

CARLETON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS
COURSE 4629
2014 WINTER
INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO GAME STUDIES

Course Meets: Mondays 2:30 -5:30pm

Instructor: Jennifer R. Whitson

Office: River Building, room 4111

Office Hours: Mondays 5:30-6:30pm.

Online Office Hours: held by appointment, over Skype.

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Email is the best way to reach me. I will answer emails within 48 hours.

Pre-requisites & precluded Courses: Third Year Standing

Course Description and Objectives:

This course provides an introduction to the critical study of the fastest-growing yet least understood aspect of mass digital culture: video games. We will survey the history of video game forms, pairing specific games with readings drawing from a variety of theoretical perspectives. This approach will allow for the examination of a variety of issues necessary for developing a critical analysis of video games, including the nature and practice of play, hardware and other externalities, formal qualities, narrative structure and genre, simulation and realism, spatiality and property, gender and identity, authority and authorship, war and violence.

NB: While no previous experience with videogames is necessary, students should be prepared to devote a substantial amount of time outside of class to both the playing of video games on OSX or Windows (although in many cases games will also be available on either Xbox 360 or PS3) and to the serious critical reading and writing that this class will involve.

Objectives

1. Provide an introduction to some of the foundational texts in the field of video game studies, emphasizing their role in the formation of key concepts and arguments,
2. Describe some of the forms specific to video games as a medium,
3. Explore the relevance of existing critical theory to video game studies, including the ability to use video games as an allegory for the explanation of critical concepts, and,
4. Move the analysis of video games beyond deterministic arguments and incitements to moral panic towards an analysis of video games as part of a cultural field of discourses, forces, relations, processes, objects and effects.

Reading (s)/Textbook (s):

*** Completing required readings is central to your success in this course.***

Required readings: All of your required readings are available online or are posted on CULearn.

Course Requirements & Methods of Evaluation:

This is an upper year seminar course. You are consequently expected to participate actively in generating and pursuing discussion of issues. The aim of a seminar course is for all of us to discuss and analyze the assigned readings. Hence it is a REQUIREMENT for this course that you read all assigned readings prior to every class and actively participate in classroom discussion. This includes bringing questions/comments to class about the readings, asking questions, playing the assigned games, making *constructive* criticism of classroom presentations, and connecting themes discussed in class with contemporary events.

Five factors will be evaluated as part of this course. These are set out below.

Assignment	% of Total Grade	Due Date
300 word Abstract and Reference list (15 articles)	10%	February 10
Take-home game design assignment	20%	March 3
In-Class Debates: Oral debate Written Reflection	10% 10%	Sign-up
Final Research Essay (2,500 words)	30%	April 7
Participation: In-Class	12%	Weekly
On-line	8%	

Note: The above is the *only* grade structure. You will not be permitted to improve your grade by completing additional work or assignments.

Reference List and Abstract- Due February 10

On February 10th you will hand in a 300 word abstract of your final paper. This should be considerably advanced beyond a “I hope to look at...” style of summary. Instead, it should be a concise abstract of the argument you will be making in your final paper and identification of the sources you will potentially be drawing from.

In addition to your abstract, you must attach a list of at least 15 reference items pertaining to the topic of your final research essay. These materials will be drawn from academic journal articles, chapters in edited academic books, or academic articles published on the Web. **Note:** book titles and assigned course readings are not accepted. You should include the pertinent bibliographic information for the reference: title, author, year of publication, etc in the MLA or APA citation style. You should also highlight what you see as the five most promising references, indicating with a sentence or two why you think they might be important.

Rationale: The abstract is an opportunity to ensure you have selected an appropriate paper topic, to ensure an early start to the paper, and to ensure feedback on your paper so that you can earn a better mark on your final paper.

Many students have difficulty finding good sources, which are the backbone of good term papers. This assignment will follow an in-class session on how to find academic sources, explaining how they differ from non-academic sources. At this point, you do not have to read beyond the paper abstracts.

However, by beginning your reading early, you will have a head start on your term paper. Once I have your reference list, I may recommend other relevant sources for you to check out.

Take-Home Assignment - Due March 3

On February 24th you will be given a game design challenge that reflects and applies our readings and course discussion. The specifics of this assignment will be provided on that date.

