CS40: History of Games
Section 2241, Fall 2024 Course Syllabus

Instructor: Ethan Wilde (he/him/his), ewilde@santarosa.edu

Course Description

This course includes a comprehensive study of the evolution of games throughout human history, with an emphasis on early games' impact and influence on video games. Review of the technological and artistic antecedents, with analysis of how video games reflect the beliefs, aspirations and values of the cultures where they flourish. Study includes gameplay experience and analysis of notable game genres, identifying significant artistic and technological innovations. Students will investigate gameplay and create a non-digital game that is informed by the study of game history.

Recommended Preparation: Eligibility for ENGL 1A or equivalent

Prerequisites: None

Whether you want to make games or simply better your own motivations as a player of games, an understanding of the history of people playing games is fundamental. We will explore the long and many-faceted history of humans playing games in this course.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Interpret the interaction of society and culture with games throughout history and construct comprehensive analyses of the impact of video games on popular culture.
2. Analyze how technological innovations furthered the use of video games as a platform for artistic expression.
3. Compare and contrast video game styles and genres throughout time.

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss the history of games throughout human history using chronological reasoning.
2. Demonstrate higher-order thinking skills including evaluation and use of evidence about issues, problems, and explanations for the influence of video games on popular culture.
3. Explore problems in the history of game design and, where possible, solve them.
4. Develop, test, and evaluate rival hypotheses from primary sources about the history of video games.

5. Construct sound arguments and interpretation about video games and popular culture; and evaluate the arguments and interpretation of others.

Topics and Scope:

I. Understanding Games and Culture
    A. The relevance of games
    B. Children's games
    C. Games and human nature
    D. Definitions of games
    E. Games as closed systems
    F. The field of play
    G. A working definition of games
    H. Elements of traditional games
    I. Terminology of traditional games
    J. Applications of play

II. The Historical Origins of Game Forms
    A. Games, play and culture
        1. Prehistoric games
        2. Knucklebones
    B. Ancient board games
        1. Mancala
        2. Royal Game of Ur
        3. Knossos
        4. Games of ancient Egypt
        5. Games of ancient India
        6. Games of ancient China
        7. Games of ancient Rome
    C. History of playing cards
        1. Chinese origins of playing cards
        2. Mamluk playing cards
        3. Cards in Europe
        4. Suit systems in Europe
        5. Tarot cards
        6. Prohibitions on cards and gambling
        7. Hanafuda cards
        8. Mahjong
    D. Development of war games
        1. Games and warfare
        2. Rome and war
        3. Gladiator game
        4. Jousting
        5. Yabusame
        6. Buzkashi
        7. Aztec flower wars
        8. Koenigspiel
        9. Modern war games

III. The Evolution of Games

A. The rise of commercial board games
    1. The Industrial Revolution and game publishers
    2. Snakes and Ladders
    3. The first American board game
    4. The Mansion of Happiness
    5. The Game of Life
    6. Education and games
    7. Monopoly
    8. The advent of narrative gaming
    9. Dungeons & Dragons

B. The morality of gaming
    1. Milton Bradley
    2. Parker Brothers
    3. 20th Century: competition, collapse and consolidation

IV. The Birth of Electronic Gaming
  A. 1940s - 1960s: Pioneers
    1. William Higinbotham and Tennis For Two
    2. Steve Russell and Spacewar!
  B. 1961 - 1972: Early visionaries
    1. Ralph Baer and the Odyssey
    2. Nolan Bushnell and Computer Space

V. 1972 - 1976: Atari and the Rise of Arcade Games
  A. Al Alcorn and Pong
  B. Competition emerges

VI. 1977 - 1979: An Industry Matures
  A. Video games become a consumer project
  B. Gaming in Japan and the growth of Nintendo - Hiroshi Yamaguchi

VII. 1980 - 1982: High Water Mark
  A. Golden age of arcade games
  B. Game designers recognized as creative artists

VIII. 1983 - 1985: Crash and Recovery
  A. Demise of Atari: lessons learned
  B. Nintendo in Japan and North America
    1. Nintendo's NES and its impact
    2. Shigero Miyamoto
  C. Legal status of video games: significant legal decisions
  D. Behind the Iron Curtain: Alexey Pajitnov and Tetris

