

# College Course Evaluations

## CMST 29003: Comparative Media Poetics: Cinema and Videogames

Section 01 - Spring 2013

Instructor(s): Jones Ian

Number Enrolled: 16

Number of Responses: 13

### Evaluation Comments

#### What were the instructor's strengths? Weaknesses?

- This was the first class he ever taught, but I thought that the vision he had for cinema and videogames was very intriguing. I really hope that this kind of course, that meshes film art with the virtual art will continue to gain popularity in this school. Great job Ian! You really opened up the deep potential these two mediums of art hold!
- Ian was really great at explaining concepts in a very accessible way. It's clear that he's very passionate about the subject, and that helped him to give clear lectures and ask the right questions. I wished that he would have asked more specific questions from time to time during discussion, as some students were reluctant to respond to a broad request for thoughts about a subject.
- Strengths: Communicating cinematic principles. He made everything easy to understand and presented clear, concise thoughts.
- Ian's very intelligent and articulate and presents lectures very clearly. The vast variety of his film/videogame knowledge is astounding. I kinda wish he made classes for centered around discussion, because it often became very one-way (which isn't necessarily bad, because he holds your attention, and the subject matter is just naturally very interesting and fun to me).
- Ian is a fantastic teacher. He singlehandedly made me consider attempting to get a cinema studies minor because this class and his work were so interesting. He seamlessly blended lectures and discussions together, both of which were incredibly useful. He also was very considerate of the work he assigned us, changing the amount of readings when he thought they had become too much. He is also clearly very knowledgeable about video games, making this class really interesting in terms of both the art aspects of video games, the technical aspects of video games, and the history of video games. The only weakness I can think about is sometimes Ian would apologize for some aspect of the course, showing that he wasn't always very confident in his choices. I think the class was amazing and, he did not need to apologize for anything
- Ian was fantastic, he had a clear passion for the material.
- Huge amount of knowledge to share, and very organized. Sometimes spent too much time in class on film and not enough on video games, and did not always successfully convey the methodology he was expecting the class to use.
- Used a combination of very clear lectures and discussion. Very open and interested in feedback, and helpful during office hours. The class was still being tailored, and kinks were being worked out, but considering I think it flowed very well.
- Ian Jones is funny, knowledgeable, intelligent, and very coherent. The lectures were always very clearly presented, and interesting, and it was very infrequently that questions were not answered immediately or students were not given the opportunity to speak. The general impression of the class that Ian provided the students with bits of knowledge that we then collectively used to learn together, students and professor as a whole, about the topics at hand.
- He was super smart and engaging
- Ian clearly is incredibly knowledgeable about this field, on both the cinema and video game sides. I also thought his syllabus was particularly diverse with a variety of topics and different game genres. He might have relied a little too much on his lectures to get through class, so that sometimes he'd finish early without a clear point to start discussions or attempts to start discussion felt like looking for a particular answer rather than fleshing a topic out. I also happened to like his sense of humor and drollness, but it did make him feel slightly unapproachable at times.

#### What were the teaching assistant's or writing intern's strengths? Weaknesses?

- n/a
- N/A
- N/A
- Wasn't one

#### What, if anything, would you change about this course and why?

- It's practically impossible with how the play sessions are constructed right now, but I wish that for the future there were more lounge-y play sessions, such that there are multiple tv's, and consoles/PC so that everyone can play instead of having to watch someone play it, since the experience is admittedly different.
- I honestly wouldn't mind trying to pack more material into the screenings, especially with the video games aspect of the course. I felt that my biggest insights came from that aspect of the course, because I'm used to analyzing film as part of my major.
- Nothing, this was literally the greatest class ever.
- I wish there was a way so that every game we looked at could be PLAYED by every student. The only common text we all played as a class was The Path, so I wish there were more of these assigned games. I also wish the lab component was a feature from the get-go, as it kind of acts like a second screening/chance to play the games we passively looked at during the screening.
- I think that nothing needs to be changed about the course. There are so many topics relevant to video games that I can think of a lot of things I would want to add, but I also don't want to

take anything out of the class. I think the only thing I felt was lacking a little was the history of video games and video game development. We talked a lot about the history of video games at the beginning of the quarter, but it seemed to taper off by the end. It wasn't a big deal, though, and the lack of history did not make this class less enjoyable

