

## **History and Theory of Games**

Art 380 (3 Credit Hours)

Fall 2009

**Instructor: Neal McDonald, M.S., M.F.A.,**

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### **Course Description and Rationale**

#### **From the Student Catalogue:**

This seminar offers an in-depth treatment of historical, philosophical, and theoretical issues related to game design and play. The course traces the origins of gaming and follows its evolution into the contemporary idiom. Analysis will also cover how multi-person independent decision-making and strategic situations provide insight on political science, anthropology, economics, sociology, and biology.

This is a combination art history, game studies, business, and game design class.

#### **Textbook:**

Rules of Play, Salen and Zimmerman, ISBN 0-262-24045-9

#### **Additional Texts, helpful but not required**

The Book of Games: Strategy, Tactics and History, by Jack Botermans

Many games, big, pretty book, rules, some history.

Handbook of Computer Game Studies, by Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein

Nice alternate textbook

A History of Board Games Other than Chess, by Harold James Ruthren Murray

Out of print, but a lovely set of games, esp. Asian chess variants

Official Rules of Card Games, Alfred Morehead, ed.

I have the "up-to-date" 50<sup>th</sup> version, published in 1957. :)

Goren's New Bridge Complete, by Charles Goren

How to Think Ahead in Chess, by I. A. Horowitz and Fred Reinfeld

Classic books on a classic game; a taste of the depths available.

Baseball (2d ed.): A History of America's Game, by Benjamin G Rader

An example of game-embedded-in-culture. Cricket would work, too.

Homo Ludens, by Johan Huizinga

Man, Play and Games, by Roger Caillois

For when you're feeling underphilosophicalised.

Any widely-used child development textbook

The course web site is [www.umbc.edu/~mcdo/380/](http://www.umbc.edu/~mcdo/380/)

The course web site contains rubrics, lecture notes, and links to other materials. I will be updating it throughout the semester. Look at the course web site, please.

**Special Assistance Notice (from the *Americans with Disabilities Act*):**

If you have a disabling condition that will require an accommodation in tests or class structure, please advise the instructor or the department accordingly.

**Academic Integrity**

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the UMBC Student Handbook, the Faculty Handbook, or the UMBC Policies section of the UMBC Directory [or for graduate courses, the Graduate School web site].

**Bottom Line:** If you wish to use work that it not your own, give attribution.

**Evaluation:**

Your final grade is the average of all your grades.

**1) Your attendance grade is one grade.**

You must sign in before class starts. I put the sign-in sheet away at the beginning of class to minimize disruption.

Each time you do not sign in lowers your attendance grade 3%.

Excused absences must be arranged before 3 the day of the class.

**2) Writing Assignments:** there will be three papers, each describing a game and critiquing it.

**3) Tests:** There will be 4 tests, over chapter contents and the games described in class. The final exam is not cumulative, and counts the same as the other tests.

## Tentative Schedule

#	date	day	topic	book chapter
	31-Aug	M	no class	
1		W	syllabus, writing	
	7-Sep	M	no class	
2		W	board	3 Meaningful Play, Ludus Florentis
3	14-Sep	M	board	4 Design, bioshock postmortem
4		W	Chess	5 Systems
5	21-Sep	M	Guest Lecture: Chess?	
6		W	review, early computer	6 interactivity
7	28-Sep	M	test 1	7 definition
8		W	early computer	8 digital games
9	5-Oct	M	card games	9 the magic circle
10		W	cards	10 rules play culture
11	12-Oct	M	cards	Postmortem: Weapon Of Choice
12		W	cards	14 emergent systems
13	19-Oct	M	Guest Lecture: Bridge	
14		W	review, puzzles	15 uncertainty
15	26-Oct	M	test 2, puzzles	16 information theory
16		W	war games	18 dynamics
17	2-Nov	M	war games	little wars .txt, PM: Word Fu
18		W	war games	19 game theory
19	9-Nov	M	war games	21 rule breaking
20		W	review	Postmortem: Tomb Raider PDF
21	16-Nov	M	test 3, simulation	22 defining play
22		W	simulation	24 types of pleasure
23	23-Nov	M	Guest Lecture: Video Games	27 simulation
		W	Thanksgiving	
24	30-Nov	M	simulation	28 social play, PM: Brothers in Arms
25		W	simulation	29
26	7-Dec	M	simulation	Formal Abstract Design Tools PDF
27		W	simulation	30
28	14-Dec	M	Go	33, PM:BIT TRIP BEAT
	15-Dec	T	Study Day	
	18-Dec	F	Final Exam, 1-3 PM	