

MEVIT4516 – Game Studies

Evaluation guidelines, spring 2024

The term paper consists of two parts: an academic game studies essay and a journalistic game criticism text. The candidate must complete both parts. The assignments count 50/50 in the evaluation. The candidate must ensure that the two parts are of approximately equal length in the paper (about 5 pages for each assignment). Significant discrepancies in this page distribution must not occur. The candidate must actively use and properly reference relevant syllabus literature (both the course book and articles) and other relevant sources throughout their paper. Standard academic rules for in-text references apply only for Part 1. The game criticism text has different rules (see below). Both assignments must meet at least the minimum requirements for a passing grade (E) for the candidate to pass the exam in its entirety. If one part is evaluated as an F, the entire paper receives an F.

Part 1 – Game Studies Essay

Choose one of the following main areas we have covered in the course:

- Game development and the game industry
- Game design and aesthetics
- Game culture, game communities and players

Explain briefly why and how this is an interesting and important general area for game studies. Then, focus on a specific topic within this main area that you are interested in. Formulate a research question and discuss how the topic is studied in a selection of relevant course syllabus texts and 2 self-selected game studies articles from 2021–2024. Reflect on current research issues or knowledge gaps and suggest how game studies can further study the topic to aid other scholars, game developers, players and/or others.

This is an open assignment which allows the candidate to discuss the topic they are most interested in, and they are required to use relevant syllabus texts and do research on the topic in other academic journals to find self-selected texts. The essay must not be styled and written as a traditional literature review or a project proposal. It should be a thematic discussion using research and the candidate's own observations, evaluations and arguments. The candidate must formulate and answer a relevant research question. The overall essay should have good thematic consistency, clear arguments and reasonable academically grounded suggestions. The candidate is allowed to draw on relevant personal experiences if they are well connected to the academic discussion. It is crucial that the candidate discusses the subtopic primarily from a game studies perspective. The candidate must not venture into a primarily general thematic analysis or discussion (for example, primarily discussing game design as a profession or an art form in general instead of discussing game studies research and perspectives on game design). The reflection on current issues or knowledge gaps and suggestions for further studies should be well connected to the candidate's sources and discussion in the essay.

“Game studies articles” refers to the theme and scope of individual articles, not to specific academic journals (such as *Game Studies*, *Games and Culture*, and *Eludamos*). The candidate is free to choose articles from a variety of academic journals, but the self-selected articles must be reasonably connected to the field of game studies and not be predominantly written within or for another field (such as psychology, sociology, literary theory or economics). The candidate does not need to state or reflect on how they found the self-selected articles.

The candidate’s choice of subtopic for the core of the assignment is not limited to topics covered in the syllabus literature or in the class workshops. The main area must be explained using the syllabus literature. Regardless of whether the chosen subtopic is covered explicitly in the syllabus literature or not, the candidate must place the subtopic clearly within one of the main areas. Subtopics can be relevant for and intersect with multiple main areas, but in this assignment the candidate must frame their subtopic within one specific main area and structure the focus and discussion accordingly. The candidate may acknowledge impact from or for the other two main areas for contextualization purposes, but this should be kept short. If a candidate chooses a subtopic that is not explicitly covered by the syllabus literature, they must be evaluated on how well they manage to connect the subtopic to other relevant/intersecting topics in the syllabus literature. If the subtopic is not explicitly covered in the syllabus literature, the candidate must ensure that both self-selected articles cover it. Choosing a subtopic not covered by the syllabus literature is not a valid reason for not using the syllabus literature actively in the essay. If this occurs, it should be evaluated as deficient knowledge of the syllabus literature and the course’s central themes.

Part 2 – Game Criticism

Write a game criticism text intended for a critical game journalistic outlet on a topic of your own choosing and in which you write from a game studies background. Adapt to the style and language of a particular outlet and incorporate perspectives from game studies (the course syllabus) in your text. Approach your subject through the lens of cultural journalism:

Cultural journalism understands the audience as citizens and offers a critical perspective on contemporary culture and cultural commodities. This should on one hand enable them to engage with said cultural commodities on a deeper and informed level and on the other hand understand the influences of the production for profit on these commodities and culture at large. A critical game journalism should be cultural journalism (Prax & Soler 2016).