- The screenings were not very effective and begged the question of the course, as the majority of students had to watch video games being played by others rather than play themselves, as if video gameplay is at all watchable. Every student needs to see every game, or else we are just comparing films to mistakist machinima.
- More coherence in the overall topics discussed. Video Games have such a broad range of points to discuss, and to fly through them AND hit on the similarities between games and film, there differences, effects, etc, didn't always play out nicely, BUT this is not to say that everything discussed was not interested or insightful. (I have to admit I'm a little upset, because now I can't play The Last of Us without noticing every little mechanic Naughty Dog put in there to guide the player, and how they constructed the space.) This course left me with a strong desire to continue scholarly discussion of games, so it also makes me sad that this course was only one quarter.
- I would organize it around specific topics a little more, but otherwise no complaints
- As an early version of what video game studies could look like at UChicago, the class was pretty good, but did feel very far-reaching at times. The first half of the quarter felt like the weeks did build on themselves and themes could be connected across different genres and styles of games; the second half, not as much. It might make sense to start by focusing on something very specific, like player identification, knowledge, and how vision is guided, then build outwards. I would have also liked if we spent some time wondering how video games might be changing contemporary cinematic styles, rather than just seeing how the poetics got translated in the other direction.

#### **Is there any topic in this course that you wished you had had previous background in?**

- Probably the old school films.
- I felt I was adequately prepared.
- Definitely more background in cinematic language, sometimes it was hard to keep up with the CMST majors. But so long as you did the reading and critically thought about everything things fell into place.
- Nope.
- more experience with different video games (especially popular ones that came up in class discussion a lot)
- The class seemed more reliant on being a "gamer" than I had expected. Not having played popular video games from recent past proved a real deterrent for understanding some moments in class.
- I wish I had more experience gaming, but having the games on hold at the Reg was incredibly helpful. Although, easier access to game systems would have been great. There wasn't any pressure to be able to game well though, which was nice, but it still would have been useful.
- No.
- Games

#### **Which texts were most useful?**

- Each text had its own merit.
- I really enjoyed the texts related to action cinema and action games like Uncharted.
- All are useful for their weeks, but not as a complete whole.
- Jenkins and Murray
- All game studies articles.
- Bordwell,'s Principles of Narration, Nitsche, articles specific to games or genres were very helpful, Sobchack although tough was useful
- All were pretty useful.
- Murray, Bissell, Purse, Aarseth
- The Path, as the main video game we got to play, was especially useful, as were various texts like those by Jenkins, Murray, etc.

#### **Which least?**

- I didn't enjoy the hong kong action cinema portion of the course, personally.
- Bissell?
- N/A
- Bazin
- I thought the Week 9 material (aside from the essay on "excess") wasn't particularly helpful. Might have just been the presentation styles for the week.

#### **How productive was class discussion?**

- Everyone was clearly passionate.
- Extremely productive, I learned more in one class meeting than in 3 years of economics courses.
- This always depends on the kind of people in your class. Unfortunately, discussion sometimes veered off-track since some of the kids in the class were idiots, but it was mostly fruitful and enthusiastic.
- Everyone was almost always really engaged with the topics at hand (though sometimes it seemed that the entire class would have very tired days). However, I never thought that the discussion were not productive. I left each one with a new insight on cinema and video games
- Class discussion was usually very productive, but sometimes prodding was needed.
- Rather productive, quite interesting.

- Very productive. The questions presented to the class to discuss were often direct enough to keep discussion on topic, while open enough to allow for many modes of thought, and different but relevant points.
- Not particularly
- Class discussion could be productive at times, though it could be hard to motivate people to talk a lot of the time. Some sessions saw a lot of insightful contributions, other ones not so much.

