1. Department and Contact Information

English / Arts and Sciences
Dr. Marc C. Santos / 813-974-7533 / marcsantos@usf.edu

2. Course Information

ENC / This course will require a new number; proposed number: ENC 3418 / Title: Rhetoric and Gaming

Credit Hours: 3.0 / Discussion /

Course Description [Max 255 Words]:

This course applies several different theoretical lenses to broaden students’ understandings of video games. Furthermore, students familiarize themselves with the major genres of writing predominant in the video game industry. [224 Words]

3. Justification

A. Indicate how this course will strengthen the Undergraduate Program. Is this course necessary for accreditation or certification?

Given the rising popularity of video games, it is absolutely necessary that Florida’s humanities departments take serious their aesthetic, cultural, and political ramifications. This is particularly important in rhetoric, since, as a series of scholars have pointed out, games have powerful persuasive potential.

B. What specific area of knowledge is covered by this course which is not covered by courses currently listed?

Florida’s English catalogue does not currently include any course that deals with video games from either an aesthetic or production-oriented perspective. This class does both.

C. What is the need or demand for this course? (Indicate if this course is part of a required sequence in the major.) What other programs would this course service?

The department has received increasing interest from undergraduates for a course focusing on gaming. This is especially true in our Professional Writing, Rhetoric, and Technology major—a number of our students are interested in pursuing degrees in the video game industry. Given the industry’s growth over the past decade, this course could attract students from a variety of other programs.
D. Has this course been offered as Selected Topics/Experimental Topics course? If yes, what was the enrollment?  
This course will be offered as a special topics in the Spring of 2013. Currently the course has a full enrollment of 22 students.

E. How frequently will the course be offered? What is the anticipated enrollment?  
We hope to offer the course at least once every three semesters. We expect it to fill every time.

F. Do you plan to drop a course if this course is added? If so, what will be the effect on the program and on the students? (Please forward the nonsubstantive course change form regarding the course to be deleted to the Council secretary.)  
There is no plan to drop an existing course at this time.

G. What qualifications for training and/or experience are necessary to teach this course? (List minimum qualifications for the instructor.)  
The required qualifications for the instructor are as follows: a doctorate or master’s degree in counseling, education or a related field; or master’s degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).

4. Other Course Information - Required for submission to the Statewide Course Numbering System

A. Course Objectives

Students will:

- Learn how to analyze a game using myriad theoretical lenses (aesthetic, critical, identity politics)
- Learn core rhetorical concepts such as pathos, ethos, genre, audience, and identification
- Survey theories of gamification and their relation to rhetoric
- Implement principles of visual rhetoric and game design
- Explore fundamental genres of game writing and development

B. Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will:

- Develop a theory of art and defend games based on that theory
- Analyze a genre of games for its representation of race, gender, or class
- Produce a range of texts (including, web essay, video blog, game design materials and packaging) using a variety of tools (including video editing, audio editing, web publishing software, image editing software, publication software [Adobe InDesign etc]).
C. Major Course Topics

Course topics include:

- Classical & Contemporary Rhetorical Theory
- Aesthetics
- Ethics
- New Media
- Ludology
- Gamification
- Technical Documentation

D. Course Textbooks (600 characters maximum)

Course texts include:

- Bogost, *Persuasive Games*
- McGonigal, *Reality is Broken*
- Fille and Platten, *The Ultimate Guide to Video Game Writing and Design*

Additionally, there is a course pack with a range of readings on rhetoric and aesthetics.

The course syllabus is available online at:

http://www.marccsantos.com/courses/rhetoric_gaming_sp13/syllabus_draft.html
Rhetoric and Gaming
Dr. Marc C. Santos | Spring 2013

Proposed Course Number: ENC 3418

Office: Cooper 301c | Email: marcsantos@usf.edu | Hours: W/R 2:00-3:30
Website: http://www.marccsantos.com/courses/rhetoric_gaming_sp13/syllabus_draft.html

Prologue (Course Introduction)

Even those outside of the "hobby" recognize video games as the fastest growing media field. Yet, despite their increasing popularity and sophistication, video games receive an underwhelming lack of scholarly attention. And, though growing, their pedagogical impact is even lower--rarely do games show up in education. In designing this class, I hope to correct these oversights by posing two important, interlocking questions:

- First, how can traditional humanities/critical methods inform the way we think about and appreciate games?
- Second, how can games help us invent new critical/political/pedagogical methods?

For many in the humanities, the first question is the easier to address, since it simply encourages us to apply our existing critical models to new, emerging forms of media (note the use of the plural here--to refer to video games as one monolithic genre is akin to referring to literature to one amorphous pile of books; games and game genres, like books and literary genres, are diverse and uneven). The second aspiration is a bit more ambitious, since it suggests that attending to games will require us to invent new methods for critical analysis--and that games might render some of the older methods irrelevant.

