**INST 728F: Games & Learning [and Being Human]**

Dr. Caro Williams-Pierce [she/her/hers]

Spring 2020

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit Hours: 3 credits</th>
<th>Office Hours: By Arrangement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Hours: Tuesdays, 2 - 4:45 pm</td>
<td>Office Location: Patuxent, 2109G</td>
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</table>
| Course Location: HBK 0302H  
(Game Lab location: Patuxent 2109D) | E-Mail: carowp@umd.edu  
If you need to contact Caro about absences, issues, etc., use this email address |

**Introduction:**

This course is for masters and doctoral students who are interested in the relationship between games and learning, whether they play games already or not! This course will explore the theoretical and practical relationship between games and learning through a read-watch-play structure that involves weekly reading, videos, and games. Students will learn how to use game design principles as a lens for understanding well designed games, evaluating how learning is designed into such digital contexts, and identifying good learning experiences. Readings from educational researchers and games researchers will be paired with particular games in order to illustrate different approaches to designing learning in games, and how those differing approaches influence the emergent gameplay experience.

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Recognize and critique the underlying principles of existing games;
2. Analyze the role of game design in constraining and affording different types of learning;
3. Understand the relationship between the underlying principles, mechanisms, and aesthetics and the emergent gameplay experience; and
4. Develop an awareness of the complex cultural nature of games (like any other art produced within a society by an individual or group).

**Required Materials:**

- *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* [2nd edition] by James Paul Gee. ([publisher website](#))
- Up to $50 for purchasing games throughout the course
- Other materials (articles, videos, games) available linked directly below
- Course website: elms.umd.edu
  - Any unexpected but important information (e.g., class cancelled due to weather) will be communicated via the Announcements system on ELMS - so make sure you're set up to get those notifications!
  - Do not use ELMS to contact Caro with questions - use her email address ([carowp@umd.edu](mailto:carowp@umd.edu)) instead

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1 Also known as: The Hula Hoop Class.
Assignments:

- **Read**: Each week there will be at least one (and often more) reading of varying length, ranging from books to research articles to blog posts.

- **Watch**: Each week there will be at least one video of varying length - maximum required video viewing time will not be over 45 minutes per week.

- **Play**: Each week there will be at least one game to play. Some games will be short, and you'll finish them quickly; some will be fairly bland, and Caro will note a shorter amount of time you should play to just get an idea of the gameplay; others will be long or impossible to actually “complete”, and you should play them for an hour. If not otherwise noted, play the game for an hour. (Caro recommends setting a timer, because time becomes weirdly fluid when gaming…)
  - Note: The games are free, have a free demo, or are available in the Game Lab, unless otherwise stated.

- **Weekly Written Reflections (13 total)**: weekly one-page written reflections that connect each part of the homework (generally reading articles, watching videos, and playing games). Each type of media is worth one point for a thoughtful mention; a percentage of a point if only summarily mentioned; and zero points if the media is not mentioned. For example, in Week 2 there are two readings, a single video, and a single game - a well-written reflection that synthesizes the four will receive the full 4 out of 4 points. The reflections are due in old-fashioned paper form at the beginning of each class.

- **In-class presentations (2 total)**:
  - Presentation #2 (5-minute presentation on April 14): Analyzing failure and feedback. More details here.

- **Class facilitation in pairs or groups (2) for the full class, or solo for half the class**: Class facilitation involves developing the class agenda and activities for the class. More information available here.

- **Final project (due the last day of class)**: choose one of the following for your final project: a 5-minute video; a 10-minute in-class presentation; or a 10-page paper. The focus is on synthesizing what you’ve learned about games and learning in this class. More information will be forthcoming later in the semester.

