

First-Year Seminar I

Section 010: Frames, Claims, and Videogames

ENGLISH 1001-010 | Spring 2017

Tuesday, 1:00 PM–4:00 PM, Spertus Building, Rm 423B

Instructor: Ian Bryce Jones, Department of Liberal Arts
 ijones1@saic.edu

Office hours: by appointment, at designated times during the semester
 13th floor seating section of the MacLean Center Café

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Following the general mission of First Year Seminar, this course teaches English writing, close reading, and composition, with an eye towards the unique needs of writing about interactive digital experiences. The medium of videogames has been home to heated and didactic debates over the past twenty years, erupting in academic criticism, popular discourse, the art world, and the U.S. legal system. Are videogames art? Do they tell stories? Do they deserve First Amendment protections under the U.S. Constitution? And are they ever going to “grow up”? This course examines these debates, the games that inspired them, and the games that came out of them, as a way of investigating how common rhetorical strategies have helped shaped the reception of a young medium across various diverse audiences. Upon examining a wide range of arguments about videogames, students will be expected to make their own arguments about videogames, marshalling the task of description in service of putting forward supportable, contestable, and non-obvious claims—the more didactic, the better!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

- **Attendance and class participation.** Students are expected to attend all classes regularly and on time. Unexcused absences for more than **two** class sessions will put students in jeopardy of receiving no credit for the course. A string of unexcused and unexplained absences will be call for immediate failure of the course. (*Attendance is not included as a component of the course credit breakdown—it should be considered a separate rule set by which one can receive no credit in the course.*)
- **Nine substantial posts** on the course’s discussion board, in response to weekly prompts. By substantial, I mean somewhere **in the range of 300-400 words**. Ideally, by the end of the course, this will tally up to somewhere around 3,100 words, or **the equivalent of nine double-spaced pages**.
- **First written assignment**, a five-page (about 1,700 words) pick-a-side argument based around a single case study object. **First draft** due **Friday, March 3th**, electronically. **Revised and final draft** due **Friday, March 17**, again electronically.
- **Second written assignment**, an seven-page (about 2,400 words) analytical paper, to be written on one or more of the objects examined in class, with at least one written source cited. **A first draft/outline/proposal** of this is due **Friday, April 21**, electronically. **Your final draft** is due **Friday, May 12**, again electronically.

See the *course credit breakdown* supplement for an exhaustive review of assessment policies, and how the exact division between credit/no credit will be managed.

COURSE POLICIES: WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

- Page numbers for the two written assignments refer to **double-spaced** pages, in **12 point Times New Roman** font, with margins not exceeding **1.25 inches**. If you are at all confused as to what is expected, look to the word counts instead. The first paper should be around 1,700 words, and the second paper should be around 2,400 words. You can give-or-take around 200 words here.
- All writing should consistently include **proper citations**, following the guidelines of either MLA or the Chicago Manual of Style. References for proper citation will be provided for the course.
- All papers are due electronically, by 11:59 PM on the due date listed on the syllabus. **Preferred formats include .doc, .docx, and .rtf**. I discourage PDFs, as they are more difficult to add marginalia to. **Mac users:** Please convert .pages format files to a different standard before sending them. **Google Drive users:** Sharing a paper via Drive is great, but make sure that you share it in a way that allows me to comment on it. We'll troubleshoot this as necessary.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

From the SAIC Student Handbook: Academic misconduct includes both plagiarism and cheating, and may consist of: the submission of the work of another as one's own; unauthorized assistance on a test or assignment; submission of the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all instructors; or the failure to properly cite texts or ideas from other sources.

Academic integrity is expected in all coursework, including online learning. It is assumed that the person receiving the credit for the course is the person completing the work. SAIC has processes in place, including LDAP authentication, to verify student identity.

A quick guide provided by the Flaxman library on how to avoid plagiarism is accessible here: http://www.saic.edu/media/saic/pdfs/campusresources/academicadvising/plagiarism_quickGuide.pdf

A longer, more in-depth detailing of school policy is available here: http://www.artic.edu/webspaces/portal/library/plagiarism_packet.pdf

ACCOMMODATIONS STATEMENT

SAIC is committed to full compliance with all laws regarding equal opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with known or suspected disabilities, such as a Reading/Writing Disorder, ADD/ADHD, and/or a mental health condition who think they would benefit from assistance or accommodations should first contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) to schedule an appointment. DLRC staff will review your disability documentation and work with you to determine reasonable accommodations. They will then provide you with a letter outlining the approved accommodations for you to deliver to your instructors. This letter must be presented before any accommodations will be implemented. **You should contact the DLRC as early in the semester as possible.** The DLRC is located within the Wellness Center on the 13th floor of 116 S Michigan Ave. and can be reached via phone at 312.499.4278 or email at dlrc@saic.edu.