IX. 1986 - 1991: The Console Wars Continue
  A. Nintendo vs Sega
  B. Yuji Naka and Sonic the Hedgehog
  C. Differences between Japanese and North American consumers
  D. Gunpei Yokoi and the Gameboy

X. 1992 - 1994: The Arrival of 32-Bit Consoles
  A. Controversies, Congress and the ESRB
  B. Sony and the PlayStation
  C. Evolution of PC Games

XI. 1995 - 1999: 64-Bit and the Birth of Online Gaming

XII. 2000 - 2001: Sony, Sega, Sims and Sixth Generation Consoles

A.   PlayStation leads the pack
B.   Demise of Sega: Death of Dreamcast
C.   Xbox and GameCube arrive
D.   Will Wright and The Sims

XIII.   2001 and Beyond: Challenges in the New Millennium
A.   New platforms and business models emerge
1.   Social, mobile, and free-to-play
2.   The Wii and its broad appeal
3.   Rebirth of casual gaming
B.   Serious games as a creative platform
C.   Online software distribution
D.   Indie games go mainstream - Markus Person and Minecraft
E.   Edu-gaming
F.   Gamification
G.   Ethics, controversies, and challenges
1.   Violence in games
2.   Inclusivity: race, gender, and LGBTQ+
3.   Industry workplace issues
4.   Addiction

XIV.   Games in Film, Television, Music and Print
A.   The fear of technology as expressed in films about AI and games
1.   2001: A Space Odyssey
2.   Tron
3.   WarGames
B.   Utopian and dystopian visions of virtual reality in film, books, and popular culture
1.   The Matrix
2.   Black Mirror "Santa Rosa" episode
3.   William Gibson
C.   Commodification and popularization of game characters in music and popular culture
1.   Character franchises of Nintendo and Sega
2.   Integration of popular music in console titles

XV.   The Aesthetics of Video Game Design
A.   Ludology vs narratology
B.   Game aesthetics shared with other art forms
C.   Playtesting and the aesthetics of interactivity

XVI.   Non-Digital Game Design
A.   MDA: mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics
1.   Mechanics
2.   Dynamics
3.   Aesthetics
B.   Game design documents

XVII.   The Future of the Video Game Industry

Assignments:

1. Read approximately 25-30 pages per module from instructor-provided reading materials
2. Create two (2) timelines of periods in the history of games, such as the rise of home gaming consoles

3. Prepare five (5) written documents that address the influence of historical facts, relevant court cases, social movements, and technological advances, on specific games or trends in the history of games, three to seven (3-7) pages each
4. Regular participation in nine (9) double-module-length and eight (8) single-module-length online discussion forums
5. Playtest six (6) online versions of traditional and/or modern games and provide analysis on game mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics
6. Midterm and final exams

Course Outline of Record

You may find the official course outline of record for this course at the following link: https://portal.santarosa.edu/srweb/SR_CourseOutlines.aspx?ck=CS40

Class Meetings

Fall 2024 Schedule

Class Delivery	Day and Time	Modality
Online	Modules start on Wednesdays	Canvas
Live Web conference (optional) https://santarosa-edu.zoom.us/j/718711452	Wednesdays, 10:15am – 11:45am	Zoom

All class materials for each module will be released online in Canvas on Wednesdays throughout the entire semester. A live online meeting will be held on Wednesdays, 10:15am – 11:45am via Zoom. Attendance at the live web conferences is highly recommended. Every student must either attend the live web conference or watch the entire screencast recording of the web conference. Use the Zoom link above to join live only on Wednesdays, 10:15am – 11:45am. To view any lecture's recorded screencast, visit the Screencast page for any module in the Modules section.

Instructor Contact

Ethan Wilde

Email: ewilde@santarosa.edu

Phone: 707-527-4855

Fall 2024 Office Hours
August 19 – December 9, 2024

Day	Time	Location
Mondays (online)	1:20pm - 8:00pm	Online: Skype *ethanwilde* or Email *ewilde@santarosa.edu*

» Reserve a future office hour appointment

I typically respond to emails within 48 hours, weekends excepted. I never respond on Sundays.

Course Web Site

Students will use the Canvas course web site to access all course content, for reading, assignment instructions, submitting assignments, viewing classmates' work, sharing resources, and viewing grades. *The Google Chrome browser is recommended for viewing the Canvas-powered course site. Other browsers are not recommended.*

Equipment

- **A personal computer**, either at home, work or on the Santa Rosa or Petaluma campuses.