The earliest imagining of this course was titled "Rhetoric and Video Games," but I changed it to Rhetoric and Gaming. I use the gerund for two reasons: first, to stress that we are thinking about gaming as a form of action--not video games as static objects. While our first few projects will treat games in terms of objects, our latter projects will treat gaming in terms of engagement, with a direct and indirect impact on how we maneuver in the world. That brings me to my second reason for using the gerund gaming--I want to stress that gaming is increasingly growing into a philosophical mantra. "Gamification" (the perhaps overused buzz word for this growth) marks interdisciplinary study on the impact gaming has on economic, social, and political life. Thus, the goals of this course extend beyond studying video games, and into how those games can explicitly and implicitly shape behavior and identity.

That's what brings us into the realm of rhetoric. Rhetoric's two most straightforward definitions are persuasion (Aristotle) and identity (Burke). Games, as Ian Bogost has highlighted, have powerful impact...
on both. Thus, we'll utilize critical methods for thinking about what games mean and we'll invent methods for thinking about what gaming does (to me, to my community, to my economy, to my culture, to my world). Finally, the course will have a productive component, as we will walk through the process of developing and promoting a game.

Missions (Assignments)

**Level One: Video Games and/as Art**

*If a man hacking in furry at a block of wood, make therein an image of a cow, is that image a work of art? If not, why not?* Joyce Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man, 218

In his infamous April 16th, 2012 diatribe "Video games can never be art," film critic Roger Ebert asserts that games lack emotional and symbolic depth. Furthermore, he stresses how the end of a video game is "winning," rather than mere experiencing. Ebert writes:

Why aren't gamers content to play their games and simply enjoy themselves? They have my blessing, not that they care. Do they require validation?

I would argue that we do not require validation as much as recognize the importance for including games in our educational institutions; we require justification for endorsing such an inclusion. Rather than dismiss Ebert's criticisms, I suggest we develop such justification by tackling them head on. What are the artistic values of video games? To address this question, you need to begin by developing a theory of art. In both pieces, Ebert stresses the necessity (and difficulty) of formulating a definition of art. In the earlier piece, he risks the following definition: "My notion is that it [artistic merit] grows better the more it improves or alters nature through a passage through what we might call the artist's soul, or vision." We'll start with this definition, the ability to "improve or alter [our human] nature through what we might call the artist's soul, or vision," but we'll contrast it to some of the other major theories of art. Of course, attempting to define art risks descent into an endless abyss. For most of us, art is a visceral, affective experience that testifies to the wisdom of Justice Potter's words: "I know it when I see it." Yet a few prominent theories can help us reflect on precisely what we are seeing, or in our immediate case, playing:

- Aristotle, *Poetics*
- Tolstoy, "What is Art?"
- Baraka, "The Revolutionary Theatre"
- Popova, "The Value of Arts"
- Dali, "The Moral Position of Surrealism" [PDF]

In 800-1200 words, I'll ask you to respond to Ebert's column by focusing on the aesthetic quality of one particular game (or one particular series). In essence, we'll be working together to create a canon of video games--seeking those games that transform our nature.
Your response will have to offer a definition of art, drawn from any of the sources we have read in class (or anything you might read outside it). There is no such thing as a right or wrong definition of art--but there are definitely good and bad definitions (in other words, I would argue that the definition of art is a rhetorical, rather than philosophical, proposition). Your task will be to offer a good enough theory of art to base your claim for the sophistication of a particular game.

Resources:

**Level Two: Representations of Race and Gender in Video Games**

While scholars are increasingly noting the pedagogic potential of video games (particularly, James Gee's oft-cited What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Literacy and Learning), they also note, with growing concern, the rather myopic presentation of women, minorities, and other cultures in games. If games are going to advance, then they will need to be sensitive to these issues. Our second project will turn a critical eye to games to see how they measure up to 21st century standards for identity politics.

Working in teams of two, your job will be to create a 4-6 minute video, using Anita Sarkeesian’s “Tropes Vs. Video Games” as a model.

Resources:
- http://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2012-07-09-anita-sarkeesian

How real is the virtual: "http://www.juliandibbell.com/articles/a-rape-in-cyberspace/"


**Level Three: Bogost's Procedural Rhetoric**

Following our reading of McGonigal and Bogost, students will research and report on an aspect of gaming (such as a structural or symbolic analysis of a particular game), gaming theory (such as gamification, serious gaming, or political gaming), or gaming culture (such as social gaming, gaming addiction, or trolling). These papers will be approximately 2500 words and will include readings from outside the course.

**Level Four: Making a Game**

In the capstone project, students will use Fille and Platten, as well as a few other sources on ludology, to construct a game and marketing materials and professional documents for that game. The game can
either be a proof-of-concept for a video game (i.e., a pitch) or it can be a card game, a real world game, or a board game. In any case, the game will require supporting documents (such as instruction manuals) and packaging materials.


Instructions (Course Objectives)

Approved Course Description
This course explores the rhetorical dimensions of gaming while at the same time asking how games might influence rhetorical theory.