In-Class Debates - Variable

There will be six debates held throughout the term (Jan 27, Feb 10 & 24, and March 10, 17, & 24,). You will each participate in one debate in which you will explore in depth a specific topic related to the course, such as the relationship of games to addiction, violence, learning, other forms of literature, etc.

First, sign up for a debate topic and a position (i.e., "side") in weeks 1 and 2 of this seminar. You might end up arguing a position you do not personally agree with. For each debate, one team will debate another team on a given topic. Since enrolment might fluctuate, you might work individually or you might work in pairs or groups of no more than 3 students. During sign up, all debate topics/positions must be filled by at least one person before another name can be added to a topic/position. People working in teams consisting of more than one person will be marked collectively.

If you are working in a team of more than one person (i.e., more than just you), you will be marked collectively on your oral presentation. You will all be graded individually for your written reflections. It is your responsibility to ensure a fair division of labour. It is also your responsibility to contribute your best work to your team.

Oral Debate: 10%

For your debate topic, you will conduct research to support your "side" of the debate. Your research should include a minimum of 4 academic/scholarly sources in addition to course readings, and an unlimited number of additional sources. Based on your research, you will develop an argument in favour of your position, and present this argument in the debate. You should also prepare rebuttals (i.e., counter-arguments) in advance ("prepared rebuttals"), as well as prepare to respond for possible rebuttals by your opponent ("spontaneous rebuttals").

In-class debate structure:

Stage 1: Side A presents arguments for their perspective – up to 10 minutes;

Stage 2: Side B presents arguments for their perspective – up to 10 minutes;

Stage 3: Side A presents their "rebuttal"/ counter-argument (both prepared and spontaneous) to Side B – approximately 5 minutes;

Stage 4: Side B presents their "rebuttal"/ counter-argument (both prepared and spontaneous) to Side A – approximately 5 minutes;

Stage 5: Side A and Side B take alternating turns in free debate – approximately 10 minutes;

Stage 6: Debate is open to entire class to participate. Both Sides A and B are free to respond – up to 20 minutes.

As you engage in debate, you should take brief notes on your own spontaneous rebuttals. That is, you should jot down brief notes when you come up with arguments or points on the spot.

Written Overview & Individual Reflection: 10%

Due 1 week after your oral debate

One week after your debate, you will submit a hard copy of your debate, composed of:

- (1) your original, unmodified presentation of arguments (i.e., the document you are reading/working off when you present), including your original, prepared rebuttals,
- (2) any notes you took on your spontaneous rebuttals,
- (3) the bibliography of all of your sources, and
- (4) a 1-2 page reflection on the debate itself in terms of the arguments advanced relating to your topic. **Each student must hand in their own personal reflection.**

Your reflection should be a contemplation of the argumentation in the debate in which you participated. You must address each of the following questions: 1) Were you persuaded by the arguments of your opponents? 2) What were the weaknesses and strengths in your own verbal rebuttals/counter-arguments? 3) What were the strengths and weaknesses of your opponents' position as they presented it? 4) Were there any particularly good insights or questions by classmates? 5) In what ways did the debate question constrain the structure of your argument? 6) How has the debate stimulated further thought on this topic for you?

Policy Notes: All presenters are encouraged to discuss their debate with me for a few minutes at least one week in advance. Presenters who plan to use technology with which the classroom is not already equipped should notify me at least one week in advance to ensure access to the relevant technology.

The oral presentation of your debate may not be delivered late except as a result of a documented illness or personal emergency. (For those working in pairs or groups of three, if only one person is able to attend, that person will deliver the debate on behalf of the team on the original scheduled date. Therefore, be sure to share your work with your partner(s) in advance of the presentation date.) Without documentation for an absence on your own debate day, you will receive a 20% penalty. You will be expected to deliver your oral presentation in the next class in which it is practicable, which will be determined by the instructor.

Rationale: Debating provides a forum to examine the merits and demerits of perspectives on a given topic, while facilitating peer-to-peer education. Your debate reflection is an individual opportunity to consider and reconsider the merits and demerits of the arguments advanced both by you and your opponent in order further to advance your contemplation of an issue. It is also an opportunity to consider questions and perspectives presented by your peers.

