Video Games as a Cultural Practice

So why am I here and what exactly am I supposed to learn?

Video games have become ingrained in 21st century American culture similar to the manner in which television became a part of 20th century culture. Currently there is much debate about the problems, benefits, and general effects of video games and gaming practices. Some of the issues presently being examined are those of violence, gender and ethnic discrimination, and educational/literacy factors. We will be examining these issues, as well as social responses to video gaming as a cultural practice.

What are the goals for this class?

This class is designed with several objectives in mind: (1) to help you learn how to enhance and complement your writing with visual and verbal forms of communication, understand and experience the composing process in written, visual and verbal communication, as well as to experience a range of written, visual, and verbal genres, (2) to study and come to some understanding of video gaming and the literacy skills that young people are learning in the gaming environment, and (3) to explore how social, cultural, and political attitudes toward gaming have been shaped.

Do I need to buy books for this class?

Yes! We are going to be using Reading Culture 5th Edition (2004) by George and Trimbur.


There will also be required readings that can be downloaded from the Revisions web page.

How are you going to grade us?

The following is a breakdown of how I will be evaluating your performance in this class:
Pop quizzes on the reading – 15%
Persuasion paper – 25%
Group participation – 15%
Attendance – 10%
Formal speech – 10%
Zine - 15%
Leading class discussion - 10%

Grading Scale
93-100 A  89-92 A/B  83-88 B  79-82 B/C
73-78 C  69-72 C/D  63-68 D  62-0 F

C means 'average' -- it is the grade you will receive if you come to class and do all the work. "B" means that you have done above average work, with revisions, extra time and extra thought. "A" means exceptional, superior work. It is very hard to earn an A in this class. If you aren’t sure of your grade at any point in the semester, please come talk to me!

How are you structuring this class?
We are going to be doing a lot of team (2 students) and group (at least 4 groups) work in this class. It is essential to practice your communication skills not only via writing, but to also learn how to communicate verbally, in front of an audience and also in team situations.

We will discuss the details during class.

What are the writing assignments about?
The writing assignments will include some in-class writing on reading assignments, a research-based piece which will include several drafts, and a finished zine. We will be discussing these assignments in-depth as we continue through the semester.

Your papers are to be typed and double spaced. I will be expecting you to pay attention to grammatical issues, and to have direct quotes from the readings in order to support your points. This means that you will have to use in-text citing. (See Brown's Essential Handbook.) Please note that I don’t accept any late work.
What's up with the class presentations?

You will be doing a lot of presenting in this class, most of it in a very informal manner. Each of you will pair up with a partner to lead a class discussion on required reading. While there is no particular format that needs to be followed, discussion leaders will be graded on their ability to understand and communicate the reading, as well as engage the class. Your group will also come up with a reading quiz for your particular reading. Questions should be typed out and handed to students. This should take up no more than the first 5 minutes of the class. If you need a tv/vcr/dvd/projector, you must let me know at least 1 week in advance. If there are any problems with getting these items, I will let you know immediately.

Why a portfolio?

To access student's work in Revisions, the University is requiring each student to turn in a portfolio at the end of each semester. If portfolios are not turned in by the last day of class or if the requirements are not followed, 10% will be taken off your final course score. The requirements are listed below.

1. The portfolio **covers must be free of any names, student #, section #, or any other information. I want a separate sheet (NOT the cover letter) with your name on it.**

2. All work must be free of grades, my editing suggestions, and marginal as well as end-point comments. This will require you to print clean copies of some of your work.

3. Each portfolio must contain a reflective cover letter characterizing the basic focus of this section and describing the major written, oral, and visual assignments and comments that reflect on the quality of your experience in UN 2001, the value of the course to your general education, and suggestions (if any) for changing or improving the class.

4. All written work should be on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. All pieces with the exception of draft work must be typed and double-spaced.

5. The contents of each portfolio must include in the order listed and clearly marked by dividers:

   - Reflective Cover Letter
   - Copies of assignments for all submitted work (without names).
   - Work in the portfolio must include at least three pieces from a range of assigned rhetorical purposes (expressive, exploratory, informative, persuasive, aesthetic). We will talk about this in class.
• At least one example of writing for learning.
• One major piece of writing the intent of which is to persuade.
• One piece of writing that is substantially research-based.
• All process work for the research based writing assignment. This would mean all drafts.
• Portfolios should contain samples of oral and visual work required along with assignment handouts that initiated this work.

6. All work must be submitted in an 8 1/2 by 11 inch binder. Work must be bound and separated by clearly marked dividers, not simply stuffed into binder pockets.

7. All binders must contain a label on the front cover with the following:
   UN 2001 Student Portfolio
   Fall/Spring/Summer Term 200__

What's up with plagiarism?

Well.....plagiarism is considered cheating, and is a serious academic offense. It is defined as "knowingly copying another’s work or ideas and calling them one’s own or not giving proper credit or citation," and it covers copying sections, major ideas, or entire papers from printed or electronic sources as well as handing in papers written by other students. More to the point, plagiarism prevents you from learning, which has the potential to make your future classes more difficult. Who really needs that? If you have any questions, please talk to me or consult the Writing Center.

Is there really still a problem with harassment?

Yes, there really is. MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education and services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).