City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus

offered by School of Creative Media
with effect from Semester A 2022/23

Part I   Course Overview

Course Title:	**Critical Ludology: Games, Playability and New Media Art**
Course Code:	**SM6323**
Course Duration:	**One semester**
Credit Units:	**3**
Level:	**P6**
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

The study of games is a new and rapidly expanding field of academic research, which is closely connected to the rapid development of computer games as a cutting-edge art form. This course introduces students to the basic theoretical questions and vocabulary concerning games and play, and their application into analytic, critical and creative purposes. Rather than focusing exclusively on digital games, a broad spectrum of contemporary and historical game/play activities will be discussed. Special attention will be paid to the medium-specific qualities in certain forms of play. The theoretical insights will be applied into game analysis, criticism, modification, and design exercises. Through these exercises the course explores questions related to the role of games/play in new media art, the representational potential of games, and the use of games in critical discourses and interventionist practices.

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.	Describe different forms of play, the formal constituents of games and the relationship of these to the metaphor and concept of a game and the activity/attitude of play. Describe game/play-like features in historical and contemporary forms of human culture, and, computer games as a form of contemporary media culture.		✓	✓	
2.	Differentiate between transmedial and medium-specific elements of games (in e.g. mechanical and digital games) and acquire the vocabulary and thinking skills needed to conceptually design games that make use of the medium-specific potential.		✓	✓	✓
3.	Analyse contemporary computer games with methods of structural analysis and close-playing.		✓	✓	
4.	Describe and analyze how games can represent and simulate actual or fictional processes and recognise the potential of such games for social critique and intervention.		✓	✓	✓
5.	Use concepts of game and play to describe, analyze and/or create - New media artworks with personal style/ signature - Games where the boundary between play and daily life becomes blurred		✓	✓	✓
		100%			

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	
Lectures	Lectures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Presentations	"Let's Play!" group presentations on game analysis	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Final essay	Final project	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Readings	Readings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

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%							
Participation in in-class discussions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	15%	
Presentations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	25%	
Final project	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	60%	
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.)

Applicable to students admitted in Semester A 2022/23 and thereafter

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B)	Marginal (B-, C+, C)	Failure (F)
1. Class 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.	– 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	– 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	– 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	– 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	– 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	– 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:	– 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,	– 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,

	personal daily experience.	− 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	comprehensible pronunciation, fluent expression and diction, fair time-management	expression and diction, poor time-management	expression and diction, minimal time-management
3. Reaction Paper	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, defendable, and standing on personal insight.	− 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	− 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	− 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	− 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
4. Final Project	Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, execute creative ideas and projects. The threshold of 'discovery' lies in a student's proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned	− Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature − Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or	− Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium − Ability to create project/ work that	− Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium − Marginal ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking	− No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium − Fail to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of

authorship.	application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium − Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production − Innovative exploration by combining knowledge from different disciplines (e.g. mathematics, psychology, physics, anthropology, etc.) to create an inter-disciplinary project − Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment	demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration − Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/ suggestions	and creative exploration − Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available	thinking and creative exploration − Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Class 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.	– 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	– 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	– 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	– 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	– 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	– Rich, informative content, excellent grasp of the material with in-depth and extensive	– Adequate content with firm grasp of the material that informs the audience on a subject matter	– Adequate content with comprehensive grasp of the material demonstrating basic knowledge	– Weak content, loose grasp of the general ideas with some knowledge of the subject matter	– Inadequate content, fail to identify the general ideas with knowledge of the subject matter

	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.	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	– Reasonable organization, balanced structure and composition – Good verbal communication: comprehensible pronunciation, fluent expression and diction, fair time-management	of the subject matter – Fair organization, weak structure and composition – Fair presentation skills: acceptable pronunciation, expression and diction, fair time-management	– Poor organization, structure and composition – Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, poor time-management	– No organization, structure or/and composition – Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, minimal time-management
3. Reaction Paper	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, defendable, and standing on personal insight.	– Rich content, excellent ability to interpret and integrate various resources – Rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition – Precision in argument, well	– Adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand – Reasonable organization with balanced structure and composition	– Adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand – Fair organization with adequate structure and composition – Relevant points made to the	– Weak content, limited use of resources – Poor organization, structure and composition – Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions	– Inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources – No organization, structure or/and composition – Irrelevant points to the subject matter, no ability to interpret opinions

		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	– 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	subject matter in question – Ability to respond to other statements and engage in class discussion	– Ability to respond to other comments in simple terms	– Fail to respond to other comments
4. Final Project	Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, execute creative ideas and projects. The threshold of 'discovery' lies in a student's proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned authorship.	– Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature – Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium – Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production	– Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium – Ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration – Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc)	– Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium – Limited ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration – Adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available	– Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium – Marginal ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration – Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available	– No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium – Fail to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration – Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

		− Innovative exploration by combining knowledge from different disciplines (e.g. mathematics, psychology, physics, anthropology, etc.) to create an inter-disciplinary project − Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment	available and constructive feedback/ suggestions		

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.)

Games, play, ritual, rules, constraints, player, simulation, representation, game contract, magic circle, game world, ludology, Game Studies, game analysis, game design, game ontology, tactical games

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.	Roger Caillois: *Man, Play and Games*
2.	Johan Huizinga: *Homo Ludens. A study of the play-element in culture*
3.	Jon Dovey & Helen Kennedy: *Game Cultures – Computer Games as New Media*
4.	Jesper Juul: Half-Real: *Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*
5.	Katie Salen & Eric Zimmerman: *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*
6.	David Sudnow: *Pilgrim in the Microworld: Eye, Mind and the Essence of Video Skill*
7.	Ian Bogost: *Persuasive Games. The Expressive Power of Videogames.*

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

1.	DiGRA Digital Library www.digra.org/dl
2.	Game Studies journal www.gamestudies.org
3.	Eludamos Journal www.eludamos.org