



ENGL 207  
Section A  
9:30-10:20 AM  
MW THO 125  
TTH RAI 121  
Winter 2009  
University of  
Washington



"Video games are an expressive medium. They represent how real and imagined systems work. They invite players to interact with those systems and form judgments about them. As part of the ongoing process of understanding this medium...we must strive to understand how to construct and critique the representations of our world in videogame form."  
—Ian Bogost

"You are in a maze of twisty passages, all alike."  
—ZORK

ALEXANDER GALLOWAY in *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture* argues that play "is a symbolic action for larger issues in culture" (16) and that video games "render social realities into playable form" (17). Using a broad archive of "imagined worlds"—drawing on literature, video games, text games and hypertext, film, and scholarship—this course will identify and explore some of the key concepts, the key moves, and the key terms of the interdisciplinary fields of cultural studies.

CENTRAL QUESTIONS AND ENGAGEMENTS INCLUDE: What are the different critical practices and methodologies of cultural studies? How might we employ different cultural studies approaches and lenses to these virtual worlds and video games? Why study these "imagined worlds," how are they important, and what values do they have? In this course, we will look at and analyze texts of media old and new through the lenses of cultural studies and deploy virtual worlds and video games as theories about and dramatizations of different social relationships and realities, to unpack and analyze the intersections of cultural formations like race, gender, class, nation, and sexuality, particularly in the US context. We will look at how video games can be rhetorical, political, and popular tools, and in the words of Gonzalo Frasca, how "they can be used for conveying passionate ideas...to deliver an ideological message." Moreover, Henry Jenkins adds that we should "look at games as an emerging art form...and talk about how to strike a balance between this form of expression and social responsibility" (120).

READINGS MAY INCLUDE IN WHOLE OR IN EXCERPT: Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler's *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Orson Scott Card, Shelley Jackson, Walter Benjamin, Alexander Galloway, Ian Bogost, Lisa Nakamura, N. Katherine Hayles, Maureen McHugh, Nick Montfort, William Gibson, Donna Haraway, Cory Doctorow, Julian Dibbell, and Gonzalo Frasca. Digital and visual texts may include: Will Crowther's *Adventure*, Jason Rohrer's *Gravitation*, Gregory Weir's *The Majesty of Colors*, Andrew Plotkin's *Shade*, LambdaMOO, Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern's *Facade*, *Tron*, *Monster Camp*, *America's Army*, and *World of Warcraft*.

NEW MEDIA AND GAME PLAY will be a required part of the class. Students will be required to keep a weekly "plog" (play log). Moreover, students will produce two short researched, revised, and analytical papers, which will potentially be used to develop into a larger online group project. Students seeking W-Credit will be accommodated.

## Requirements & Grading

Your grade should not be the sole exigence or motivation for this class. It is the hope of the course that you walk away from English 207 with something more, with a curiosity about the world around you. Find some pleasure and some edification and some knowledge from this class (or any class really) and success is usually not far behind. With that in mind, your grade will be a reflection of engagement effort close reading critical thinking writing

"Video games have an unmet potential to create complexity by letting people experience the world from different perspectives."  
—James Paul Gee

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."  
—Albert Einstein



## Required Course Texts & Materials

- ENGL 207A Course Reader (available at Ave Copy, 4141 Univ. Way NE @ 42nd)
- Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, Eds., *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*
- Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*.
- Alexander Galloway, *Gaming*
- All games are available online for free or free-trial.
- Some readings are also available via e-reserve.
- Web access and an active UW email account

## Course Requirements

Plog, or, Play Log (10%)  
Game Play Presentation (10%)  
Critical Review (10%)  
Keyword Major Papers (40%)  
Class Participation (30%)



“Cultural Studies allows the analyst to attend to the many moments within the cycle of production, circulation and consumption of [a text] through which meanings accumulate, slip and shift.”  
—Martin Lister & Liz Wells

“I’m a games and theory kind of guy. I love puzzles, so it was fun dissecting Shakespeare’s prose.”  
—Neil Patrick Harris

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”  
—William Butler Yeats

a reflection of engagement, effort, close reading, critical thinking, writing, and participation.

