

## VIDEO GAMES

CMN 176v

Winter 2021

### Lecture

Online videos will be released Mondays at 9am

### Zoom Discussion sections

Thursdays 3:30 – 4:30pm

### Professor

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Office hours: M 1pm-2pm  
and by appointment

### Teaching assistant

Jeffrey Tseng  
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F 4-5pm and by appointment

### Overview

This course examines the impact of video games on players and society. Topics include motivations for playing games, gender differences and portrayals, eSports, identification, moral choices, and cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects. The course also discusses interpersonal communication in online games, along with the use of avatars and virtual reality for persuasive, health, and educational purposes.

### Course objectives

- To review scientific studies investigating the uses and effects of playing video games.
- To learn and apply basic social science theories and research principles to the study of video games.
- To link scientific studies with students' personal experiences with video games.

### Required readings

Each week's required readings will consist of research and news articles related to a given topic. Each reading is associated with an entry in the schedule provided below. Read according to the schedule provided below. Download from Canvas (Canvas->Files->Readings).

### Prerequisites and grading system

There are no pre-requisites. Basic knowledge in research methods may help with understanding course contents. This is a letter grade course.

### Grading summary

- Virtual attendance: 20%
- Cumulative final exam: 20%
- Quizzes and discussion section assignments: 60%
- Extra credit

### Student evaluations

- (1) *Virtual attendance:* Video lecture(s) are available on a weekly basis. Please watch until the end to score attendance points. Watch each video until the very end, otherwise Canvas will not record your points.
- (2) *Quizzes and final exam:* Weekly quizzes and a cumulative final exam consist of multiple-choice questions, true/false statements, etc. They will cover information seen in class

and in the readings. The final exam will be a comprehensive examination. The final exam is cumulative and covers all content seen. There are no makeup exams except in cases of documented illness or personal crisis. Job interviews and doctor appointments do not count as excused absences. Contact Dr. Peña **before** missing an examination because of illness or family issues. There will be no makeup exams if you fail to provide prior notice to the instructor. There are no makeup exams except in cases of illness or personal crisis. Job interviews and personal appointment do not count as excused absences. There will be no alternative exam or quiz dates; if you have tests in other classes then please plan ahead. Cheating in any other form will also result in failing the test. There will be no extra time for students who started their tests late.

- (3) *Discussion sections and quizzes:* Students will engage class content in discussion sections. In addition, students will answer quizzes and turn in reports addressing topics and questions proposed by the instructor. There will be no makeups; students that miss a lecture or discussion section activity cannot turn in late work. Some activities do not appear in the schedule below in order to discourage students from skipping lectures and discussion sessions. There will be no extra time for students arriving late.
- (4) *Extra credit:* Your participation in ongoing faculty or student research conducted through the Department of Communication is highly appreciated and encouraged. For each hour you participate in this research (up to a maximum of three hours), you will receive one extra point to your final total course score for the semester (up to a maximum of three extra points per semester). There are no guarantees that extra credit opportunities will be available for all students. If available, please sign up early for extra credit. There will be no alternative extra credit options; you can only get extra credit by participating in research studies.
  - Please sign up here if you need or want to earn extra credit <https://ucdavis.sona-systems.com/Default.aspx?ReturnUrl=/>
  - You can find more information about Sona here: <http://pscresearch.faculty.ucdavis.edu/extra-credit/>

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are responsible for abiding by the UC Davis Code of Conduct. Please be aware, instructors may now apply a grade of “F” for the course, not just the assignment/exam in question, for academic misconduct.

In this course, any work submitted by a student for academic credit will be the individual student's own work. Any work submitted by students must be crafted specifically for this course, unless you have permission from the instructor. Plagiarism, or any other type of unethical behavior, will result in dismissal from the course and related disciplinary actions. Copying someone else's work and using online databases will be treated as an academic misconduct. Coordinating to take online quizzes and exams with others will also be treated as an academic misconduct.

Campus now requires students to verify that they have begun each course for which they are registered via the *Academic Participation Program*. Please be certain to complete your course verification before the quarter add deadline. Failure to do so may result in reduction of financial aid awards. Please see [participate.ucdavis.edu](http://participate.ucdavis.edu) for details and to verify your course(s). Pictures sent from the emergency room do not constitute proper documentation.

### **Equal Treatment**

No student will be given an opportunity to improve a grade that is not made available to all members of the class. This policy applies to requests for special treatment both before and after the course is completed. Unacceptable requests include additional “extra credit” work, retaking an exam, rewriting an assignment, an extension of time on an assignment or exam, or asking for a grade boost.