**How has this course contributed to your education?**

- I think the course has helped teach me how to approach any subject with an intellectual perspective, and has helped me to develop different tools for writing and analyzing as well.
- It was fun

**Why did you take this course?**

Core requirement	0 / 0%
Instructor Reputation	0 / 0%
Faculty member recommended it	0 / 0%
Concentration Requirement	0 / 0%
Meets at a convenient time	0 / 0%
A student recommended it	0 / 0%
Topic interests me	0 / 0%
Concentration elective	0 / 0%

**In summary, I had a strong desire to take this course**

Strongly Agree	10 / 77%
Agree	2 / 15%
Neutral	0 / 0%
Disagree	0 / 0%
Strongly Disagree	0 / 0%

**How many hours per week did you spend on this course?**

Low Answer	4
Average Answer	6.7
High Answer	15

**What proportion of classes did you attend?**

All	13 / 100%
75%	0 / 0%
50%	0 / 0%
25%	0 / 0%

None 0 / 0%

**Were the time demands of this course reasonable?**

Yes 13 / 100%

No 0 / 0%

**The Instructor**

	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Organized the course clearly.	0%	0%	0%	15%	31%	<b>54%</b>
Presented clear lectures.	0%	0%	0%	0%	39%	<b>62%</b>
Held my attention and made this course interesting.	0%	0%	0%	8%	15%	<b>77%</b>
Stimulated and facilitated questions and discussions.	0%	0%	0%	15%	39%	<b>46%</b>
Responded well to student questions.	0%	0%	0%	15%	31%	<b>54%</b>
Was available outside of class.	8%	0%	0%	15%	15%	<b>77%</b>
Was helpful during office hours.	8%	0%	8%	8%	31%	<b>46%</b>
Motivated independent thinking.	0%	0%	0%	15%	39%	<b>46%</b>

**The Readings**

	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Fulfilled the objective of the course.	0%	0%	0%	0%	31%	<b>69%</b>
Were reasonable in number.	0%	0%	0%	8%	8%	<b>85%</b>
Were appropriately difficult.	0%	0%	0%	0%	39%	<b>62%</b>

**Approximately how much of the reading did you do?**

	<b>N/A</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>46%</b>	31%

**The Assignments**

	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
How helpful were the lectures and discussions in preparing for exams and completing assignments?	0%	0%	8%	0%	31%	<b>62%</b>
How appropriately were the requirements of the course proportioned to course goals?	0%	0%	0%	15%	39%	<b>46%</b>
How well did the requirements	0%	0%	0%	15%	<b>46%</b>	39%

contribute to the goals of the course?

How timely and useful was feedback on assignments and exams?	0%	0%	8%	8%	<b>62%</b>	23%
How fairly were the assignments graded?	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>62%</b>	39%

### Overall

	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
This course met my expectations.	0%	0%	0%	15%	31%	<b>54%</b>
This course provided me with new insight and knowledge.	0%	0%	0%	8%	15%	<b>77%</b>
This course provided me with useful skills.	0%	0%	8%	15%	23%	<b>54%</b>
The content of this course was presented at an appropriate level.	0%	0%	0%	0%	39%	<b>62%</b>
I put my best effort into this course.	0%	0%	0%	8%	<b>46%</b>	<b>46%</b>
The class had a high level of morale/enthusiasm.	0%	0%	0%	15%	39%	<b>46%</b>

### The Teaching Assistant(s)

	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Were available outside of class.	<b>85%</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Were helpful with assignments.	<b>92%</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

### Discussion Sections, Problem Sessions, Writing Tutorials

	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Were well coordinated with this course and contributed to it.	39%	0%	0%	0%	8%	<b>46%</b>
Provided well-designed materials.	39%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>54%</b>

**Would you have preferred more assignments that allowed/required you to spend time individually looking at games (as an alternative to viewing others play them in a group setting), even if that required a greater reliance on lab time with the Logan consoles for platform-exclusive games?**