### Plog, or, Play Log (10%)

Each week you will be introduced to one or more games, virtual worlds, stories, or theoretical texts. You will be required to keep a weekly “plog” or “play log” about the games that you play and the texts that you read. Plog entries will be short reactions, responses, meditations, and provocations that engage the game and your play on a critical, analytical, or theoretical level.

### Game Play Presentation (10%)

You will be required to sign up for a game play oral presentation once during the quarter. For your presentation, you will play the game for that day, you will read the texts assigned for that week, and then generate a critical and analytical question to get class discussion started for the day. You will be required to create a 1-page handout copied for the whole class that may include: a brief biography of the writer or game creator, a brief synopsis of the text or game, your critical question, and any other information you feel is useful or relevant. Presentations are 3 to 5 minutes, should include a demonstration of play, and may be done in small groups.

### Critical Review (10%)

You will be required to write a short, 500 or so word, single-spaced critical review of a game or a text not covered by the course that you believe fits the critical, theoretical, and intellectual stakes of this class. You will locate a game or text, close read it, and generate an academic assessment of the game or text’s value for study. In other words, what game might you include in a class like ours? What text? You must have your game or text approved by the instructor. The critical review will be turned in and published on the course blog and is due by the last week of class.

### Keyword Major Papers (40%)

You will be required to write two formal papers, each 4-6 pages in length, that engage one of the “keywords” for video game studies. Using the *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* as a model, you will select a keyword relevant to our class (e.g. avatar, virtual, game, race, gender, nation) and write an academic, analytical definition of the term drawing on the course’s readings and further research. Papers will be collected three times during the quarter, roughly in Week 4, Week 7, and Week 10. Each paper must be on a different keyword, submitted on a different due date. Each paper is worth 20% of your final grade. See the Keyword Major Paper prompt for more details and explanations.

### Participation and Preparedness (30%)

Preparedness and participation forms a large component of your final grade. It is essential that you prepare for class, attend class, and participate. Missing class may seriously compromise your ability to do well in this class. Again, negative participation will hurt your participation grade. Participation is determined by 1) your **respectful** presence in class, 2) your **willingness** to discuss, comment, and ask questions, 3) your **preparation** for class, which includes bringing required materials to class and doing all of the assigned reading for class, 4) your **engagement** in group work, 5) your use of the class blog, 6) and your interactions with me and other students. Finally, failure to turn in homework, incomplete assignments, or late papers will negatively impact your participation grade.



“Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without ever noticing it, live your way into the answer.”  
—Rainer Maria Rilke

“Our approach to making games is to find the fun first and then use the technology to enhance the fun.”  
—Sid Meier

“Read in order to live.”  
—Gustave Flaubert

"Most people are awaiting Virtual Reality; I'm awaiting virtuous reality."  
—Eli Khamarov



### Formal Paper Formatting

- 1) 1" margins top, bottom, left, and right on each page.
- 2) Single-spaced block header with your name, date, course, my name.
- 3) Appropriate title. No title page necessary.
- 4) Double-spaced body. Indented paragraphs (1/2 inch).
- 5) Standard Times Roman Font, 12 point only. Black ink only.
- 6) Correct MLA in-text parenthetical citation and quotation format.
- 7) MLA style bibliography. A paper without a bibliography automatically fails.
- 8) Proofread, edited, and revised carefully. Follow the directions on the assignment prompt.

Moreover, you will be required to participate generally on the class web log. Please bookmark the blog address, check the site regularly, and feel free to comment and post regularly. The class blog will be used for announcements, assignment reminders, updates to the syllabus, as well as questions, inquiries, and an extension of in-class discussion. Blog commenting, responding to other students' plogs, and posting will be taken into account in evaluating class participation. See the class blog for details on blog etiquette and rules of engagement.

