

Fall 2019 Course Descriptions

Instructor: Regina Marie Mills

Course: ENGL 303

Title: Approaches to Literature: Gaming Literature

Description: This course explores games as a literary category and also examines how we make games out of literature. We will look at how games make narratives through story and design, thinking about both plot and form. From fan fiction, in which readers of literature play with the literature they adore, to tabletop and online role playing games, in which a gamemaster or game developer builds worlds and players characterize their created personas through actions and dialogue, games of all kinds use and play with the conventions of literature. "Gaming Literature" is about seeing games as literature and viewing literary studies as a field of exploration and experimentation.

This course provides a robust introduction to the major, showing students the many avenues of research available to English majors, such as literary studies, area studies (e.g. LGBTQ and queer studies, ethnic studies), cultural studies/popular culture, digital humanities, creative writing, rhetoric, film studies and the study of visual culture.

Assignments may include: writing and analyzing round-robin stories, creating and analyzing a video game (Twine, Flash, etc.), writing a reception history of a game, creating a zine, adapting a short story or text into a different narrative format (ex. Creating a video game adaptation of a short story). There may also possibly be a trip to Nerdvana to play and study arcade games (characterization, narrative) and popular culture ("vintage" toys and art).

Proposed Readings: Possible focal texts:

Video games such as: Arcade games (at the local arcade, Nerdvana); original Nintendo games like Super Mario Bros. 3 and The Legend of Zelda; Super Nintendo games like The Legend of Zelda: Link to the Past and Castlevania II: Simon's Quest; recent computer and console games like Gone Home, Doki Doki Literature Club, Her Story, Bioshock and Bioshock Infinite, Papers, Please, Undertale and The Stanley Parable; various Twine games such as The Uncle Who Works for Nintendo, You Are Standing at a Crossroads, Hana Feels, howling dogs, Everything you swallow will one day come up like a stone, queers in love at the end of the world
Representative zines from fanfiction culture (e.g. original Star Trek) and Riot Grrrl movement (e.g. Bikini Kill)

Fan fiction (e.g. fan fiction based on the Harry Potter series)

Creepypastas such as "Ben Drowned," "The Lost Town of Deepwood Pennsylvania," "Borrasca," and "Footsteps"

Choose-your-own adventure literature: such as Give Yourself Goosebumps: Night in Werewolf Woods and Choose Your Own Adventure #71: Space Vampire

Role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons, Villains and Vigilantes, Traveller,

Supplementary and secondary sources might include: "The Joy of Reading Role-Playing Games" (Guardian), Anna Anthropy's Rise of the Videogame Zinesters, Playing the Past: History and Nostalgia in Video Games, Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction. 3rd edition, "Gaming Literacy" in The Video Game Theory Reader 2, Gaming at the Edge, "What Games Can Learn from the Engagement Layers of Papers, Please" (Cory Johnson), "Origins of the First-Person Shooter" in Gaming (Alexander Galloway, pp. 39-69), "Game Design as Narrative Architecture" (Henry Jenkins); Creation of Narrative in Role-Playing Games