Final Term paper - Due April 7

This entire course is designed to help you build a substantial research paper on any topic you might choose pertaining to the the role of games and play in society. You are encouraged to write on any course-related topic that interests you. **You should consult with me concerning your choice of topic.** You are expected to produce *exceptional* final papers of approximately 2,500 words.

Although you are expected to commit to a research topic early in the course, you should also feel free to change your topic during the term as your interests change.

Term papers are **due the last day of class.**

Participation - Weekly

As an upper-year seminar class, you are expected to actively contribute to in-class discussion. This includes having read the material in advance of the class and making informed comments, observations and criticisms of the readings. **Note: simply attending class and making required presentations will count for a grade of 0 for classroom participation.** For full marks (and your added enjoyment) you're expected to keep up with our reading and play schedule, participate actively in our weekly seminars,

and contribute to our discussions, both in-class and online.

1. In-Class Participation (12%):

You are required to attend class regularly, with the readings completed in advance, and to actively participate in group discussions and activities. Participation will be gauged by attendance **and** engagement in class discussion and activities.

2. Online Participation (8%):

There will be a discussion board on CULearn (starting this class) where you can post comments and responses to posted topics that relate to our weekly play sessions and other items of interests. I will post weekly discussion questions to a specific discussion board. You can respond to these questions or post your own comments regarding the week's material. These comments/questions should be at least several sentences long and demonstrate an engagement with the material and an attempt to employ a Communications perspective.

Each comment is worth 1%. You can post as much as you like, but in order to be eligible for full marks you must post in at least 8 of the separate calendar weeks listed below:

January 6-12th	January 13-19th	January 20-26th
January 27- February 2nd	February 3 - February 9th	February 10th - February 23rd
February 24 - March 2nd	March 3 - March 9th	March 10th - March 23rd
March 24 - March 30th	March 31 - April 7th	

Please remember that these online spaces are a virtual extension of our classroom, and therefore, subject to the University's conduct regulations. At all times, you must respect your fellow classmates, and try to keep the discussion relevant to our course goals. When in doubt, follow The Golden Rule of Netiquette: *Don't post any comment you wouldn't read aloud in class.*

Grades:

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52
F = Below 50			

WDN = Withdrawn from the course

ABS = Student absent from final exam

DEF = Deferred

FND = (Failed, no Deferred) = Student could not pass the course even with 100% on final exam.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Grade Appeals:

I am willing to reconsider grades for all components of the course **if there is a sound basis for why the previous grading was in error**. I will provide the appropriate appeals form for you to fill out. Individuals who would like to have an assignment re-evaluated should outline **in writing** the reasons

why they believe their assignment/exam deserves a better grade. Assignments must be re-submitted no more than two weeks after the assignment was returned to the student.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT MY CLASS

Assignments

Please see the last page of this outline for important information on my late policies, rules for handing-in assignments, and extensions.

Missed Classes

You are responsible for knowing the material and announcements presented during seminars whether or not you attend class. Please arrange with another student to get missed notes and announcements. An excellent way to get in touch with fellow students is on the CULearn Discussion Boards.

Classroom Expectations and Behaviour

Please do not disrupt other students' ability to hear the seminar (e.g., do not arrive late or leave early, begin packing your belongings before class ends, chat while others are speaking etc.).

Technology Notes:

Laptop computers and other portable technologies should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, answer email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule.

Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

OTHER UNIVERSITY POLICIES (AKA THE FINE PRINT)

Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an

instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Carleton's Academic Integrity policy can be found here:
<http://www1.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity/>

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608 every term to ensure that I receive your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by the last official day to withdraw from classes in each term. For more details visit the PMC website: http://www.carleton.ca/pmc/students/acad_accom.html

In cases of illness, family death, etc., accommodations relating to course requirements can only be made with the submission of official certification (original + one copy).

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

COURSE CALENDAR & READINGS:

All readings are available on reserve at the library and/or online through CuLearn. Some of these are pdf files, some are direct links to the web, while others are links to the library system where you would have to navigate the journal itself to access the article.

Note: This is a tentative class reading schedule and will be modified as required. In particular, the games each week may change according to availability, price, etc.

Play: Each week, one game will be assigned as "homework". Most of these games are short, and can be completed in a few minutes to a few hours. The Library's new game centre hosts many of these games, for those students who are unable to play them at home.

