Class Meetings
HMS 540S
W: 2-4:50 pm, NH 302

Instructor
Stephanie Boluk
sboluk@pratt.edu
Office hours: T: 1 pm – 3 pm, 304 DeKalb
Website: www.stephanieboluk.com

CLASS BLOG: http://stephanieboluk.com/teaching/HMS540F13/blog/

Description:
Addressing the way in which games have expanded to become a dominant cultural interface, Heather Chaplin and Eric Zimmerman have termed the twenty-first century the “ludic century.” From romhacking to raiding and from e-sports to experimental artgames, this course will explore the way in which play and production are entangled in contemporary gamespaces. By thinking in terms of metagames—games about games, games within games, and the games around games—we will play with practice and practice play.

In addition to a mid-term and final project, the course requires students to deeply engage with weekly readings, films, and games, participate actively in class, write weekly blog posts, occasionally work alone or in groups on assignments, and present on class material.

Goals:
1. Learn about history, theory, and culture of games and computational media
2. Explore the relation between theory and practice using the model of metagaming
3. Critically interrogate software culture and gaming practices

A Note:
As this is a participation-driven course attendance is mandatory. Time in class will consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, student presentations and a few film screenings. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to make yourself aware of all class news and content from your peers (i.e., don’t email me to find out what was missed, get notes, etc). You are responsible for keeping up to date and turning assignments in on time.

Late Policy
Deadlines are non-negotiable. If the midterm or final project are submitted after the deadline, one letter grade per day will be deducted. This policy will be strictly enforced and no extensions will be permitted without proper documentation. Failure to post to the blog by the weekly deadline will result in the post not being counted for a grade. So don’t forget!

Email Policy
I will try to respond to emails within 72 hours. If you ask a question that asks for a reply with something lengthy or substantive (e.g., a question related to your research project), I may suggest a face-to-face meeting in lieu of email exchange (or I may take longer than 72 hours to get back to you). When it comes to talking about your research, coursework or any subject better served by dialogue, I prefer face-to-face meetings so please use my office hours or email to make an appointment!

**Technology**

Laptops, phones, and tablets are **FOR CLASS PURPOSES ONLY**. The quickest way to lower your grade will be to email, access social media, and or use other popular forums. If you are easily tempted, turn your wireless off. Multi-tasking is a myth and small distractions can significantly affect classroom attention and engagement in conversation with your colleagues. In the spirit of Foucault's panopticon, please internalize this rule as I will not bring it up in class but **casual in-class surfing will affect your grade**.

**Special Accommodations**

Pratt Institute is committed to full inclusion of all students. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodations, please make an appointment with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to discuss these accommodations. DRC is located in Room 117, Willoughby Hall. Students with disabilities who have registered with DRC are encouraged to speak to the professor about accommodations they may need to produce an accessible learning environment.

**Requirements:**

I) **Blog Posts (20%)**: Students are expected to post at least one thoughtful entry per week that demonstrate comprehension and engagement with readings and issues discussed in class. These posts can be of varying length (aim for a 250 word minimum/week) and should be useful contributions to our discussions. You will be expected to respond to topics and issues raised by your colleagues as well as the professor. Please feel free to embed links, images and videos into your entries if relevant. Make sure to copyedit your grammar and syntax for clarity. Format your posts and any links or embedded media in a clean, well-organized fashion. I expect articulate, insightful, well-written posts that demonstrate a deep engagement with the material we are studying. Consistent failure to follow these guidelines will result in penalties to the grade. **You cannot ‘bank’ posts or catch up if you miss multiple weeks.**

II) **Mid-term essay/project (25%)**

III) **Final essay/project (30%)**: There will be 10-12 page final paper for this course on a topic that you develop during the semester. Students are encouraged to do some independent research for this project.

IV) **Class participation (10%)**: This category involves being present (in a variety of senses) and having interesting things to say that are directly pertinent to course materials.

V) **In-class Presentation & Speedrun (15%)**: Each student will give a 20 minute presentation and complete a speedrunning assignment for class.

**Required materials:**

1. *Braid* (available on Steam for $10, although it frequently goes on sale)
2. *Portal* (available on Steam for $10)
3. *Moneyball* by Michael Lewis
4. *Games of Empire* by Nick Dyer-Witherford and Greig de Peuter
5. *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* by Catherine Malabou
6. *Gamer Theory* by McKenzie Wark
7. *Philosophy of Sport*, by Steven Connor
8. Set up a Steam account (free)
9. **Suggested**: USB game controller for your computer (e.g., [http://www.amazon.com/Microsoft-Xbox-360-Wired-Controller/dp/B003ZSN600/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1377471407&sr=8-1&keywords=wired+xbox+360+controller](http://www.amazon.com/Microsoft-Xbox-360-Wired-Controller/dp/B003ZSN600/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1377471407&sr=8-1&keywords=wired+xbox+360+controller))
10. See schedule for links to downloadable articles and games
CLASS SCHEDULE

Schedule and some texts may change as we go along. I'll update online schedule with changes and links.

