HNRS 122 Reading the Arts: Expression in Video Games

Fall 2018 Section 001 – MW 9-10:15am, Robinson B368

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Office hours: By appointment (email me to set up an appointment)

Course Description:

This course will examine video games and expression, including expression manifestation in color choice, lighting, animation, pacing, dialogue, environmental storytelling, and character design. We will also look at video games as a form of expression for both game designers and players. Finally, we will discuss the influence of society on video games and the influence of video games on society.

Course Objectives:

• Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic process and a work’s underlying concept, and where appropriate, contexts associated with the work.
• Identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary and critique appropriate to that art form.
• Engage in generative artistic processes, including conception, creation, and ongoing critical analysis.

Readings:

Students will be given specific reading assignments which they will be expected to have read before class. Failure to do so will greatly compromise students’ ability to do well on class writings, quizzes, papers, and in-class activities.

Late Work:

Late work will be accepted, but the grade for the assignment will be dropped one full letter grade for every day it is late. Work is always due at the beginning of class (with the exception of in-class assignments). If it is not turned in at the beginning of class, it is considered one day late.

Participation:

Participation is a vital part of this course. It is not only part of your grade, but also an important part of the learning experience. Students are expected to come prepared to discuss the course readings and subjects covered in class with well-thought-out and examined questions and comments.

Technology:

I will only use your Mason email addresses. Readings, course updates, information on assignments and examinations will be available on Blackboard.

Please be respectful of your peers and your instructor when using electronic devices.

• Cell phones must be put on silent.
• Please do not engage in activities that are unrelated to class. Such disruptions show a lack of professionalism and may affect your participation grade.

Honor Code and Academic Honesty:

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment,
ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

Disability Accommodations:

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ds.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Other Student Support Resources: https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus

Grading:

- Participation and Quizzes 10%
- Assignments 30%
- Mid-term Project 20%
- Final Project 40%

Assignments: Most assignments will be short writing assignments (250-300 words) critically exploring a topic.

Tentative Topics:

- Introduction to the class and game design
- Structure of games
- Formal elements
- Dramatic elements
- Environmental storytelling
- Level design
- Character design
- Animation
- Color choice and lighting
- Graphic design
- Games and society