Dr. Courtney Rivard

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# ENGL 118: Storytelling and Game Development

## Overview

This course examines video games as narrative texts through game play and game design. By the end of the semester, students will develop and create an original interactive narrative video game using the open-source software Twine. Through this making-centered course, students will study existing non-linear narratives to explore the basic principles of writing and examine the needs and expectations of the audience/viewer/player for immersive/interactive media and that of established Media.

Throughout the semester, we will work as a team with Prof. Gaby Calvorcoressi’s English 307 class on Games and Poetry. This partnership will allow us to center poetry in the development of our class produced games.

Because of the global pandemic, this semester will look different than most years at UNC. We will need to be compassionate with one another as we will all no doubt be faced with new struggles and challenges. Additionally, there may be times that we will need to make changes to the syllabus and our plans, so I ask you to see the syllabus as a tentative document that may change.

## Hybrid format

We will begin the **first two weeks of the semester all online**, this will allow us to establish some expectations as a group and learn more about the needs and limitations of everyone in the class.

During week three, we will likely move to our hybrid model. Here is what this will look like: on **Tuesdays, we will meet online** with Prof. Calvorcoressi’s class to discuss principles of game design and review selected games.

**On Thursdays, class will be broken into small groups**: A, B, C, D. I will meet with one group face-to-face on campus at an outside setting. The others will meet in small groups online or in person (their choice), and will send me a selfie/screenshot at the start and end of each class for attendance. I will mix the groups up after each cycle.

## Learning Objectives

1. Identify, compare, contrast, and evaluate the way stories are told and designed in video games.
2. Learn and apply significant critical concepts and vocabulary specific to video games.
3. Critically analyze and contextualize storytelling video games with the help of recognized authorities in the field, both academic and popular.
4. Understand major movements and discourse communities within critical gaming like #Gamergate.
5. Play, think, speak, and write in a more effective, thoughtful, critical, and informed fashion.
6. Develop stronger analytical skills.
7. Develop ethical research skills.
8. Learn how to create a game online using a Twine application (Twinery.org).
9. Develop stronger reading, researching, and writing skills.

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## Netiquette

Professionalism is expected throughout this course, this includes proper netiquette, which is a word for courteous online communications. In other words, let's be polite; ask questions instead of making accusations. Inappropriate behavior can impact your grade and/or result in withdrawal from the course. This covers all communications including working with your peers in peer-review, direct messages and emails to both instructors and students, and discussion boards on trello and zoom chat.

Discussion boards are one important way for a writing class to create a community. In this course, they can act as a way to discuss lectures and readings, display parts of your work, and share other activities. They are the best way to develop relationships with your peers despite the distance of online learning. Professionalism and focus is expected. If the conversation gets too off topic, you can request an off-topic channel.

## Course Readings and Games

All course readings will be available in our google drive folder and linked on trello.

Games will be either free in a browser or available for purchase onSteam.

## Grading

Because this class takes the form of a workshop model, a significant portion of your grade is dedicated to your participation and attendance. The requirements of your participation include homework, preparation, conduct, conferences, and general participation.

Your participation grade includes being prepared with all materials including homework and class activities and discussion, as well as being actively engaging with your working group. Of course, participation looks different in a remote course, so you will demonstrate your attendance and participation by completing and posting smaller tasks in trello both during our class time and for homework.

* In-class activities are graded as completed or incomplete.
* Homework and blogs are graded based on completion: 2 points for full completion, 1 point for partial completion, and 0 points if it is not turned in.

