Magazine Analysis and Poster Workshop

Week 9 – October 19 – Poster Workshop + the Hegemony of Play (technologies, cultures, and production processes)

- **Analysis of Representation REVISIONS - due by 11:59pm on Canvas on Monday after class**
- **Week 9 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- Janine Fron, Tracy Fullerton, Jacquelyn Ford Morie, and Celia Pearce. 2007. "The Hegemony of Play." In *Digital Gaming Research Association: Situated Play*. Tokyo. [[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228528880\\_The\\_Hegemony\\_of\\_Play](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228528880_The_Hegemony_of_Play)]

Week 10 – October 26 – Poster Presentations + Gameplay

**MEET IN THE MEDIA LIBRARY (Willis Library 250H)**

- **POSTERS + POSTER PRESENTATIONS - due at 11:10am to be presented in class; optionally revise and resubmit posters by 11:59pm on Friday, October 30th**

## PRODUCTION & REGULATION

Week 11 – November 2 – Designing for Girls in the 1990s

- **RESEARCH PROJECT - PROPOSAL + BIBLIOGRAPHY - due by 11:59pm on Canvas**
- **Week 11 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- Jack Yarwood. 2023. "The Making of *Barbie* (1991), The Doll's Debut on Nintendo Consoles." *Time Extension*, December 29. <https://www.timeextension.com/features/the-making-of-barbie-1991-the-dolls-debut-on-nintendo-consoles>
- Carly A. Kocurek. 2017. "'Friendship Adventures for Girls': A Pre-History of Emotion Games" in *Brenda Laurel: Pioneering Games for Girls*. Bloomsbury. [[eLibrary](#)]
- **(GRAD): Intro + Conclusion**

Week 12 – November 9 – Designing for Diversity in the 2010s

- **Week 12 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- Shira Chess. 2017. "Playing with Identity" in *Ready Player Two: Women Gamers and Designed Identity*. University of Minnesota Press. [Course Reserves]
- **(GRAD): Intro + Chapter 1**

Week 13 – November 16 – #GamerGate

- **RESEARCH PROJECT - ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY - due by 11:59pm on Canvas**
- **Week 13 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- (skim) Eron Gjoni. 2014. *The Zoe Post*. <https://thezoepost.wordpress.com/>
- Jordan Ephraim. nd. "10 Things You Need To Know About The #GamerGate Scandal." *WhatCulture.com*. <https://whatculture.com/gaming/10-things-need-know-gamergate-scandal>
- Huff Post Live. 2014. "Does #GamerGate Have The Support Of Female Gamers?" via GamerGaters on Steam on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nnuie9zttU>
- Stephen Totilo. 2012. "The Contemptible Games Journalist: Why So Many People Don't Trust The Gaming Press (And Why They're Sometimes Wrong)." *Kotaku*. <https://kotaku.com/the-contemptible-games-journalist-why-so-many-people-d-5957810>
- **(GRAD): Chapter of your choice: *The Toxic Meritocracy of Video Games* [pdf]; *Gaming at the Edge* [[eLibrary](#)]; or *Gamer Trouble* [[eLibrary](#)]**

*November 23-29 – Thanksgiving Break - No Class*

Week 14 – December 7 – Woke Gaming and the Anti-Woke Backlash

***MEET IN THE MEDIA LIBRARY (Willis Library 250H)***

- **Week 14 Annotated Bibliographical Entries - due by Friday 11:59pm on Canvas**
- **Upload complete Annotated Bibliography to Canvas by Friday 11:59pm**
- Mike Drucker. 2024. "I'm Personally Going to Force Game Companies to Put in All that Stuff You Hate." *The Gamer*. June 16. <https://www.thegamer.com/im-putting-the-things-you-gate-in-games-woke-dei/>
- Douglas Blair. 2024. "Politics-Free 'Black Myth' Sells 10 Million In Three Days As DEI Games 'Dustborn' And 'Concord' Flop." *The Federalist*. September 2. <https://thefederalist.com/2024/09/02/politics-free-black-myth-sells-10-million-in-three-days-as-dei-games-dustborn-and-concord-flop/>

Finals Week

- **RESEARCH PROJECT - CULMINATING WORK - due on December 11th by 11:59pm on Canvas**