Grading:
All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. If you would like to review any of your grades or have questions about how something was scored, please email Caro to schedule a time to meet in her office. Caro is happy to discuss any of your grades with you, and if she has made a mistake she will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

There are four different components to your final grade (out of 100 points): Read-Watch-Play (60%); class presentations (10%); class facilitation (15%); and the Final Project (15%).
- **Read-Watch-Play**: 66 points available in total
- **Class Presentations**: Each presentation is worth 5 points of your final grade - with two presentations, this accounts for 10% of your final grade.
- **Class Facilitation**: You will be responsible for two class facilitations, in pairs or small groups with classmates. Facilitating will make up 15% of your final grade.
- **Final Project**: The final project will make up 15% of your final grade.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Total Points Available</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read-Watch-Play</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Presentations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Facilitation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15%</td>
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**Final Grade Cutoffs (*no rounding*)**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Cutoff</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>87.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>84.00%</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>81.00%</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>78.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;78.00%</td>
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**Policies regarding late or missed assignments:**
- **Excused absence for read-watch-play assignments**: life happens, and sometimes it's not possible to get everything done. Consequently, everyone gets a single excused absence *without an explanation* - you don't even need to explain why you are absent, or why you haven't finished the weekly assignments. This excused absence applies to all of the following for a single week: missing class; not turning in the reflection; and not doing the weekly reading/video/gameplaying.
- **Caveat**: this does not apply to in-class presentations or class facilitation. Missing these requires a legitimate excuse that Caro will evaluate on a one-on-one basis. If you have to miss such a deadline, you should inform Caro as soon as possible, indicating when you plan to submit your work. You should use this clause only for extraordinary personal reasons (e.g., personal illness, family concerns, etc.). If that absence is approved, you will have the opportunity to make up all the points through an alternative assignment we develop together. If it is not approved, then Caro will give you the
opportunity to make up a *percentage* of the points through an alternative writing assignment that Caro will develop with a hard deadline.

### Class Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading &amp; Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Caro facilitates</td>
<td><strong>In Class:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Experience survey&lt;br&gt;• Syllabus annotation (in-class activity)&lt;br&gt;• Reading the Discourse Policy, then discussing&lt;br&gt;• Watch: James Paul Gee&lt;br&gt;• Fill out Class Facilitation Survey&lt;br&gt;• Walk over to Game Lab if it’s ready to be shown!</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 28</td>
<td>Introductions (names and pronouns)&lt;br&gt;Experience Survey&lt;br&gt;Syllabus and Discourse Policy&lt;br&gt;Video and group discussions</td>
<td><strong>Assigned (4):</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Read first half of Gee’s book (chapters 1-4; pp. 1-112)&lt;br&gt;• Read Don’t Play the Goose Game&lt;br&gt;• Watch Pikmin You Play (20 minutes; start around the 2:10 mark)&lt;br&gt;• Play Tomb Raider (free demo for PS4 or Windows; if you only have access to a Mac, let me know)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Due at class:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• 1 page written reflection</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Caro facilitates</td>
<td><strong>Assigned (4):</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Read second half of Gee’s book (chapters 5-8; pp. 113-206)&lt;br&gt;• Read Gee (2005)&lt;br&gt;• Watch Constance Steinkuehler (8 minutes)&lt;br&gt;• Play Oregon Trail&lt;br&gt;<strong>Due at class:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• 1 page written reflection</td>
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<td>February 4</td>
<td>Theme: Getting settled into the class norms and assignments</td>
<td><strong>Class Facilitation Leaders: Heather &amp; Thomas</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Theme:</strong> Learning in games (Gee’s perspective)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Class Facilitation Leaders: <em>Heather &amp; Thomas</em></td>
<td><strong>Assigned (5):</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Read Squire (2006)&lt;br&gt;• Read Squire &amp; Jenkins (2003)&lt;br&gt;• Watch American McGee’s Alice cutscenes (at least the first 20 minutes)&lt;br&gt;• Play Queers in Love at the End of the World a couple of times&lt;br&gt;• Play Depression Quest for 30 minutes</td>
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<td>February 11</td>
<td><strong>Theme:</strong> Games as designed experiences</td>
<td><strong>Class Facilitation Leaders: Matthew</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Theme:</strong> Games as designed experiences</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>February 18</td>
<td><strong>Assigned (5):</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Read Squire (2006)&lt;br&gt;• Read Squire &amp; Jenkins (2003)&lt;br&gt;• Watch American McGee’s Alice cutscenes (at least the first 20 minutes)&lt;br&gt;• Play Queers in Love at the End of the World a couple of times&lt;br&gt;• Play Depression Quest for 30 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Facilitation Leaders/Grouping</td>
<td>Due at class:</td>
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<td>5 February</td>
<td>Tony</td>
<td><em>1 page written reflection</em></td>
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<td><em>A short paragraph naming a game (of a type you’ve never played before) and explaining why you’ve chosen it.</em></td>
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<td><em>This will be the game you’ll play for next week, and will be the game you present about in Presentation 1.</em></td>
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<td>6 March</td>
<td>Caro facilitates</td>
<td><em>1 page written reflection</em></td>
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<td><em>1 page update on your gameplay experience for Presentation #1</em></td>
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<td>7 March</td>
<td>Cecilia &amp; Hayleigh</td>
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feedback to see if I need to adjust the syllabus. Any changes will be discussed in class in Week 8, and will begin in Week 9.