### Formatting

All of your papers (drafts and final copies) must adhere to appropriate style and format guidelines for the genre and discipline you are writing. We will discuss these guidelines and examine models in class. Additionally, when saving documents (when you first ‘save as’ on your computer) for homework and papers make sure to title it:

**Last Name\_Assignment\_version**

### Points break down as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Participation | 10 % |
| Attendance | 5 % |
| Blogs | 15 % |
| Short response papers (3) | 45 % |
| Final gaming project | 25 % |
| Total | 100 % |

A = 100-93 B = 86-83 C = 76-73 D = 66-60

A- = 92-90 B- = 82-80 C- = 72-70 F = 59-below

B+ = 89-87 C+ = 79-77 D + = 69-67

### Late work:

Each writing assignment will involve research, drafting, and revision. Because writing is a recursive, unpredictable, and multi-step process, careful advance planning is essential to avoid falling behind. Late work—whether it is homework, a draft for a workshop day, or a project—will be penalized.

Unless alternative arrangements are made, all other graded assignments lose half a letter grade per day after the due date. **I know that we are dealing with many new challenges during the pandemic, so please contact me if you face difficulties and we can make necessary arrangements.**

### Attendance Policy:

The unique workshop format of English 118 necessitates constant attendance and participation. If you miss a class, your absence will have a detrimental effect on the ability of our group to function. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. You are allowed FOUR absences without it negatively affecting your grade. After FOUR absences, your attendance grade is lowered by 15% for each class missed.

If you miss a class, you must email me beforehand to let me know of your absence. In this email, you must inform me which of your classmates will serve as your note taker (of course you must also get their permission to do so). Additionally, you will be responsible for all missed work. In this email, please do not ask me if we “missed anything important” while you were absent – I believe that each class is important.

### Sickness

As we are in the midst of global pandemic, please let me know if you are unable to come to class because you are sick. We will make alternative arrangements to get you caught. Under no circumstances, should you come to our face-to-face meeting feeling sick as this could endanger those around you.

### Masks

This fall semester, while we are in the midst of a global pandemic, all enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our classroom as well as all face-to-face meetings with me or your group mates. Additionally, social distancing must be maintained. This requirement is to protect our educational community -- your classmates and me – as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you can be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see <https://carolinatogether.unc.edu/university-guidelines-for-facemasks/>.

## The Honor Code:

The honor code applies to everything that you—and I—do at this university, including our use of outside sources in our research and writing. Our work in this class will conform to the principles and procedures defined in the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance (http://instrument.unc.edu/). The research that we do this semester, whether primary or secondary, print or online, formal or informal, will require careful documentation on your part. We will review citation guidelines early and often throughout the semester. The need to cite your sources applies to all your work, including drafts as well as final versions of your feeders and projects. When in doubt: CITE.

If I suspect you of plagiarizing all or part of a paper, even unintentionally, I am required to report the offense to the Honor Court. If you think you are running into trouble with a paper, PLEASE come and speak with me. It is much, much better to take a late penalty on an assignment than to risk Honor Court proceedings.

## Students with Disabilities

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ensures that no qualified person shall by reason of a disability be denied access to, participation in, or the benefits of, any program or activity operated by the University. In compliance with UNC policy and federal law, qualified students with disabilities are eligible to receive “reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to education opportunities, programs, and activities” (http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/faculty-policies.html). If you anticipate such accommodations, please notify me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Additionally, you may seek out student support services at the Department of Disability Services (DDS) (http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/) and through the Learning Center (http://learningcenter.unc.edu/)

## Non-Discrimination Policy

This classroom should be a safe space. This university does not discriminate against its students or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In this class we will strive to maintain an open atmosphere with shared respect for all differences.

## Writing Center

The UNC Writing Center offers free tutoring services for students at<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/>. You may visit the Writing Center to ask for help with a specific paper, whether you are concerned with developing ideas and content, organizing your assignment, or working on style issues. To make an appointment, browse the Writing Center's online resources, or send a draft online, please go to (http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/). To make best use of your time there, please bring a copy of your assignment sheet and your draft with you. The Writing Center will not proofread papers or talk with you about grades.

## Course Policies:

Please remember that the syllabus functions as a contract between instructor and students. We will go over these policies during the first few days of class, but you are responsible for knowing and abiding by these policies.

You should come to class having prepared the assigned reading, writing, or other homework, and you should be ready to engage with your classmates and the text(s) at hand.