

MEVIT2725 – Video Games: Aesthetics, Industry and Culture

Assessment guidelines, spring 2021

The exam consists of two assignments, and the candidate must answer both. The assignments count 50/50 in the evaluation. The candidate must ensure that the two assignments are of approximately equal length in the paper (approximately 5 pages for each assignment). Significant discrepancies in this page distribution must not occur. Standard rules and principles for academic writing apply. Both assignments must meet at least the minimum requirements for a passing grade (E) in order for the candidate to pass the exam in its entirety. If one assignment is evaluated as a fail, the entire paper receives an F.

The first assignment is the same for all candidates and the second assignment offers a choice between two types of analysis. These two analysis types have the same formal requirements and test the same types of academic skills (analysis, interpretation and discussion), but differ in themes and subject matter. The candidate must actively and explicitly use the syllabus literature in both assignments. The candidate should use both the textbook and relevant articles throughout. Mark Brown's videos from The Game Maker's Toolkit can be used as supplementary sources. Secondary sources (like SNL, Wikipedia, other online sources or other textbooks) or lecture slides must not be used as sources to define terms and theories already covered in the syllabus literature. Some references to lecture slides are allowed for the representation analysis since the lecture on game representation included some content not covered in the syllabus literature.

The following paragraphs will list what to look for in terms of content and focus. Due to page restrictions, the candidate is not expected to and should not include everything that is listed below. It is important that the candidate demonstrates a general understanding of the area the assignment asks for and that they are able to focus on aspects that are most central to and relevant for their chosen examples and cases.

Assignment 1

Assignment 1 is about metaculture in gaming. The candidate should demonstrate a general understanding of what metaculture is, various manifestations of it in game culture, and reflect on how and why video games enable such practices. The candidate must connect gaming metaculture to significant game historical developments. Relevant aspects include technological developments, the internet, game communities and various creative and helpful player practices. The candidate should use most of the paper to discuss and exemplify central opportunities and challenges for both players and the game industry. Relevant aspects include in-game and out-of-game communities, modification of games (modding), player-created games, digital genres and experiments, and economic and copyright issues.

Assignment 2

The candidate can choose to conduct a narrative analysis or a representation analysis of a video game of their own choice. The game must be appropriate for the selected type of analysis, and the candidate must explain why the game is academically relevant/interesting. If the game seems inappropriate or unconventional (for example, choosing to conduct a narrative analysis on a mostly non-narrative game), the candidate must convincingly argue for its relevance/appropriateness and why the type of analysis is useful for understanding the game. Both analysis types ask the candidate to formulate a specific question for the analysis of the game. The course teachings have not focused on how to formulate good research questions. Thus, in the evaluation, the relevance of the question is more important than the quality of it. It is important that the question focuses on what is particular for the candidate's chosen game and that it helps narrow and concentrate the aim of the analysis. The question must not be formulated in a way that directs the candidate away from what the assignment asks for.

Relevant terms and theories should be explained briefly. It is important that the paper is an analysis and interpretation of a game using relevant syllabus subject matter, not a general exposition on various syllabus subject matter. Both analysis types ask the candidate to discuss the relationship between gameplay and the theme of the analysis. Thus, the candidate must demonstrate knowledge of and ability to use relevant game aesthetic terms, such as game rules and structures, genres, mechanics, interfaces, geography, perspectives, graphical styles, sound and music.

For a narrative analysis, the following is relevant to include: definitions of narratives; similarities and differences between games and narratives; Aarseth's ludonarrative model (world, objects, agents and events); narrative mechanics such as cutscenes, characters, branching, choices and quests; emergent narratives and storytelling through landscapes.

For a representation analysis, the following is relevant to include: definition of representation; game representation specifics; historical and current representations of male and female characters; types of LGBTQ+ content in games; race/ethnicity in games; species in games; diversity; aesthetic pluralism; optional content; conditional sexuality.