Required Software + Services

- **Internet access**
- **Web browsers** including**:**
  - Google Chrome recommended
  - Mozilla Firefox recommended
- **2D Graphics software** such as:
  - Pixlr browser-based image editor
  - Drawio.com browser-based drawing app
- **PDF display software** such as:
  - **Adobe Reader**

- **Word Processing software** such as:
  - Microsoft Word
  - Google Docs
  - Apple Pages
- **Presentation software** such as:
  - Microsoft PowerPoint

- o [Google Slides](#)
- o [Apple Keynote](#)

Important Dates

Day Class Begins: Monday, August 19, 2024
(first course week begins with class meeting on August 21, 2024)

Day Class Ends: Friday, December 13, 2024

Last Day to Drop with refund: Sunday, September 1, 2024

Last Day to Add with instructor's approval: Sunday, September 8, 2024

Last Day to Drop without a 'W' symbol: Sunday, September 8, 2024

Last Day to Drop with a 'W' symbol: Sunday, November 17, 2024

Last Day to Opt for Pass/No Pass: Friday, December 13, 2024

Dropping the Class

If you decide to discontinue this course, it is your responsibility to officially drop it. A student may be dropped from any class when that student's absences exceed ten percent (10%) of the total hours of class time. It is strongly advised that if you need to miss more than one class/homework deadline in a row that you contact the instructor to avoid being dropped from the class.

Attendance

Students who fail to complete the requirements of the first and second class modules may be dropped by the instructor. **Students must view and participate in online materials released each module in the Modules section of the course Canvas website.**

Pass-NoPass (P/NP)

You may take this class P/NP. You must decide before the deadline, and add the option online within your student portal or file the P/NP form with Admissions and Records. With a grade of C or better, you will get P.

You must file for the P/NP option by December 13, 2024. Once you decide to go for P/NP, you cannot change back to a letter grade. If you are taking this course as part of a certificate program, you can probably still take the class P/NP. Check with a counselor to be sure.

Instructor Announcements

The instructor will post announcements on the "Announcements" page in Canvas throughout the semester. Canvas notifies students according to their preferred Notification Preferences.

Late Policy

Please make a plan before the course starts to allow yourself the necessary time each module to complete the required reading, watching, online discussion posting, and assignments. The official Course Outline of Record for this three-unit semester-length course stipulates that each student is expected to complete 157.5 hours of learning for the class. This works out to 9 hours per module for each of the seventeen modules of regular instruction along with 4.5 hours for the Final Exam module. If you plan accordingly, you can avoid submitting assignments late.

All assignments are due at 11:59pm Pacific time on the **Tuesday** corresponding to the due date. A late submission will receive a 10% penalty for each module it is late. Submissions more than two modules late are not accepted without prior written arrangement.

Exams

There will be online midterm and final exams. The material comes from the online reading, viewing, class lectures and supplemental materials. If any exam is missed, a zero will be recorded as the score, unless you have made prior written arrangements with me. It is your responsibility to take the exams by the due date.

Grading Policy

Click the "Grades" link in Canvas to keep track of your grades. I grade once a week and post grades and comments in the Canvas gradebook.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Points Total
A	90% - 100%	900 points or more
B	80% - 89%	800 to 899 points
C	70% - 79%	700 to 799 points

Letter Grade	Percentage	Points Total
D	60% - 69%	600 to 699 points
F	59% or lower	599 points or less

If taking Pass/No Pass you need at least 70% of the total class points and to complete the midterm exam and the final exam to pass the class.

Grading Breakdown

Percent	Points	Grading Category
60%	600 points	**Timelines + Written Documents**
15%	150 points	**Playtesting Reports**
10%	100 points	**Discussions + Attendance (Participation)**
1%	10 points	**Syllabus Quiz**
7%	70 points	**Midterm**
7%	70 points	**Final Exam**
100%	**1000 points**	**1000 points possible**

Standards of Conduct

Students who register in SRJC classes are required to abide by the SRJC Student Conduct Standards. Violation of the Standards is basis for referral to the Vice President of Student Services or dismissal from class or from the College. See the Student Code of Conduct page.