Choose to write either an article/feature story or a game review:

- An article/feature story should critically examine and reflect on a particular case/topic relevant to the game industry, game journalism, game development, game design or game culture. Discuss possibilities, challenges and propose solutions to problems.
- A game review should critically analyze and evaluate a specific game title's gameplay, design and content. A game review is a subjective format. Your subjectivity must be balanced with the aims of cultural journalism. The goal of the review is to engage with the game as a cultural object/work, not as a product that you award a score to or recommend buying or not.

You must include a reflection note in which you discuss how you have designed your text, how you think your text fits with the particular outlet, how you chose to use game studies perspectives, and how your text fulfills the aim of critical game journalism. Include links to 2–3 game criticism texts that you used as inspiration for your own text.

The game criticism text should be about 4 pages. The reflection note should be about 1 page.

This assignment is about disseminating academic game studies knowledge in popular game journalistic formats. The most important evaluation aspect is how well the candidate can integrate and meaningfully use game studies knowledge in a game criticism text intended for a public format. The candidate must not be evaluated on whether they meet some criteria of being a game journalist/game critic or not, as this is not part of the course content or training.

As with Part 1, the assignment allows the candidate to choose the topic they are most interested in. The style and content in this assignment will differ greatly from Part 1. Here, it is important that the candidate styles their text to a specific game journalistic outlet, and this outlet must be explicitly stated (either in the beginning or in the reflection note). The candidate's 2–3 enclosed links to inspirational texts must be used in the evaluation of how well the candidate adapts to the style and language of the specific outlet. The candidate must write in their own voice, they are not supposed to emulate the specific styles or traits of individual critics/journalists. The most important aspect here is how well the text fits within the overall ecosystem of the outlet.

The candidate must be evaluated on how well their text follows the outlined principles of cultural journalism. The format and aims of cultural journalism are fairly similar to academic discussion and analysis. The text must not be written from a consumer journalism perspective where the main goal is to score/rank games and recommend/not recommend purchases of games or services. The candidate is allowed to use different rhetorical devices such as humor and metaphors, but they must take care to not become unprofessional (for example, being overly personal, one-sided, or too satirical or flippant).

The text must clearly reflect that the candidate writes from a game studies background and can draw on relevant syllabus texts to strengthen their arguments and enlighten the reader. The

method of referencing here differs greatly from traditional academic formats. Due to the game journalistic format requirements, the candidate should not explain terminology or use in-text references in the same way as in academic texts (see below for references rules).

The reflection note is part of the evaluation. While the game criticism text is the most important component, the reflection note is important for evaluating the relationship between the candidate's conscious choices and decisions and their incorporation into the text.

Reference rules for the term paper (from the assignment instructions)

Part 1 - Game Studies Essay

- Standard academic rules for the use and documentation of sources and references.

Part 2 - Game Criticism

- Different rules for the use of sources and references. One of the goals of the assignment is to stay true to the journalistic genre and format. Thus, it might be artificial and intrusive with long explications of terms and explicit references to academic texts or sources in a review or a feature story. There is no need for a (Richardson et al. 2021: 154)-reference in a review, for example. As such, try to weave the game studies perspectives seamlessly into the text. You are of course allowed to mention certain terms or names of researchers, but it should be done in a more publicly accessible format. Your audience here is not other scholars. Use the reflection note to explicitly discuss how you incorporated game studies research, which academic sources you used and why.

Syllabus literature spring 2024:

Books

Richardson, I., Hjorth, L., & Davies, H. (2021). *Understanding games and game cultures*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Articles

Aarseth, E. (2001). Computer Game Studies, Year One. *Game Studies*, 1.

<http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/editorial.html>

Blanco-Fernández, V., & Moreno, J. A. (2023). “Video Games Were My First Safe Space”: Queer Gaming in the Animal Crossing New Horizons LGBTIQA+ Community. *Games and culture*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120231205638>

Bringsjord, S. (2001). Is It Possible to Build Dramatically Compelling Interactive Digital Entertainment? *Game studies : the international journal of computer game research*, 1.

<http://www.gamestudies.org/>

Clarke, R. I., Lee, J. H., & Clark, N. (2017). Why Video Game Genres Fail: A Classificatory Analysis. *Games and culture*, 12(5), 445–465. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412015591900>

Condis, M., & Morrissette, J. (2023). Dudes, boobs, and GameCubes: video game advertising enters adolescence. *Media, culture & society*, 45(6), 1285–1302.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231159533>

Consalvo, M. (2009). There is No Magic Circle. *Games and culture*, 4(4), 408–417.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412009343575>

Crogan, P., Harvey, A., & Giddings, S. (2018). Indie Dreams: Video Games, Creative Economy, and the Hyperindustrial Epoch. *Games and culture*, 13(7), 671–689.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412018756708>

Kimberly Dennin, & Adrianna Burton. (2023). Experiential Play as an Analytical Framework: Empathetic and Grating Queerness in The Last of Us Part II. *Game studies: the international journal of computer game research*, 23(2). <https://gamestudies.org/2302/articles/denninburton>

Eskelinen, M. (2001). The gaming situation. *Game studies : the international journal of computer game research*, 1.