Course Objectives
Students will learn:
- Learn how to analyze a game using myriad theoretical lenses (aesthetic, critical, identity politics)
- Learn the core rhetorical concepts such as pathos, ethos, genre, audience, and identification
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Student Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will:
- Develop a theory of art and defend games based on that theory
- Analyze a genre of games for its representation of race, gender, class and/or sexuality
- Produce a range of texts (including, web essay, video blog, game design materials and packaging) using a variety of tools (including video editing, audio editing, web publishing software, image editing software, publication software [Adobe InDesign etc]).

Course Assignments
This course has 4 major assignments:

Argument Project (10%)
In their first assignment, students will develop an argumentative essay that responds to Roger Ebert's assertion that "video games can never be art." This essay will be posted to the web, and thus will provide students with an opportunity to learn web authorship, including how to edit/insert images and incorporate hyperlinks into their writing.

Analytic Project (20%)
In their second assignment, students will work in pairs to produce a 4-6 minute video modeled after Anita Sarkeesian's "Tropes vs. Women" series. These projects will analyze how race, gender, sexuality, and/or class are depicted in a particular series of video games.

Research Project (30%)
In their third assignment, students will write an academic essay of 6-8 pages on a research topic of their choice. My hope is that research projects will grow out of our readings in McGonigal and Bogost, particularly the latter’s emphasis on procedural rhetoric and serious games, but this is not a requirement.

Development Project (25%)
In their final project, students will work in teams of 3 to develop a video game. This will include producing a print mock-up of the game (proof-in-concept), marketing materials for the game, instruction manuals for the game, and packaging for the game.

Blogs and Quizzes (15%)
Additionally, students will keep a weekly gaming journal reflecting on how their gaming relates to course materials. There will also be periodic quizzes on the reading.

Course Policies
We will be observing all university policies regarding attendance, religious holidays, disability accommodations, and emergencies.

Grading and Attendance Policies

Grade Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97 or above</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-96</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>62 or below</td>
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</tbody>
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The S/U option is not available for this course. A grade of "I" will be awarded only in the case of a medical or family emergency and, in conjunction with the English department's policy, "only when a small portion of the student’s work is incomplete and only when the student is otherwise earning a passing grade."

Attendance Policy
University excused absences include

1. death of an immediate family member
2. observation of religious holidays
3. participation in authorized university activities
Excused absences #2 and #3 require advanced notice. You are still responsible for completing assignments. This is a lecture/discussion/production based class; attendance is of a high priority. You are allowed to miss 3 class sessions. Any unexcused absence beyond 3 reduces your course grade by a whole letter per absence. A student with 7 or more unexcused absences cannot pass the course.

Policy on Make-up Work
Assignments missed due to unexcused absence cannot be made up. Late assignments--unless required due to an excused absence--will not be accepted.

Disability Accommodation Policy
"Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with Students with Disabilities Services in order to receive academic accommodations. SDS encourages students to notify instructors of accommodation needs at least 5 business days prior to needing the accommodation. A letter from SDS must accompany this request." See http://www.sds.usf.edu/students.asp for information and resources.

Emergency Policy
In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USF to suspend normal operations. During this time, USF may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include, but are not limited to, Blackboard, Elluminate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It is the responsibility of the student to monitor his or her Blackboard site for each class for course specific communication, as well as the main USF College, and Departmental websites, emails and MoBull messages for important communications.

Academic Integrity Policy
I quote from USF’s Academic Policies and Procedures:

Academic integrity is the foundation of the University of South Florida’s commitment to the academic honesty and personal integrity of its University community. Academic integrity is grounded in certain fundamental values, which include honesty, respect and fairness. Broadly defined, academic honesty is the completion of all academic endeavors and claims of scholarly knowledge as representative of one’s own efforts. Knowledge and maintenance of the academic standards of honesty and integrity as set forth by the University are the responsibility of the entire academic community, including the instructional faculty, staff and students.

Students found guilty of academic dishonesty will not only fail that assignment, but also are liable to be failed for the course, graded with an FF, and/or recommended for expulsion dependent upon the severity of the offense.

Defaults (Course Policies)
Please:

- Visit my office hours. My hours are W/R from 1:00-3:00. My office is in CPR 301c
- Be on time. I take attendance at the beginning of class. If you come in late, then I count it as an absence
- Remember to turn off all personal portable devices (cellphones, etc) before class
- Remember that, although there is a computer in front of you, there's also a human being in front of the class. Know when to pay attention to the human, and when to pay attention to the computer.

### Class Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Working</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Ebert, Aristotle, Tolstoy</td>
<td>Project 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Dali, Baraka, Popova</td>
<td>Project 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Bogost (&quot;Art&quot;)</td>
<td>Project 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Dibbell (&quot;Rape&quot;); Blackmon</td>
<td>Project 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Sullivan (web video), Higgin</td>
<td>Project 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>McGonigal</td>
<td>Project 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>McGonigal</td>
<td>Project 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Bogost, Research</td>
<td>Project 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Bogost, Research</td>
<td>Project 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Bogost, Research</td>
<td>Project 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
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<td>Project 3</td>
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<td>Twelve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thirteen</td>
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<td>Dille and Platten</td>
<td>Project 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifteen</td>
<td>Dille and Platten</td>
<td>Project 4 / Games Showcase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixteen</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
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