### W-Credit

If you are seeking W Credit for the class, you must complete all three Keyword Major papers. The three grades will be averaged and count for 40% of your final grade. You must produce a minimum of 10-15 pages of formal, revised writing and earn a minimum of a 2.0 average on the three Keyword papers to receive W credit.

### Attendance

**Attendance is strongly recommended.** If you are absent, you miss the explanation of an assignment, an in-class exercise or workshop, the discussion of a reading, and overall, the class as a community of learning. It is in your best interests to come to class. Also, you are expected to be in class on time. Class will start immediately at the appointed time. In the first minutes of class I may make important announcements, establish the agenda for the class meeting, begin immediately with an important lesson, or field questions. Therefore, it is particularly important for you to arrive on time, especially for a fifty-minute class. If you come in after I start class, even by only a few minutes, you are late and I will mark you as such.

Chronic or conspicuous attendance problems will negatively affect your class participation grade. If you know you are going to miss class, please let me know ahead of time (via email), provide any pertinent documentation, and we will make any necessary arrangements. And when you do miss class, always find another student to get class notes and see me in order to make up missed work in a timely manner. If you miss a great deal of the quarter, you are recommended strongly to take the course during a quarter in which you can more easily attend class.

### Assignment Format

All papers must be typed or produced on a word processor. Word processing is preferable because it makes the mechanics of revision—rearranging, adding, and deleting—easy. If you do not have your own computer with word processing capability, computer labs are available on campus with a variety of software that is easy to learn. All documents should be saved in Microsoft Word format; if you do not have access to Word, then save your documents in RTF or Rich Text Format.

All papers must follow the manuscript format outlined by the assignment. **All papers must use MLA citation and documentation conventions.** Papers that do not follow the format guidelines will not be accepted. They will be returned unread to you. Papers will be regarded as late until they are resubmitted in the proper format. Keyword Major Papers follow standard MLA format, but the Critical Review has different manuscript guidelines. Pay attention to their assignment prompts.

**Always make a backup copy of every paper you turn in,** lest you be one of the unhappy people whose paper is eaten by the computer. You may even want to take the precaution of e-mailing your paper to yourself as an



### Late Assignments

All assignments must be done completely and turned in on time. Lateness will subtract from your assignment's final grade and work must be turned in preferably by the next class meeting after the original due date. Note that I will not comment on late work. However, you still need to complete late work or you will receive a zero. If you miss class on the due date of a paper, you must notify me and make arrangements to get the paper to me as soon as possible. **Unless previously arranged, I do not accept assignments via email.** Furthermore, all work must be seen and checked by me to be eligible for your final project! Remember that a paper has not been officially handed in until it is in my hands. Never turning anything in late is always the best policy.



attachment at least a couple of times during the drafting process and certainly BEFORE you exit the document for the last time and leave the computer lab, your friend's computer, or even your own computer. This way, even if you lose your disc or your paper gets mysteriously erased, you still have a copy in your e-mail files.

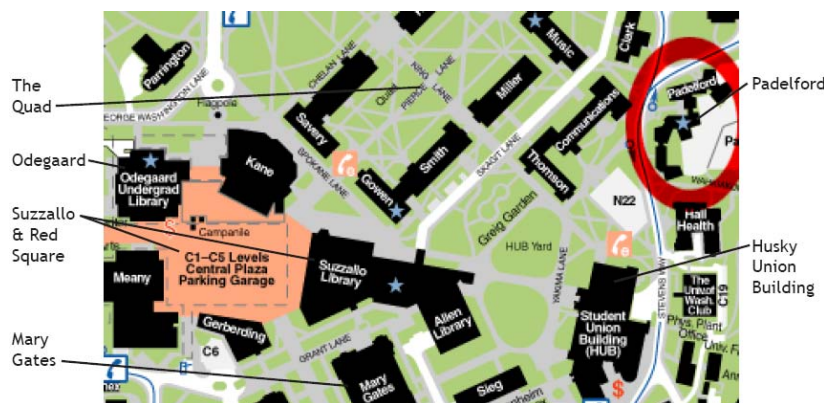
## Evaluation Rubric

Over the course of the quarter, your assignments will receive feedback and comments that will identify what you are doing well and what still needs improvement. Your grades assess your fulfillment of the assignment, the quality of work, detail, analysis, and argumentation, overall effort, and finally, style, polish, and risk taking. Consider the following evaluation rubric as signposts or a kind of legend to your progress and evaluation:

