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Syllabus

Note: If you have a disability that may require an accommodation for taking this course, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) within the first two weeks of the semester.

General Course Objectives:

- To engage students in critical reading, discussion, and writing
- To explore subjects of interest while pursuing the above objectives

Course Objectives Regarding the Subject of Interest:

The subject of interest of this seminar surrounds computer games, specifically, the formal aspects of the computer game, the computer game in society and culture, and the economic impact of the computer game. These goals are elaborated as follows.

- Look at games critically. Analyze some popular games from: (1) the computer scientist's point of view (human-computer interaction, speed of computer graphics, network speed, artificial intelligence, texture mapping, and particles), (2) the artist's points of view (aesthetics, emotion, and storytelling), and (3) the social scientist's points of view (the gamer culture, sense of community, psychology and gender issues); and (4) from the economic point of view (how are computer games brought to market: research & development, financing, channels of distribution, and marketing.)
- Explore in what ways studies of computer games deserve more serious evaluation, and can be treated as a scholarly research as are films and music.
- Discuss the possible evolution of video games as poetic and aesthetic forms of art. What does it take to make a game poetic and thought-provoking? Is it possible? Why or why not?
- Examine the game culture phenomenon, the impact of computer games to our lives, and how our culture and psychological needs may be driving the direction of the computer game industry.
- Examine how the game play may reflect our lives and our inner self. For examples, are computer games making people more solitary or social? Why are multi-player games and role-playing games becoming so popular? What are the kinds of social interaction and sense of community that the players thrive for in the virtual world? How are these kinds of socialization different from the real world?
- Discuss what defines a "game." What are the ingredients of a game? Are games necessarily competitive? Must there be a winner and a loser?
- Understand technical issues for good computer games, such as game design, human-computer interaction and computer programming.
- Research what the qualifications of game programmers are. What exactly are the roles of game programmers in game industries?
- Research and examine several game entrepreneurs' courses of game development -- evolving from ideas to reality -- as well as the passion it took to do so.

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Format of the Course:

The format of classroom activities take the form of a seminar setting. Most of the classroom time involve discussion on issues and examination of opposing viewpoints. In addition, there will be writing assignments, total about 20 to 30 pages. Both the classroom discussion and the writing assignment aim to provide students opportunities to articulate their ideas and thoughts, and exercise critical thinking and analysis of arguments.

- Examine opposing viewpoints:
In addition to helping students to make explicit their ideas and thoughts, the writing assignments also require the students to include discussion and examination of opposing viewpoints expressed by other students. This is to train the students to listen to others' opinions during discussion and acknowledge different viewpoints in their

writings.

- Literature research:

The writing assignments also require students to conduct literature research and quote the credible sources to provide a basis in constructing and supporting their rationales and arguments.

There will be one to two library instructional sessions in literature research.

- Encourage creative thinking and open-mindedness to comments:

Each student will be required to propose and design his/her "ideal" computer game.

The students will need to present their ideas, vision, and intellectual justifications clearly in writing and as an oral class presentation at the end of the semester. This writing assignment will require students to incorporate the examination and analysis of games, from the perspectives of computer science, art, and humanities. Class discussion encourages students to contribute constructive comments and take into consideration of comments from other students. Students will have the opportunity to revise their game ideas and turn in a revised writing after the discussion. Dr. Wong will also give feedback and advice for the first draft. Students with similar ideas are encouraged to pair up to work on their ideas. But they are still required to turn in the writing assignment separately.

- Learn to write scholarly reviews:

There will be reading assignments on scholarly articles on films and video games for students to learn the writing style of critics. Students will analyze and discuss the approach of the writings, and then apply it to writing a review of a game.

Textbooks:

- Mark J. P. Wolf (ed.), *The Medium of Video Games*. University of Texas Press: 2002. ISBN 029279150X
- Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (ed.), *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*. MIT Press: 2005. ISBN 0-262-18240-8

References:

- **Reading for Computer Algorithms:** Selected sections from: J. Glenn Brookshear, *Computer Science : An Overview* (8th Edition) ISBN 0321247264
- **Video Game History and Video Game Creators :** Selected TV episodes of *G4TV Icons*.

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Evaluation:

25%: full papers (2 full papers; total about 15 -17 pages) + an oral presentation

25%: short papers (2 short papers; total about 6-7 pages)

25%: pre-class assignments + an 3d animation project including a presentation + game programming exercises

25%: class participation (attendance and contribution in class discussion)

Attendance and Class Participation:

Unexcused absence of **more than one-fourth** of the class will make the attendance part of the grade **zero point**.

For the excused absence, you will need to turn in a 1-page write-up of what you might have talked about in class if you had not missed the class. You will also need to share with the class about your viewpoints and opinions in the following class.

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