Please note that accommodations can **never be applied retroactively**. They must be submitted to the instructor as early as possible to ensure that they are taken into account when assessing students.

FURTHER ELABORATION ON THE SCHOOL'S ATTENDANCE POLICY

SAIC policy states that students are expected to attend all classes regularly and on time. Students should miss class only with reasonable cause. If a student needs to miss class with reasonable cause, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to receive instruction for how to make up for the missed class. It is the instructor's responsibility to give this information to the student as his/her/their schedule permits. Missing class for other than a reasonable cause may jeopardize the student's academic standing in the class.

REQUIRED READING MATERIALS

All course readings will be posted on Canvas. However, students are required to purchase a number of commercially-released games, which will be used as assignments. The games are as follows:

<i>Dys4ia</i> (Anna Anthropy, 2012)	\$5.00
<i>Papers, Please</i> (Lucas Pope, 2013)	\$9.99
<i>HER STORY</i> (Sam Barlow, 2015)	\$5.99
<i>Cibele</i> (Nina Freeman, 2015)	\$8.99

This means that course materials will cost a total of \$29.97. All other games assigned in the course are free, or will be played in-class without students having any need of purchasing them.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1, 2017-01-31

What is an argument? (No, really)

Read for today:

No readings. We'll review the syllabus, and look over some in-class handouts.

Play in-class, 2017-01-31:

Proteus (Ed Key and David Kanaga, 2013)

Part One of the Course: Five Major Debates

Week 2, 2017-02-07

Are videogames art?

Read for today:

Roger Ebert, "Video Games Can Never Be Art" (2010)

George Fifiield, "Act/React," from *Act/React: Interactive Installation Art* (2008)

Ian Bogost, "Art," from *How to Do Things with Videogames* (2012)

Chris Melissinos, "Preface: The Resonance of Games as Art," in *The Art of Videogames* (2012)

Play for today:

Art Game (Pippin Barr, 2013)

Become a Great Artist in Just 10 Seconds (Andi McClure and Michael Brough, 2013)

The Artist Is Present (Pippin Bar, 2011)

Waiting for Godot (Zoë Quinn, 2014)

Week 3, 2017-02-14

NO CLASS DUE TO A SCHEDULING CONFLICT

(We will have to schedule a make-up class for this. Details pending.)

Week 4, 2017-02-21**Should games be considered protected expression under the US First Amendment?****Read for today:**

Oral Arguments for *Brown, Governor of California, et al. v. Entertainment Merchants Association et al.*
No. 08-1448. November 2, 2010.

SCOTUS Opinion: *Brown, Governor of California, et al. v. Entertainment Merchants Association et al.*
No. 08-1448. (2011).

Play in-class, 2017-02-21:

Mortal Kombat (Midway Games, 1992)

Hurt Me Plenty (Robert Yang, 2014)

Cobra Club (Robert Yang, 2015)

Rinse & Repeat (Robert Yang, 2015)

Week 5, 2017-02-28**Should games be considered a form of storytelling?****Read for today:**

Janet H. Murray, “Harbingers of the Holodeck” (selections), from *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (1997)

Gonzalo Frasca, “Ludology Meets Narratology” (1999)

Espen Aarseth, “Genre Trouble: Narrativism and the Art of Simulation” (2004)

Play for today:

HER STORY (Sam Barlow, 2015)

Play in-class, 2017-02-28:

selections from *Oxenfree* (Night School Studios, 2016)

Week 6, 2017-03-07**What is, and what isn't, a game?****Read for today:**

Jesper Juul, “Video Games and the Classic Game Model,” from *Half-Real* (2005)

Anna Anthropy, “What Is It Good For?,” from *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters* (2012)

Raph Koster, “A Letter to Leigh” (2013)

Mattie Brice, “Triptychs” (2013)

Robert Yang, “A Letter to a Letter” (2013)

Play for today:

Ultra Business Tycoon III (Porpentine, 2013)

Is This a Game? (The Game Police, 2013)

On Formalism (Darius Kazemi, 2013)

Cibele (Nina Freeman, 2015)