This policy is not intended to exclude reasonable accommodation of verified student disability. If you have a documented disability or educational need that you believe will affect your performance in this course, please see below.

### **Special Accommodations**

If you determine that academic or physical disability-related accommodations are necessary, please register and coordinate with the Student Disability Center (<https://sdc.ucdavis.edu>) to gain access to special accommodations.

### **Copyright**

My lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, videos, and other educational materials are protected by U.S. copyright law and by University policy. I am the exclusive owner of the copyright in those materials I create. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own use. You may also share those materials with another student who is enrolled in or auditing this course.

You may not reproduce, distribute or display (post/upload) lecture notes or recordings or course materials in any other way — whether or not a fee is charged — without my express prior written consent. You also may not allow others to do so. If you do so, you may be subject to student conduct proceedings under the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct. Similarly, you own the copyright to your original essays. If I am interested in posting your answers or papers on the course web site, I will ask for your written permission.

### **Disclaimer**

This syllabus represents a “best” plan for the course; but, as with most plans, it is subject to change. Any necessary changes in this syllabus will be announced to the class via Canvas.

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| Topic                    | Readings  |
|--------------------------|---|
| Motivations<br>January 4 |   |
| Motivations<br>January 7 | Read this paper<br>Kahn, A. S., Shen, C., Lu, L., Ratan, R. A., Coary, S., Hou, J., Meng, J., Osborn, J., & Williams, D. (2015). The Trojan player typology: A cross-genre, cross-cultural, behaviorally validated scale of video game play motivations. <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i> , 49, 354-361.<br><a href="https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.03.018">https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.03.018</a> |

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Uses and gratifications  
January 11

Uses and gratifications    Read this paper  
January 14                    Sjöblom, M., & Hamari, J. (2016). Why do people watch others play video games? An empirical study on the motivations of Twitch users. *Computers in Human Behavior*.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.10.019>

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Gender  
January 18

Gender                            Read this paper  
January 21                    Kowert, R., Breuer, J., & Quandt, T. (2017). Women are from FarmVille, men are from ViceCity. The cycle of exclusion and sexism in video game content and culture. *New perspectives on the social aspects of digital gaming. Multiplayer, 2*.

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eSports  
January 25

eSports                            Read this paper  
January 28                    Bányai, F., Griffiths, M.D., Király, O. *et al.* The psychology of Esports: A Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 35*, 351–365 (2019).  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-018-9763-1>

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Identification  
February 1

Identification                    Read this paper  
February 4                    Downs, E., Bowman, N. D., & Banks, J. (2019). A polythetic model of player-avatar identification: Synthesizing multiple mechanisms. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 8*(3), 269-279.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000170>

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Moral choice  
February 8

Moral choice                    Read this paper  
February 11                    Boyan, A. Grizzard, M., & Bowman, N. D. (2015). A massively moral game? Mass Effect as a case study to understand the influence of players' moral intuitions on adherence to hero or antihero play styles. *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds, 7*, 41-57.

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Cognitive effects  
February 15

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| Cognitive effects<br>February 18 | Read this paper<br>Green C. S. (2018). <i>Video games and cognitive skills</i> . In N. D. Bowman (Ed.), <i>Video games: A medium that demands attention</i> , (pp. 25-43). New York: Routledge. |
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| In-game advertising<br>February 22 |   |
| In-game advertising<br>February 25 | Read this paper<br>Dardis, F. E., Schmierbach, M., Sherrick, B., Waddell, F., Aviles, J., Kumble, S., & Bailey, E. (2016). Adver-where? Comparing the effectiveness of banner ads and video ads in online video games. <i>Journal of Interactive Advertising</i> , 16(2), 87-100. doi:10.1080/15252019.2016.1223572 |

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| Online games<br>March 1 |   |
| Online games<br>March 4 | Read this paper<br>Domahidi, E., Breuer, J., Kowert, R., Festl, R., & Quandt, T. (2018). A longitudinal analysis of gaming- and non-gaming-related friendships and social support among social online game players. <i>Media Psychology</i> , 21(2), 288-307. doi:10.1080/15213269.2016.1257393 |

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| The virtual self<br>March 8  |   |
| The virtual self<br>March 11 | Read this paper<br>Peña, J. (2020). The Proteus effect. In J. Van den Bulk, D. Ewoldsen, E. Scharrer, and E. Mares (Eds.), <i>The international encyclopedia of media psychology</i> . Wiley. |

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| March 15                         | Final presentation and paper due date            |
| Final examination<br>March 16-17 | <b>Book an Examiy appointment through Canvas</b> |

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