Date	Topic	Readings	Play Schedule	Due Dates
Jan 6		no readings today discussion of play history		Sign up for Debate!
Jan 13 Wk 2	What is a Game?	Gee, James. "Why Game Studies Now? Video Games: A New Art Form." <i>Games and Culture</i> 1.1 (January 2006): 58-61. Huizinga, Johan. (1950). "Nature and Significance of Play" in <i>Homo Ludens</i> pg: 1-27 Available at: http://art.yale.edu/file_columns/00/00/1474/homo_ludens_johan_huizinga_routledge_1949.pdf	Play: To the Moon. (Freebird Games) (PC demo available online)	Sign up for Debate!
Jan 20 Wk3	Games as Communication Media	Juul, Jesper. "Games Telling Stories? A Brief Note on Games and Narratives." <i>Game Studies</i> 1.1 (July 2001). www.gamestudies.org/0101/juul-gts/ Bolter and Grusin. (1999) <i>Computer Games</i> . In <i>Remediation: Understanding New Media</i> . electronic copy in Carleton Library. http://catalogue.library.carleton.ca/search~S9?/aBolter%2C+J.+David%2C+1951-/abolter+j+david+1951/-3%2C-1%2C0%2CB/frameset&FF=abolter+j+david+1951&2%2C%2C5	Play: Bastion (Super Giant Games 2011). Xbox 360, iOS, \$5.	Finalize Debate Schedule.
Jan 27	Games, The Magic Circle, and the	Julian Dibbell, (1993) " A Rape in Cyberspace "	Play: September 12th (Frasca 2003). Free. Flash.	Debate 1 Jan 31 -Last day to withdraw

Wk4	"Real" world.	<p>Consalvo, Mia. (2009). "There is No Magic Circle" <i>Games and Culture</i> 4(4): 408-417</p> <p>Zimmerman, Eric. (2012). "Jerked Around by the Magic Circle". <i>Gamasutra</i>. http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6696/</p>	<p>from winter courses with a full fee adjustment.</p> <p>Your turn! In-class anonymous student evaluation of the course. If there are issues you'd like to raise, or improvements you'd like me to make, tell me now!</p>
Feb 3 wk5	Games, Socialization, and Learning	<p>James Paul Gee. (2009). "Cats and Portals: Video Games, Learning, and Play" Available at: http://www.jamespaulgee.com/sites/default/files/pub/CatsAndPortals.pdf</p> <p>Bogost, Ian. (2008). "The Rhetoric of Video Games." <i>The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning</i>. Edited by Katie Salen. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 117-140. http://www.arts.rpi.edu/~ruiz/EGD_Fall10/readings/RhetoricVideoGames_Bogost.pdf</p> <p>Bogost, Ian. (2011). "Gamification is Bullshit". <i>The Atlantic</i>. http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/08/gamification-is-bullshit/243338/</p>	<p>Play: Portal 1 or Portal 2 (Valve). PC, Xbox 360, or PS3. \$15.</p>
Feb	War and the	Kline, S., N. Dyer-Witheyford, and	Play: Papers, Debate 2

10 Wk6	Military-Industrial Complex	<p>G. De Peuter. 2005. "Origins of an Industry: Cold Warriors, Hackers, and Suits, 1960-1984 " in Digital Play: The interaction of technology, culture, and marketing. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press. pg 84-108 . Electronic library copy: http://catalogue.library.carleton.ca/search~S9?/tdigital+play/tdigital+play/1%2C1%2C2%2CB/frameset&FF=tdigital+play+the+interaction+of+technology+culture+and+marketing&2%2C%2C2</p> <p>Stahl, Roger. "Have You Played the War On Terror?" Critical Studies in Media Communication 23.2 (June 2006): 112 130.</p>	Please. (Lucas Pope). PC. \$10	Abstract and Reference list due
Feb 17	NO CLASS TODAY!			
Wk7				
Feb 24	Dark Play	<p>Bartle, Richard. (1996). Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players Who Suit Muds. http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm</p> <p>Consalvo, Mia. Gaining Advantage: How videogame players define and negotiate cheating. https://www.academia.edu/654443/Gaining_advantage_How_videogame_players_define_and_negotiate_cheating</p> <p>Carter, Marcus and Gibbs, Martin. eSports in EVE Online: Skullduggery, Fair Play and Acceptability in an Unbounded Competition. Proceedings of FDG 2013. http://www.fdg2013.org/program/papers/paper07_carter_gibbs.pdf</p>	Play: Journey (thatgamecompany). PS3. \$15	<p>Debate 3</p> <p>March 1 - last day to apply to graduate.</p> <p>Take Home Assigned Today</p>
Wk8				
Mar 3	Virtual Economies and MMOs	Castronova, Ed. "On Virtual Economies." Game Studies 3.2 (December	Play: Clash of Clans. (Supercell). free. Android and	Take Home Due