Week 7, 2017-03-14**In the end, are games actually worthy of serious critical examination?****Read for today:**

Mattie Brice, “Would You Kindly” (2013)

Chris Hecker, “Fair Use” (2013)

Ian Bogost, “Introduction: Nobody Asked for a Toaster Critic,” from *How to Talk About Videogames* (2015)

Alyssa Rosenberg, “Gamergate Reopens the Debate Over Video Games as Art” (2014)

Brie Code, “Video Games Are Boring” (2016)

Robert Yang, “For Better or Worse” (2016)

Play for today:

The Uncle Who Works for Nintendo (Michael Lutz, 2014)

Play in-class, 2017-03-14:

scenes from *BioShock* (Irrational Games, 2007)
 scenes from *Spec Ops: The Line* (Yager, 2012)

DUE ELECTRONICALLY: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15th:**First draft of written assignment 1****Part Two of the Course: Specialized Topics****Week 8, 2017-03-21****Can you make and argument with a game?****Read for today:**

Sherry Turkle, "Seeing Through Computers Education in a Culture of Simulation" (1997)
 Ian Bogost, "Procedural Rhetoric" (selections), from *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* (2011)
 John Sharp, "Artgames," from *Works of Game: On the Aesthetics of Games and Art* (2015)

Play for today:

McDonalds Videogame (Molleindustria, 2006)
Nova Alea (Molleindustria, 2016)

Play in-class, 2017-03-21:

The Marriage (Rod Humble, 2007)
Passage (Jason Rohrer, 2007)
Gravitation (Jason Rohrer, 2008)

Week 9, 2017-03-28**Space, exploration, and storytelling****Read for today:**

Randal Walser, "Spacemarkers and the Art of the Cyberspace Playhouse" (1990)
 Alva Noë, "Experience and Experiment in Art" (2000)
 Henry Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture" (2004)

Play for today:

The Static Speaks My Name (Jesse Barksdale, 2015)

Play in-class, 2017-04-04:

Gone Home (The Fullbright Company, 2013)

DUE ELECTRONICALLY, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29:**Revised and final draft of written assignment 1****Week 10, 2017-04-04****Emotion****Read for today:**

Grant Tavinor, "Emotion in Videogaming," from *The Art of Videogames* (2009)
 Katherine Isbister, "A Series of Interesting Choices: The Building Blocks of Emotional Design,"
 from *How Games Move Us* (2016)

Play for today:

Papers, Please (Lucas Pope, 2013)

Play in-class, 2017-04-04:

Journey (thatgamecompany, 2012)

Week 11, 2017-04-11**Empathy****Read for today:**

- Ian Bogost, "Empathy," from *How to Do Things with Videogames* (2012)
 Colin Campbell, "Gaming's New Frontier: Cancer, Depression, Suicide" (2013)
 Aaron Souppouris, "Virtual Reality Made Me Believe I Was Someone Else" (2014)
 Emily Short, "Anhedonia by Maddox Pratt, Played by Emily Short," from *Videogames for Humans* (2015)

Play for today:

- Darfur Is Dying* (Susana Ruiz, et al., 2006)
Husb (Jamie Antonisse and Devon Johnson, 2008)
Dys4ia (Anna Anthropy, 2012)
Anhedonia (Maddox Pratt, 2013)
Depression Quest (Zoë Quinn, 2013)
Female Experience Simulator (Alyson MacDonald, 2013)
Walking Home (spinach, 2013)

Week 12, 2017-04-18**Difficulty and failure****Read for today:**

- Jennifer Doyle, "Introducing Difficulty," from *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (2013)
 Jesper Juul, "The Paradox of Failure and the Paradox of Tragedy," from *The Art of Failure* (2013)

Play for today:

- Dwarf Fortress* (Tarn and Zach Adams, in constant development since 2006)
Fignermukcre (Trollcore Enterprises, 2014)
Problem Attic (Liz Ryerson, 2013)

Week 13, 2017-04-25**Agency and restrictions****Read for today:**

- Henry Jenkins, "Complete Freedom of Movement?: Video Games as Gendered Play Spaces" (1998)
 Sarah Ahmed, "The Orient and Other Others" (selections), from *Queer Phenomenology* (2006)
 Samantha Allen, "TransMovement: Freedom and Constraint in Queer and Open World Games" (2013)
 Micha Cárdenas, "A Game Level Where You Can't Pass" (2013)

Play for today:

