

Brief Course Outline

Course Title: **Gameplay: A Critical Making Course**

Course Number and Section:

ENGLISH

3333E 550

Instructor Name(s): John Vanderheide

Instructor Email(s): jvande29@uwo.ca

Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL is the official and authoritative source of information for the course.

Course Description:

In this “event-based” course, students combine traditional reading and researching in literary and cultural studies with a community-based research and a “critical making” component. The core theme of the course is GAMEPLAY, and its centrality to human cultures, past and present. Students will 1) explore different forms of gameplay, analog and digital, 2) read different approaches, critical or fictional, to games in general and video games in particular, and 3) engage in traditional and community-based research and a number of possible critical making activities, including designing their own analog and digital games.

Learning Outcomes:

Develop a critical understanding of games, gameplay and gamespace in different historical and cultural contexts, past and present

Deploy traditional academic research methods to different ends, both critical and creative, in your examination of the two realms of gameplay, analog and digital

Develop your general understanding of the place of the humanities within the digital realm and the place of the digital within the humanities

Develop your critical and historical understanding of digital video games in particular

Learn and apply game design and narrative design techniques in the creation of digital games and narratives

Construct digital portfolios of the knowledge and experience gained through your work in the course

Develop groupwork and public presentation skills

Textbooks and Course Materials:

Anthropy, Anna. Rise of the Videogame Zinesters. Amazon cost (subject to change): \$24.95+tax

Juul, Jesper. The Art of Failure: An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games. Amazon cost (subject to change): \$34+tax

Machado, Carmen Maria. Critical Hits: Writers Playing Video Games. Amazon cost (subject to change): \$23.76+tax

Students are welcome to purchase used books, e-books, and/or older editions.

PDFs of other readings will be made available on Brightspace

Methods Of Evaluation:

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
Class Participation (Fall)	12/03/2025	10
Call Participation (Winter)	04/25/2026	10
Walking Game Critique	10/10/2025	10
Fall Individual Project	01092026	20
Studio Portfolio Project	04/10/2026	40
Individual Portfolio Project	04/17/2026	10

In solidarity with the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples on whose traditional treaty and unceded territories this course is shared.

Saturday, August 16, 2025