- **Outstanding** (3.7-4.0): Offers a very highly proficient, even memorable demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the course or assignment goal(s), including some appropriate risk-taking and/or creativity.
- **Strong** (3.1-3.6): Offers a proficient demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the course or assignment goal(s), which could be further enhanced with revision, additional support, and creativity.
- **Good** (2.5-3.0): Effectively demonstrates the trait(s) associated with the course or assignment goal(s), but less proficiently; could use revision to demonstrate more skillful and nuanced command of trait(s).
- **Acceptable** (2.0-2.4): Minimally meets the basic course or assignment requirement, but the demonstrated trait(s) are not fully realized or well-controlled and would benefit from significant revision.
- **Inadequate** (1.0-1.9): Does not meet the course or assignment requirement; the trait(s) are not adequately demonstrated and require substantial revision on multiple levels.

## Finding Help

My office and office hours are listed at the front of the course policies. I am available during that time and by appointment to help you. I encourage you to come see early in the quarter even if it is just to talk about the class, about the assignments, or about school in general. I may ask you to meet with me when I think a conference would be useful. My office is located in the ground floor of Padelford Hall (northeast of the HUB), Room B-33. See <http://www.washington.edu/home/maps/northcentral.html?pd1>.



I am also available electronically by email and the course blog. Email and the blog are the best means of contacting me. I will do my best to answer your emails and blog posts, usually **within twenty-four hours**. If there is an emergency and you need to reach me, please contact the Undergraduate English office in A-7H&G Padelford. Furthermore, when time permits, I will

"I want to suggest a different metaphor for theoretical work: the metaphor of struggle, of wrestling with the angels. The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency. I mean to say something later about the astonishing theoretical fluency of cultural studies now."

—Stuart Hall



"My imagination makes me human and makes me a fool; it gives me all the world and exiles me from it."

—Ursula K. Le Guin

"The idea that kids can play video games like *Grand Theft Auto* or any video game is amazing. The video games are one step before a whole other virtual universe."

—Vin Diesel



## Contact Ed

Office:  
B33 Padelford  
Office Hours:  
TH 10:30 AM to  
12:30 PM  
or by appointment  
E-mail:  
[changed@u.washington.edu](mailto:changed@u.washington.edu)  
AIM:  
EDagogy

English office in A-2H&G Padelford. Furthermore, when time permits, I will supplement my office hours with virtual hours via AOL Instant Messenger (AIM nickname: EDagogy); if I am logged in, during reasonable hours, you are more than welcome to discuss the class or ask questions. Please, when you initiate an IM conversation for the first time, please identify yourself to me; also, be patient because my responses may not be immediate.

You can find additional writing help at the English Department Writing Center (EWC) <<http://depts.washington.edu/wcenter/>> located in B-12 Padelford Hall. Call (206) 685-2876 or email [wcenter@u.washington.edu](mailto:wcenter@u.washington.edu) with questions or to make an appointment. You must make an appointment to see a writing tutor. Or, try the Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC) is a good resource for this class and other classes. OWRC is located on the third floor of Odegaard Library and offers a variety of services including help with papers, brainstorming ideas, help with reading, and research. See <<http://depts.washington.edu/owrc/>> for more information. Moreover, the Center for Learning and Undergraduate Enrichment (CLUE) is also a good resource. CLUE is located in Mary Gates Hall Commons and offers tutorial sessions for most freshman lecture courses, skills courses, access to computer labs, and drop-in centers for math, science and writing. See <<http://depts.washington.edu/clue/>> for more information.