Wk9		<p>2003).www.gamestudies.org/0302/castronova/</p> <p>Dibbell, Julian. "The Life of the Chinese Gold Farmer." The New York Times Magazine. 17 June 2007. www.nytimes.com/2007/06/17/magazine/17lootfarmers-t.html?_r=1</p> <p>Dibbell, Julian. (2008). Mutilated Furies, Flying Phalluses: Put the Blame on Grievers, the Sociopaths of the Virtual World. <i>Wired</i>. 16:2. http://www.wired.com/gaming/virtualworlds/magazine/16-02/mf_goons</p>	iOS.	
Mar 10 Wk 10	Subjectivity and Race	<p>Watch: Lisa Nakamura. Video: Berkman Luncheon Talk, "Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game: Internet Games, Social Inequality, and Racist Talk as Griefing." Berkman Center for Internet Research, Harvard University, June, 2010.</p> <p>Nardi B and Kow YM (2010) Digital Imaginaries: How we know what we (think we) know about Chinese gold farming. <i>First Monday</i>, 15(6), http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3035/2566</p>	<p>Play: Your choice of a MMO, such as World of Warcraft, Eve Online, or a MOBA such as League of Legends etc. 2 hours. PC. Free.</p>	Debate 4
Mar 17 Wk 11	Subjectivity, Gender, and Feminism	<p>Bryce, J. & Rutter, J. (2002). Killing like a girl: gendered gaming and girl gamers visibility. CGDC Conference Proceedings. Finland: University of Tampere Press, 243–255. http://www.cric.ac.uk/cric/staff/Jason_Rutter/papers/cgdc.pdf</p> <p>Consalvo, Mia. "It's a Queer World After All: Studying The Sims and</p>	<p>Play: Dys4ia (Anna Anthropy) Flash game. free. http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/591565</p>	Debate 5

		Sexuality” http://archive.glaad.org/documents/csms/The_Sims.pdf		
		Kennedy, Helen W. “Lara Croft: Feminist Icon or Cyberbimbo? On the Limits of Textual Analysis.” <i>Game Studies</i> 2.2 (December 2002). www.gamestudies.org/0202/kennedy/		
Mar 24 Wk 12	Playing at Work: User Generated Content	Yee, Nick. “The Labor of Fun: How Video Games Blur the Boundaries of Work and Play.” <i>Games and Culture</i> , 1(1), January, 2006. 68-71. available at: http://www.nickyee.com/pubs/Yee%20-%20Labor%20of%20Fun%20(2006).pdf	Play: Minecraft (Mojang). Any available platform. (smartphone, console, or PC)	Debate 6
		Postigo, Hector. 2003. “From Pong to Planet Quake: Post-industrial transitions from leisure to work.” <i>Information, Communication & Society</i> 6(4):593–607.		
Mar 31 Wk 13	Working at Play: Labour in the Game Industry	O’Donnell, Casey. 2009. “The Everyday Lives of Video Game Developers: Experimentally understanding underlying systems/structures.” <i>Transformative Works and Cultures</i> 2(March).	Play: Game Dev Story. (Kairosoft). Android and iOS. a few dollars.	
		Dyer-Witheford, Nick, and Greig de Peuter. 2006. “‘EA Spouse’ and the Crisis of Video Game Labour: Enjoyment, exclusion, exploitation, exodus.” <i>Canadian Journal of Communication</i> 31:599–617.		
Apr 7 Wk 13	Participatory Culture, Modding and Spectatorship	Sotamaa, Olli. (2010) “When the Game is Not Enough”. <i>Games and Culture</i> . 5-3: 239-255/	Play: TBA	Papers Due Today
		Jenkins, Henry. “Quentin Tarantino’s Star Wars?: Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture.”		