Syllabus literature:

Books

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S. (2020) *Understanding video games : the essential introduction*. Fourth edition. New York, New York ; London ; New York, New York ; London :, Routledge.

Articles and book chapters

Aarseth, E. (2012) *A narrative theory of games*. [Online]. ACM. Available from: doi:10.1145/2282338.2282365.

Braithwaite, A. (2016) It's About Ethics in Games Journalism? Gamergaters and Geek Masculinity. *Social Media + Society*. [Online] 2 (4). Available from: doi:10.1177/2056305116672484.

Carr, D. (2009) *Textual analysis, digital games, zombies*. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/textual-analysis-digital-games-zombies/>.

Consalvo, M. & Dutton, N. (2006) Game analysis: Developing a methodological toolkit for the qualitative study of games. *Game Studies*. [Online] 6 (1). Available from: http://gamestudies.org/06010601/articles/consalvo_dutton.

Eskelinen, M. (2001) The Gaming Situation. *Game Studies*. [Online] 1 (1). Available from: <http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/eskelinen/>.

Fisher, H.D. (2015) Sexy, Dangerous—and Ignored: An In-depth Review of the Representation of Women in Select Video game Magazines. *Games and Culture*. [Online] 10 (6), 551–570. Available from: doi:10.1177/1555412014566234.

Jagoda, P. (2018) On Difficulty in Video Games. Mechanics, Interpretation, Affect. *Critical Inquiry*. [Online] 45 (1), 199–233. Available from: doi:10.1086/699585.

Jørgensen, K. (2012) Between the Game System and the Fictional World: A Study of Computer Game Interfaces. *Games and Culture*. [Online] 7 (2), 142–163. Available from: doi:10.1177/1555412012440315.

Peter (Editor) Zackariasson, Timothy (Editor) Wilson, Peter. Zackariasson, & Timothy L.. Wilson (red.) (2012b) This Is Not a Software Industry: Casey O'Donnell. I: *The Video game industry : formation, present state, and future*. [Online]. New York, Routledge. s. 26–42. Available from: doi:10.4324/9780203106495-9.

Peter (Editor) Zackariasson, Timothy (Editor) Wilson, Peter. Zackariasson, & Timothy L.. Wilson (red.) (2012a) The North American Game Industry: Casey O'Donnell. I: *The Video game industry : formation, present state, and future*. [Online]. New York, Routledge. s. 106–122. Available from: doi:10.4324/9780203106495-14.

Prax, P. & Soler, A. (2016) Critical Alternative Journalism from the Perspective of Game Journalists. *Proceedings of 1st International Joint Conference of DiGRA and FDG*. [Online] 13 (1), 1–15. Available from: <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/critical-alternative-journalism-from-the-perspective-of-game-journalists/>.

Shaw, A. & Friesem, E. (2016) Where Is the Queerness in Games? Types of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Content in Digital Games. *International Journal Of Communication*. 10, 3877–3889.

Shaw, A. (2009) Putting the Gay in Games: Cultural Production and GLBT Content in Video Games. *Games and Culture*. [Online] 4 (3), 228–253. Available from: doi:10.1177/1555412009339729.

Srauy, S. (2019) Professional Norms and Race in the North American Video Game Industry. *Games and Culture*. [Online] 14 (5), 478–497. Available from: doi:10.1177/1555412017708936.

Videos

Mark Brown (2016b) *Nintendo - Putting Play First | Game Maker's Toolkit*. [Online]. s.12:01. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2u6HTG8LuXQ&feature=youtu.be>.

Mark Brown (2018b) *The Rise of the Systemic Game | Game Maker's Toolkit*. [Online]. s.12:49. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnpAAX9CkIc>.

Mark Brown (2016a) *Controllers Control Everything | Game Maker's Toolkit*. [Online]. s.9:19. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJGKDyrR8qc>.

Mark Brown (2018a) *How to Keep Players Engaged (Without Being Evil) | Game Maker's Toolkit*. [Online]. s.10:45. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbzGO_Qonu0.