Further resources, both on- and off-campus can be found on the Links page of the course website:

<<http://staff.washington.edu/changed/207/links.html>>.

## Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people's thoughts and writing – as long as you cite them. Many students do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes plagiarism, so feel free to ask questions about these matters at any time. Plagiarism includes:

- a student failing to cite sources of ideas
- a student failing to cite sources of paraphrased material
- a student failing to site sources of specific language and/or passages
- a student submitting someone else's work as his or her own
- a student submitting his or her own work produced for another class

If you have any doubt about how to cite or acknowledge another's writing, please talk to me. It is always better to be safe than sorry. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review. For further information, please refer to UW's Student Conduct Code at <<http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html>>. **Play it smart, don't plagiarize!**

## Accommodations

If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please see me immediately. If you have a disability and have not yet registered it with Disability Resources for Students in 448 Schmitz Hall, you should do so immediately. Please contact DRS at 206-543-8924 (Voice) or 206-543-8925 (V/TTY) or 206-616-8379 (FAX) or via their website at <<http://www.washington.edu/admin/ada/dss.htm>>. I will gladly do my best to provide appropriate accommodation you require.



"Both science and popular culture are intricately woven of fact and fiction."  
—Donna Haraway

"Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race."  
—H. G. Wells

"I entered the classroom with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer...[a conception of] education as the practice of freedom.... education that connects the will to know with the will to become. Learning is a place where paradise can be created."  
—bell hooks

"If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can totally transform one million realities."  
—Maya Angelou



"An idea that is not dangerous is unworthy of being called an idea at all."  
—Oscar Wilde

"To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing."  
—Raymond Williams

**syl-la-bus: n 1: a summary outline of a discourse, treatise, or course of study or of examination requirements  
2: subject to change**

Chang / ENGL 207 A / Winter Quarter 2008-09 / University of Washington

Mon 1/5

First Day of Classes

January 2009						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**Week 1: January 5-9**

Introduction to the Course & Keywords

Gravitation, I Wish I Were the Moon, The Majesty of Colors

Read: *Keywords* "Introduction" & "Culture" +

Williams' "Culture" (course packet) + Galloway, Ch. 1 "Gamic Action"

**Week 2: January 12-16**

ADVENTURE, Shade

*Keywords* "Identity" & "Race" + Montfort and Bogost (cp)

**Week 3: January 19-23**

LambdaMOO, Façade

*Keywords* "Gender" & "Sex" + Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyberspace" (cp)

**Week 4: January 26-30**

Shelley Jackson, *My Body*

Maureen McHugh, "Virtual Love" & "A Coney Island of the Mind" (cp)

*Keywords* "Body" & "Queer" + Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (cp)

**Week 5: February 2-6**

Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*

America's Army

*Keywords* "America" & "Democracy" + Galloway, Ch. 2 "Origins"

**Week 6: February 9-13**

Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*

America's Army

*Keywords* "Nation" & "Citizenship" +

Galloway, Ch. 3 "Social Realism"

**Week 7: February 16-20**

Serious Games (games to be announced)

Frasca, Jenkins (readings to be announced)

**Week 8: February 23-27**

World of Warcraft

Cory Doctorow, "Anda's Game"

"West," "Orientalism" & Nakamura, "Cybertyping"

**Week 9: March 2-5**

World of Warcraft

*Keywords* "White" + Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities" (cp)

**Week 10: March 9-13**

World of Warcraft

Galloway, Ch. 5 "Counter gaming"

Giroux et al, "The Need for Cultural Studies" (cp)

**Week 11:**

3/16 - Finals Begin, Final Paper Due

**Week 12:**

3/23 - Grades Due

Mon 1/19

Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

February 2009						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Mon 2/16

President's Day  
Holiday

March 2009						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Wed 3/11

Evaluations Day

Thu 3/12

Writing Day

Critical Review due  
by the end of Week  
10 (posted to the  
class blog).