web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/starwars.html

Taylor, T.L. and Witkowski, Emma. 2010. "This is How We Play It: What a Mega-LAN Can Teach Us About Games," co-authored with Emma Witkowski, *Foundations of Digital Games Conference Proceedings*, Monterey, CA. [[PDF](#)]

Pointers for Reading the Assigned Articles

Many students initially find it difficult to assess and critique academic papers. Below are some guidelines to help hone your critical thinking skills, and to stimulate intellectual discussion in the classroom.

I *strongly* recommend that after you have read the paper that you take 5-10 minutes to concretely think about the paper. This will be the most important time you spend in relation to each assigned article. Use this time to note *two or three points* that you would like to make about the piece if you are called upon to comment on the reading, and formulate 1 question that flows from the week's topic. You are free to address any points you like, but as a form of guidance, consider the following:

- How does the reading relate to other readings we have done?
- Are some parts of the argument stronger than others?
- Does the author provide sufficient evidence to make his/her argument?
- Are there important factors or counter-arguments that the author has overlooked?
- Is there an example or counter-example from current events that can be used to illustrate a point related to the article?
- If the author is correct, what consequences would follow for society, policy, theory, etc?
- What political implications result from the author's position?
- Is the argument made in the paper and example (or refutation) of a point in a different article that we read?
- Can the lessons learned in that paper be applied to other societies or cultures?
- Were there parts of the paper that require further clarification?
- Could you apply a concept that the author has introduced in another setting?
- Did you think of another historical example that reinforced or contradicted the author's argument?
- If you had a strong reaction to an article, why do you think you had such a reaction?
- Do concepts from your other classes provide insight into this paper?
- What additional evidence would you need to be convinced of his/her argument?
- How could the author improve his/her argument?
- What does the argument tell us about society, or human nature?
- Do the conclusions match the evidence?
- Is there anything else you think is interesting and/or relevant?

Policy and Guidelines for Written Assignments:

Policies:

- Students must always retain a hard copy of all work that is submitted.
- Assignments can be handed-in in class, or at Communications general office (4312 River Building).

Extensions and Late Assignments:

- All assignments are expected to be submitted on time, unless you have: i) a medical note from a doctor explaining that you could not complete the assignment; or ii) special permission for an extension from me.
- You may submit written assignments up to 3 days late without penalty; however, late assignments will not receive extensive written feedback.
- Written assignments submitted more than 3 days late will be docked 5%/day, up to a maximum of 20%. Assignments handed in more than 7 days past the due date will not be accepted, and will score 0. In other words, plan ahead, develop a work schedule, and stick to it.
- Any request for an extension beyond 3 days must be submitted by email to the instructor at least one week before the due date.
- Failure to complete or hand in a written assignment earns a zero on that project.

Notes for Handing in Assignments:

- Please don't bother using fancy cover sheets, duo-tangs, etc. Simply staple your paper in the left hand corner.
- Keep an electronic and paper copy of any assignments you hand in. If I cannot find my copy of your paper and you cannot immediately provide another copy I will presume that the assignment was not handed in.
- Papers should employ proper formatting as outlined in one of the different academic styles, such as the MLA or Chicago format. This should include a cover sheet that indicates your name, student number, title, instructor's name, course number, and **word count**. Word count should not include your references. Papers should have page numbering, one inch margins, be double spaced, and use 12 point, Times New Roman (default) font.
- If you are unfamiliar with an academic style you should consult one of the many books in the library that will provide guidance on academic styles. Perdue also has online guides found here: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>
- Late papers can be handed in to the Communications general office on the 4th floor of the River Building. The administrative assistants in the office will date stamp late papers.
- **Never** slide an assignment under my office door. They are apt to be lost. Moreover, as I am often not in my office for days at a time, they will be graded as being late according to the day they are found (if they are ever found. My office is a wasteland and destroyer of papers).
- Be sure to back up your work (both locally and to network drives) and print out hard copies regularly as you write. That way, if your computer fails, you can always locate another computer at the University to finish your work.