### Spring Break

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Facilitation Leaders</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Assigned (4):</th>
<th>Due at class:</th>
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</table>
| 8 March 24 | Nihal                       | Over the shoulder (limited third person view) games | ● Read Devane & Squire (2008)  
● Watch Miegakure  
● Play Heroes of the Storm  
● Play The Company of Myself | ● 1 page written reflection                  |
| 9 March 31 | Thomas                      | Third-person or “god’s eye view” games          | ● Read Jenkins (2004)  
● Read (well, Listen) to Game Studies Study Buddies (Episode 18; 90 minutes)  
● Watch: Starcraft 2:  
  ○ If you’re new to Starcraft 2, watch this video  
  ○ If you’re familiar with Starcraft 2, watch the 2019 championship games between Reynor and Dark (play starts around the 21 minute mark)  
● Play Civilization VI (available in lab) | ● 1 page written reflection                  |
| 10 April 7 | Cecilia                     | Broken games and failure (an intentional pairing!) | ● Read closely the Wikipedia entry on free-to-play games  
● Read Juul (2009)  
● Watch Dennis Ramirez (9 minutes)  
● Watch Tom Chatfield (16 minutes)  
● Play Hearthstone  
● Play Candy Crush for 30 minutes | ● 1 page written reflection                  |
| 11        | Caro facilitates            | Assigned (6)                                    |                                                               |                                           |
| April 14 | Theme: Broken games, continued  
In-class activity (30 minutes): discuss and brainstorm for the Final Project.  
In-class on-your-own task: find someone to play *Words with Friends* with for the next two weeks.  
|---|---|
|   | • Read *The Curse of the Cow Clicker: How a Cheeky Satire Became a Video Game Hit*  
• Read *Talking Point: What does the Nintendo Seal of Approval Mean in 2019?*  
• Watch *Gabe Zichermann* (60 minutes)  
• Play *Two Dots* to Level 20  
• Play *Plants vs. Zombies 2* for 30 minutes  
• Play *Farmville* for 30 minutes  
**Due at class:**  
• Due one hour before class: share your Google Slides with Caro. File should be labeled *FirstNameLastName_Presentation2*  
• 1 page written reflection |
| 12 April 21 | **Caro’s out of town at a conference, so no mandatory attendance - work can be done independently on your own time, or during class time in the classroom - up to you!**  
Theme: Casual games & serious games  
|   | **Assigned (7):**  
• Read *Williams-Pierce & Swartz (2016)*  
• Read *Karakostas, Palaigeorgiou, & Kompatsiaris (2011)*  
• Watch *Jane McGonigal* (20 minutes)  
• Play *Threes* for 30 minutes ($2)  
• Play *Words with Friends* for a bit (play casually for two weeks)  
• Play *Spent* or *Bound by Blood*  
• Play *We Become What We Behold*  
**Due at class:**  
• 1 page written reflection *(submitted online via ELMS)* |
| 13 April 28 | **Class Facilitation Leaders: Heather**  
Theme: The social around games  
|   | **Assigned (4):**  
• Read *Steinkuehler (2006)*  
• Read *Stevens, Satwicz, & McCarthy (2008)*  
• Watch *Call of Duty 1 video* (12 minutes)  
• Play *Words with Friends* for another bit  
**Due at class:**  
• 1 page written reflection |
| 14 May 5 | **Class Facilitation Leaders: Hayleigh & Matthew**  
Theme: The social around games, cont.  
|   | **Assigned (5):**  
• Read *Martin et al. (2012)*  
• Read *Video-Game Violence is Now a Partisan Issue*  
• Read *Video Games and Real-World Violence: No Connection* |
### In-class activity (15 minutes):
Discuss what useful feedback is for student evaluations.

