

**City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus**

**offered by School of Creative Media
with effect from Semester A 2017/18**

Part I Course Overview

Course Title: The Canon of Computer Games

Course Code: SM5338

Course Duration: 1 semester

Credit Units: 3 credits

Level: P5

Medium of Instruction: English

Medium of Assessment: English

Prerequisites:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Precursors:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Equivalent Courses:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Exclusive Courses:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

Focusing on the aesthetics of computer games, this course aims to raise the students' awareness of the most important computer games and allows them to understand why these games can be considered the most important. The course will provide students with the foundational knowledge that allows them to participate in scholarly and critical debates, and, to engage in a historically aware creative practice. Taking this class, the students will become aware of computer game genres, hardware platforms, and historical eras, in terms of their impact to different trajectories of computer game aesthetics. Questions asked in class include: What makes a computer game good? How have cultural, material, and socioeconomical aspects affected the development of computer game aesthetics? What makes a computer game important in the history of computer games? Can bad games be important?

Teaching and learning activities emphasize independent close-playing session as well as contextualizations of games within cultural history. Students will be exposed to a selection of contemporary and historical computer games on a variety of platforms, using both current equipment and emulator software, and will be required to play the games and document and reflect on their experiences and present their reflections in class. Documentations may take the form of reflection essays, videos, images, etc. The games to be played will be contextualised in lectures focusing on individual historical eras, platforms, socioeconomic situations, etc.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Identify the most important computer games on a variety of platforms		✓		
2.	Describe the aesthetic, cultural and material criteria according to which these games can be considered most important		✓	✓	
3.	Differentiate between computer games based on a variety of criteria		✓	✓	
4.^	Postulate their own historically aware criteria with which to identify and highlight individual computer games		✓	✓	✓
5.	Argue for the importance of their selected games		✓	✓	✓
		100%			

^ Negotiated Learning Outcome (NLO) explicitly articulating the elements of Discovery oriented learning.

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.					Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5	
Close playing sessions	Close-playing of relevant computer/video/arcade games	✓	✓				
Documentation and reflection exercises	Writing assignments on relevant games	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Final essay / in-depth game review(s)	Final written work on a selected game	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lectures	Lectures covering key positions in computer games criticism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.					Weighting	Remarks
	1	2	3	4	5		
Continuous Assessment: 100%							
In-class participation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Presentations / assignments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Final essay (in-depth game review)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Game-playing reflective diary / blog	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Examination: 0% (duration: ---, if applicable)							
						100%	

5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Participation and Performance	This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the tutorial sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to his/her peer members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate class discussion and comment on other points - In-depth pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Interpret others' views with an open mind and ready to negotiate - Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and synthesis with informed views - Constructively critical, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points - Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Interpret opinions effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attentive in in-class participation, listening with comprehension, but only infrequently contributing - Adequate pre-class preparation but little familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Fair ability in interpreting opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people's views - Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Poor ability in interpreting opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher - No pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials - Minimal ability in interpreting opinions

2. Presentation	This assessment will grade on content and fluency of presentation. Students should show their co-operation to conduct a well-organized presentation with their own argument and evidence from readings and notes. The threshold of 'discovery' lied in a student' s self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rich, informative content, excellent grasp of the material with in-depth and extensive knowledge of the subject matter - Rigorous organization, coherent structure, and systematic exposition with a strong sense of narrative - Superior presentation skills: distinct pronunciation, fluent expression and appropriate diction, exact time-management - Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate content with firm grasp of the material that informs the audience on a subject matter - Reasonable organization, balanced structure and composition - Good verbal communication : comprehensible pronunciation, fluent expression and diction, fair time-management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate content with comprehensive grasp of the material demonstrating basic knowledge of the subject matter - Fair organization, weak structure and composition - Fair presentation skills: acceptable pronunciation, expression and diction, fair time-management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weak content, loose grasp of the general ideas with some knowledge of the subject matter - Poor organization, structure and composition - Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, poor time-management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate content, fail to identify the general ideas with knowledge of the subject matter - No organization, structure or/and composition - Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, minimal time-management
3. Final Essay	Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent grasp of research material, able to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Firm grasp of materials, able to explain key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive grasp of materials, able to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loose grasp of materials, cannot explain key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor grasp of materials - No organization