See http://stephanieboluk.com/teaching/HMS540F13/blog/ for the schedule

Week 1 (8/28)
Introduction: Games about Games
Screening: Indie Game the Movie (94 Minutes)

Week 2 (9/4) - Classic Game Studies
Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture, Chapt. 1, "Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon; Ch 3 "Play and Contest as Civilizing Functions; Chapt. 5, "Play and War; Chapt 12 "The Play-Element in Contemporary Civilization." p. 1-27; 46-75; 89-104; 195-213.
Roger Caillois, Man, Play, and Games. Chapter 1, “The Definition of Play; Chapter 2, “The Classification of Games.” p. 3-35
Game: Braid

Week 3 (9/11) - Speedrunning, Tool-Assisted Speedrunning, and ‘Gamer Science’
McKenzie Wark, Gamer Theory
Game: Pick a game to prep for speedrun (come to class ready to talk about choice)
Demo: Watch some speedruns, TAS-runs, quadruns, and blindruns
How to use Llanfair and OBS

Week 4 (9/18) – Speedrunning 2
Ian Bogost, Persuasive Games, "Preface" (pp. vii-xii) and “Ch. 1: Procedural Rhetoric,” (1-64)
Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Expressive Processing, excerpts
Presentation: Discuss speedrunning experiences--what did you learn about the software from your PB?

Week 5 (9/25) – E-Sports and Videogame Spectatorship
Steven Connor, The Philosophy of Sport
T.L. Taylor’s Raising the Stakes (excerpts)
Watch the videos in this article: http://kotaku.com/5820907/the-10-best-moments-in-pro+gaming-history
Game: Download Dota 2, play tutorial to familiarize yourself with game. If possible, play with friends and classmates in either bot or pub matches.
Demo: Watch/Analyze The International 2011 final, Na’vi vs. IG in three different languages

Week 6 (10/2) – Money Metagames: Moneyball
Michael Lewis, Moneyball
Screening: Moneyball
Week 7 (10/9) Ludic Economies
Nick Dyer-Witherford and Greg de Peuter, Games of Empire
Edward Castronova, Exodus to the Virtual World, "Dreams Fashioned in Silicon"
Check out the Steam Handbook
McKenzie Wark, Telesesthesia, excerpt
Optional: Check out the blog of Valve’s resident in-house economist (!), Yanis Varoufakis. http://yanisvaroufakis.eu/category/valveconomics

Week 8 (10/16) Alternate Realities
Jane McGonigal, Reality is Broken (excerpts)
Catherine Malabou, What Should We Do with our Brain?
Speculation: speculation.net/X

Week 9 (10/23) - Race, Gender, and Sexual Politics in Virtual Worlds
Lisa Nakamura, "Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in World of Warcraft" in Digital Labor (ed. Trebor Scholz)
Julian Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyberspace"
A more recent follow-up by Dibbell: “Mutilated Furries, Flying Phalluses: Put the Blame on Griefers, the Sociopaths of the Virtual World" in Wired.
Donna Haraway, Cyborg Manifesto
Micha Cárdenas, “Becoming Dragon: A Technology Transversal Study”
Games: Second Life and World of Warcraft (you can download the free demo)

MIDTERM DUE

Week 10 (10/30) Artgames
Mary Flanagan, Critical Play (excerpts)
Alex Galloway, Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture, " Allegories of Control" and “Countergaming.”
Games: Jodi’s Untitled Game, SOD

Week 11 (11/6) - ROMhacking
Ian Bogost and Nick Montfort, Racing the Beam
Guest lecture:
Patrick LeMieux

Week 12 - (11/13) Strange IDEs - Procedurally Generated Games
In-class Screening: Minecraft: The Story of Mojang
Manuel De Landa, Philosophy and Simulation: The Emergence of Synthetic Reason
Games: Minecraft, Dwarf Fortress, Love
Computers within Computer within…!
http://www.geekosystem.com/dwarffortress-turing-machine-computer/
16-bit ALU in Minecraft - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGkkykZVzug
Game of Life in Minecraft - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaoq19vtcnM
"Minecraft" in Minecraft - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdno1QZJ–M
Little Big Calculator - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-2-vdNNItol
Little Big Life - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13GOFa1C4e4

**Week 13 (11/20) Eccentric Spaces**
Mark Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, "The Affective Topology of New Media Art"

*Game:*

*Portal* (approx. 6-8 hrs to complete--play in groups if you have trouble!)

**Week 14 (11/27) - Thanksgiving**
No class

**Week 15 (12/4) - Interactive Fiction**
Nick Montfort, *Twisty Little Passages* (excerpts)
Dennis Jerz, "Somewhere Nearby is Colossal Cave: Examining Will Crowther's Original "Adventure" in Code and in Kentucky" in *Digital Humanities Quarterly*

*Games:*
Emily Short, *Galatea*  
*Adventure*

**Week 16 - LAST DAY OF CLASS**