Collaborating on or copying of tests or homework in whole or in part will be considered an act of academic dishonesty and result in a grade of zero for that test or assignment, except for assignments that allow collaboration. Students are encouraged to share information and ideas, but not their work.

Use of generative AI tools is not allowed in this course. Please do not use any generative AI tool to assist you in any homework assignment in this course. The use of content created by generative AI tools in your homework is considered a form of plagiarism.

What's a generative AI tool? Any software that creates code or content based on large language models. These include, but are not limited to:

- Microsoft CoPilot
- Google Bard/Gemini
- OpenAI ChatGPT
- GitHub CoPilot
- Repl.it Ghostwriter

See these links on plagiarism:

- SRJC's Statement on Academic Integrity
- SRJC Board Policy 8.2.8

I expect each student to maintain high standards of civility and respect when communicating with each other. The following rules of netiquette should be observed in all class discussions and communications:

- Be kind and respectful to others
- Use full sentences
- Avoid jargon and acronyms
- Use language that supports others

Special Needs

Every effort is made to conform to accessibility standards for all instructor-created materials. Students should contact their instructor as soon as possible if they find that they cannot access any course materials. Students with disabilities who believe they need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Resources by calling (707) 527-4278 or visit online at drd.santarosa.edu.

Student Health Services

Santa Rosa Junior College offers extensive health services to students. Visit Student Health Services online at shs.santarosa.edu or call them at (707) 527-4445.

Course Outline

Start Date	Canvas Module	Topics	Assignments
8/21	Module 1	Understanding Games and Culture	• Assignment 1: Syllabus Quiz • Discussion 1: Check-in Discussion
8/28	Module 2	The Historical Origins of Game Forms	• Assignment 2: Playtest: Traditional Games • Outside the Box Discussion 1
9/4	Module 3	The Evolution of Games	• Discussion 2: Evolution of Games
9/11	Module 4	The Birth of Electronic Gaming	• Assignment 3: Timeline: Early Game History • Outside the Box Discussion 2
9/18	Module 5	1972 - 1976: Atari and the Rise of Arcade Games	• Discussion 3: Arcade Games
9/25	Module 6	1977 - 1979: An Industry Matures	• Assignment 4: Paper: Early Video Games • Outside the Box Discussion 3
10/2	Module 7	1980 - 1982: High Water Mark	• Assignment 5: Playtest: Arcade Games • Discussion 4: Early Rise and Fall

Start Date	Canvas Module	Topics	Assignments
10/9	Module 8	1983 - 1985: Crash and Recovery	• Assignment 6: Paper: The Crash of 1983 • Outside the Box Discussion 4
10/16	Module 9	1986 - 1991: The Console Wars Continue	• Midterm Exam • Discussion 5: The Console Wars
10/23	Module 10	1992 - 1994: The Arrival of 32-Bit Consoles	• Assignment 7: Playtest: Early Console Games • Outside the Box Discussion 5
10/30	Module 11	1995 - 1999: 64-Bit and the Birth of Online Gaming	• Assignment 8: Paper: Online Gaming • Discussion 6: Online Gaming
11/6	Module 12	2000 - 2001: Sony, Sega, Sims and Sixth Generation Consoles	• Assignment 9: Playtest: 90s Console Games • Outside the Box Discussion 6
11/13	Module 13	2001 and Beyond: Challenges in the New Millennium	• Assignment 10: Paper: 21st Century Games • Discussion 7: 21st Century Challenges and Opportunities

Start Date	Canvas Module	Topics	Assignments
11/20	Module 14	Games in Film, Television, Music and Print	• Assignment 11: Timeline: Consoles + Culture • Outside the Box Discussion 7
11/27	Module 15	The Aesthetics of Video Game Design	• Assignment 12: Playtest: Contemporary Video Games • Discussion 8: Game Design
12/4	Module 16	Non-Digital Game Design	• Assignment 13: Paper: Your Game Design Document • Outside the Box Discussion 8
12/11	Module 17	The Future of the Video Game Industry	• Assignment 14: Playtest: Your Favorite Game • Discussion 9: The Future
12/16 Mon – 12/20 Fri	Module 18	No Regular Class *(Exam online, no regular class meeting)*	• Final Exam *due 12/20*

Note to students: the assignments listed above will become available as modules are released in sequence each module. To view course content, go to **Modules**.