	<p>secondary sources, build up argument and analysis. The threshold of 'discovery' lied in a student's self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.</p>	<p>explain key concepts, assumptions and debates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rigorous organization, coherent structure, distinct thesis, properly argued with strong narrative - Insightful interpretation of the subject matter with distinct themes and thesis - Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize - Ability to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools - Strong bibliography suggesting breadth and depth of coverage and informed 	<p>concepts and assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reasonable organization, balanced structure, adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand - Clear ideas which keep to the point, clear-cut subject, ability to interpret opinions independently - Organized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic 	<p>explain key concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fair organization, weak structure, adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand - Relevant points to the subject matter, fair ability to interpret opinions - Unorganized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic 	<p>concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor organization and structure, weak content, limited use of resources - Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions - Insufficient and/or unorganized bibliography 	<p>and structure, inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irrelevant points to the subject matter, minimal ability to interpret opinions - Irrelevant bibliography
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		insights				
4.Game-playing Reflective Diary / Blog	This assessment will grade on rationality, clarity and fluency of argument and comment. The threshold of 'discovery' lies in a student's ability to negotiate a position that is informed, defensible, and standing on personal insight.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rich content, excellent ability to interpret and integrate various resources - Rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition - Precision in argument, well defined and reasoned points of view grounded in insightful interpretation of existing literature - Readiness to respond to peer opinion and other views initiated in class discussion - Discussion shed light on new dimensions of the issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand - Reasonable organization with balanced structure and composition - Clear elaboration of ideas that sticks to the point, with clearly differentiated issues, ability to interpret opinions independently - Sufficient responses to peer comments to sustain a discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand - Fair organization with adequate structure and composition - Relevant points made to the subject matter in question - Ability to respond to other statements and engage in class discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weak content, limited use of resources - Poor organization, structure and composition - Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions - Ability to respond to other comments in simple terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources - No organization, structure or/and composition - Irrelevant points to the subject matter, no ability to interpret opinions - Fail to respond to other comments

Note: All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

1. Keyword Syllabus

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

Computer game history, computer game aesthetics, cultural canon, computer game criticism, media aesthetics, media history, cultural criticism

2. Reading List

2.1 Compulsory Readings

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1.	Kent, S. (2010) <i>The Ultimate History of Video Games: from Pong to Pokemon and beyond</i> . NYC & London: Random House.
2.	Holmes, D. (2012) <i>Mind Forever Voyaging: A History of Storytelling in Video Games</i> .
3.	Wolf, M.J.P. (2012) <i>Before the Crash: Early Video Game History</i> . Detroit: Wayne State UP.
4.	Raessens, J. & Goldstein, J. (eds.) (2011). <i>Handbook of Computer Game Studies</i> . MIT Press.
5.	Sharp, J. (2016). <i>Works of Game. On the aesthetics of games and art</i> . MIT Press.
6.	<p>Recommended Playing</p> <p>Games played by the students will be selected based on their cultural, socio-economical, and aesthetical impact. List of games may be updated every year the course is offered, but can be expected to contain at least the following games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pong (1972)• Tetris (1984)• Civilization (1991)• Doom (1993)/Wolfenstein 3D (1992)• Descent• SimCity (1991)• Super Mario Bros. (1985)• Giana Sisters• World of Warcraft (2004)• Minecraft (2009)• Super Monkey Ball• WarioWare• Journey (2012)• Portal (2007)• Half-Life (1998)• WiiSports• FIFA Soccer• DayZ (2012)• World of Goo (2007)• Left4Dead• Braid (2008)• Ico• Microsoft Flight Simulator X• Magic The Gathering• Proteus (2012)• Façade (2005)• Surgeon Simulator (2013)• Pokemon

2.2 Additional Readings

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	The Crisis of Cultural Canons in Postmodern Society. Andrzej Szpociński and Piotr H. Kosicki. <i>International Journal of Sociology</i> . Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 80-95
2.	Cultural Memory, Cultural History and Cultural Canons in the Third Millennium. Ziva Ben-Porat. Arcadia. <i>International Journal of Literary Culture / Internationale Zeitschrift für literarische Kultur</i> . Ed. by Biti, Vladimir / Liska, Vivian. Volume 38, Issue 2 (Oct 2003)
3.	<i>Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation</i> . John Guillory. University of Chicago Press. 2013.
4.	<i>Culture Wars: An Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints, and Voices</i> . Roger Chapman. M.E. Sharpe, 2010.