- Watch [25 Invisible Benefits of Gaming While Male](#)
- Play [World of Warcraft](#) (free for first 20 levels)

**Due at class:**
- 1 page written reflection

### 15 May 12

**Caro facilitates**

**Theme:** Games, learning, and information

**Assigned (5):**
- Read [Williams-Pierce (2019)](#)
- Read [Williams (2011)](#)
- Watch [Daphne Bavelier](#) (18 minutes)
- Watch [Brenda Romero](#) (9 minutes)
- Play [How to Remember Anything Forever-ish](#)
- Optional: Play a relaxation app: one of these (based on breathing) or this one (not based on breathing; recommended for people with asthma or other breathing problems)

**Due at class:**
- 1 page written reflection
- Final project due! If you chose a video or a presentation, share the files an hour before class with Caro

* If you find a broken hyperlink in this syllabus, and are the first to email Caro about it, a point will be added to your next Read-Watch-Play written reflection.

* If you find a missing Content Warning, and are the first to add it as a comment here on the syllabus, a point will be added to your next Read-Watch-Play written reflection.

### Syllabus Change Policy:
This syllabus is merely a guide and is subject to change without advance notice.

### Various University Policies and Resources

**Names/Pronouns and Self-Identification:**
The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. Caro invites you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit [trans.umd.edu](#) to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be
self-identified, not presumed or imposed. Caro will do her best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and asks you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Students with Disabilities:
The University is legally obligated to provide appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. The campus' Disability Support Services Office (DSS) works with students and faculty to address a variety of issues ranging from test anxiety to physical and psychological disabilities. If a student or instructor believes that the student may have a disability, they should consult with DSS (4-7682, email dissup@umd.edu). Note that to receive accommodations, students must first have their disabilities documented by DSS. The office then prepares an Accommodation Letter for course instructors regarding needed accommodations. Students are responsible for presenting this letter to their instructors.

Available Support Resources:
Want writing support? Everyone can use some help sharpen their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting ter.ps/writing and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need (see go.umd.edu/assistance), and if you just need someone to talk to, visit counseling.umd.edu or one of the many other resources on campus.

Most services are free because you have already paid for it with your student fees, and everyone needs help… all you have to do is ask for it.

How to write professional emails

Basic Needs Security:
If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live and believe this may affect your performance in this course, please visit go.umd.edu/basic-needs for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

Academic Integrity:
Academic dishonesty is a corrosive force in the academic life of a university. It jeopardizes the quality of education and depreciates the genuine achievements of others. Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of academic dishonesty is not a neutral act. All members of the University Community - students, faculty, and staff - share the responsibility to challenge and make known acts of apparent academic dishonesty.

Students have a responsibility to familiarize themselves with violations of the Code of Academic Integrity. Among these include:

- Cheating: "Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise."
• Fabrication: "Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise."
• Facilitating Academic Dishonesty: "Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty."
• Plagiarism: "Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in an academic exercise."

For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit https://studentconduct.umd.edu/.

Emergency Preparedness:
See the following URL: http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/

Course Evaluations:
Course evaluations are a part of the process by which the University of Maryland seeks to improve teaching and learning. The University Senate approved the implementation of a standard, online, University-wide course evaluation instrument. Each course evaluation contains a set of universal questions, and some are supplemented by questions from specific colleges. Students who leave no "Pending" evaluations in their Evaluation Dashboard each semester can view the aggregate results of a subset of universal items online. Across the University, course evaluations are being administered through a web-based system dubbed CourseEvalUM. All information submitted to the Evaluation System is confidential. Instructors and academic administrators can only view summarized evaluation results after final grades have been submitted. Instructors and academic administrators cannot identify which submissions belong to which students. This standardized set of evaluation results provides the University with useful information on teaching and student learning across the campus.

(Some of the) References


Karakostas, Palaigeorgiou, & Kompatsiaris. (2011). WeMake: A framework for letting students create tangible, embedded, and embodied environments for their own STEAM learning. Studies in Computational Intelligence, 342(December), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-18084-2_1