- Freedom Bridge* (Jordan Magnuson, 2010)
Lim (merritt kopas, 2012)
Mainichi (Mattie Brice, 2012)
Simmons (Ashton Raze, 2012)

Play in-class, 2017-04-25:

- scenes from *The Stanley Parable* (Galactic Café, 2013)

DUE ELECTRONICALLY, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26:

Draft/outline/proposal for written assignment 2

Week 14, 2017-05-02**Changing players' understanding of the world: Optimistic and skeptical views****Read for today:**

Ian Bogost, Simon Ferrari, and Bobby Schweizer, "Journalism at Play," from *Newsgames* (2010)
 Sophie Houlden, "Some Words on Some Problematic Stuff" (2014)
 Anna Anthropy, "Empathy Game" (2015)
 Mattie Brice, "Empathy Machine" (2016)

Play for today:

Kabul Kaboom (Gonzalo Frasca, 2001)
September 12: A Toy World (Gonzalo Frasca, 2003)
Points of Entry (Persuasive Games, 2008)
The Refugee Challenge: Can You Break into Fortress Europe? (John Domokos and Harriet Grant, 2014)
Eat (Mattie Brice, 2013)
EMPATHY MACHINE (merritt kopas, 2016)

Week 15, 2017-05-09**Conclusion**

In-class presentations on final papers, wrap-up, student requested topics, makeup/overflow

Week 16

No class, although I will be available Monday the 15th for last-minute office hour meetings

DUE ELECTRONICALLY, WEDNESDAY, MAY 17:

Revised and final draft of written assignment 2

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

The Writing Center provides one-on-one writing tutoring for students. It is located in the MacLean Center Basement, 112 S. Michigan Ave., B1-03

Fall and Spring Semester Hours:

Monday–Thursday 9:00 AM–7:15 PM, Friday 9:00 AM–5:15 PM
 4:15–7:15 PM are designated as walk-in hours.

Monday–Thursday SAIC offers free, hour-long writing tutorials at the Writing Center, which is located in the basement of MacLean. Tutors are available to assist all currently enrolled students with any stage of the writing process.

Appointments: To schedule an appointment with a Writing Center tutor, students first need to create an account through the online sign-up system: <https://www.supersaas.com/schedule/saic/WritingCenter>.

Once students have set up their own account, they may sign up for appointments. Weekly standing appointments are available upon request. When students come to their tutoring appointments, they should make sure to bring their assignments with them and have any work printed out.

Online schedule instructions are available outside of the Writing Center suite (in the hallway outside of the MacLean Center B1-03).

Contact Information:

Leila Wilson, Writing Center Coordinator: lwilson@saic.edu or 312.345.3588
 Writing Center Suite: 312.345.9131 (Call to see if there are any last-minute openings.)

Course Credit Breakdown

Assessment of Student Progress

Assessment of student progress toward learning outcomes will be given on a 100-point scale. Achieving **70 or more out of these 100 points** will result in students **receiving credit** for the course. Achieving **less than 70** out of these points will result in students **receiving no credit** for the course.

There are no letter grades. There are no percentages. There are only points, and you receive them or you don't. The remainder of this document will break down where these points come from.

Breakdown of the class's points

- 1) Discussion board posts: 3 points each x 9 = **27**
- 2) First written assignment: **31**
- 3) Second written assignment: **42**

1) Nine substantial posts on the course's discussion board

27 of these points come from postings on the course's discussion board. Students are expected to post nine times throughout the course of the quarter, in response to prompts. Each post is worth 3 points. Posting nine insightful posts, that address the topic of the prompt in 300-400 words, will net you all 27 of these points. Posting fewer posts, or shorter, less substantive posts, will net you fewer points, but still some. Not posting at all will not give you any points, which will make it very hard to pass the course.

2) The first written assignment

31 of these points come from the class's first written assignment. This assignment will be assessed via a rubric, clearly laying out expectations and learning goals for the assignment, allowing students to clearly see which points they are receiving, which points they are not, and why. Two drafts of this assignment are due. When reviewing the first draft, I will indicate how many points would be earned by the assignment in its current state. Points will not actually be distributed, however, until the second draft is reviewed, so students will have a chance to fix problems and earn more points.

3) The second written assignment

42 of these points come from the class's first second assignment. Again, this assignment will be assessed via a rubric. This rubric will be slightly different from the first assignment. The revision system will be identical: Two drafts of this assignment are due, and, when reviewing the first draft, I will indicate how many points would be earned by the assignment in its current state. Points will not actually be distributed until the second draft is reviewed.