Fisher, H. D. (2015). Sexy, Dangerous—and Ignored: An In-depth Review of the Representation of Women in Select Video game Magazines. *Games and culture*, 10(6), 551–570.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412014566234>

Harviainen, J. T., Brown, A. M. L., & Suominen, J. (2018). Three Waves of Awkwardness: A Meta-Analysis of Sex in Game Studies. *Games and culture*, 13(6), 605–623.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412016636219>

Pulos, A. (2013). Confronting Heteronormativity in Online Games: A Critical Discourse Analysis of LGBTQ Sexuality in World of Warcraft. *Games and culture*, 8(2), 77–97.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412013478688>

Ip, B. (2011a). Narrative Structures in Computer and Video Games: Part 1: Context, Definitions, and Initial Findings. *Games and culture*, 6(2), 103–134.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412010364982>

Ip, B. (2011b). Narrative Structures in Computer and Video Games: Part 2: Emotions, Structures, and Archetypes. *Games and culture*, 6(3), 203–244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412010364984>

Jorgensen, K. (2019). Newcomers in a Global Industry: Challenges of a Norwegian Game Company. *Games and culture*, 14(6), 660–679. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412017723265>

Juul, J. (2001). Games telling stories? *Game studies : the international journal of computer game research*, 1.

Keefer, K. H. (2023). Becoming Bayek: Blackness, Egypt, and Identity in Assassin’s Creed: Origins. *Games and culture*, 18(7), 940–958. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120231152755>

Kennedy, H. W., Harvey, A., & Giddings, S. (2018). Game Jam as Feminist Methodology: The Affective Labors of Intervention in the Ludic Economy. *Games and culture*, 13(7), 708–727.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412018764992>

Monson, M. J. (2012). Race-Based Fantasy Realm: Essentialism in the World of Warcraft. *Games and Culture*, 7(1), 48–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412012440308>

Shaw, A. (2010). What Is Video Game Culture? Cultural Studies and Game Studies. *Games and culture*, 5(4), 403–424. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412009360414>

Mortensen, T. E. (2018). Anger, Fear, and Games: The Long Event of #GamerGate. *Games and culture*, 13(8), 787–806. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412016640408>

Nieborg, D. B., & Sihvonen, T. (2009). *The new gatekeepers: The occupational ideology of game journalism*.

https://www.gamespace.nl/content/NieborgSihvonen09_TheNewGatekeepers.pdf

- Prax, P., & Soler, A. (2016). Critical Alternative Journalism from the Perspective of Game Journalists. *Proceedings of 1st International Joint Conference of DiGRA and FDG*, 13(1), 1–15. <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/critical-alternative-journalism-from-the-perspective-of-game-journalists/>
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- Ryan, M.-L. (2001). Beyond Myth and Metaphor: The Case of Narrative in Digital Media. *Game studies* :, 1.
- Sarah Stang. (2019). “This Action Will Have Consequences”: Interactivity and Player Agency. *Game studies: the international journal of computer game research*, 19(1). <https://gamestudies.org/1901/articles/stang>
- Sotamaa, O. (2021). Studying Game Development Cultures. *Games and culture*, 16(7), 835–854. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120211005242>
- Tompkins, J. E., & Martins, N. (2022). Masculine Pleasures as Normalized Practices: Character Design in the Video Game Industry. *Games and culture*, 17(3), 399–420. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120211034760>
- Schott, G., & Thomas, S. (2008). The Impact of Nintendo’s «For Men» Advertising Campaign on a Potential Female Market. *Eludamos*, 2(1), 41–52. <https://doi.org/10.7557/23.5971>
- Tom Welch. (2018). The Affectively Necessary Labour of Queer Mods. *Game Studies*, 18(3). <http://gamestudies.org/1803/articles/welch>
- Zagal, J., Ladd, A., & Johnson, T. (2009). *Characterizing and understanding game reviews* (s. 215–222). ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1536513.1536553>