

ANGM 2375: History of Games

Tuesdays 10:00 AM – 12:45 PM

JO 3.516

Spring 2026

Contact Information

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Course Description

This undergraduate course examines the history of digital games and the gaming industry, beginning with the arcades and early home consoles of the seventies and ending in the current decade. The course focuses both on the chronology of development and design as well as the origins and evolution of the mechanics, genres, technologies, and hardware that inform and influence modern game design philosophy.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

- Understand the history and culture of the digital game industry
- Examine and apply the impacts of past design and production decisions on modern game design and industry structures
- Develop critical analysis skills and techniques for evaluating historical and modern digital games

Required Textbooks and Materials

- *Replay: The History of Video Games*, Tristan Donovan (2010)
- At least four digital games, either in students' own collections or provided by the Games and Media Library and/or the Narrative Systems Research Lab
- Additional readings and course materials will be provided online in eLearning by the instructor

Textbooks and some other bookstore materials can be ordered online or purchased at the UT Dallas Bookstore. Students will be expected to play digital games and maintain an appropriate level of games literacy, competency, and civility in this course.

Grading Policy

- 10% Paper Zero: Game Review
- 10% Paper One: 80s Game Analysis
- 15% Paper Two: 90s Game Analysis
- 20% Paper Three: Tracing a Mechanic
- 10% Paper X: Game Feel Analysis
- 25% Paper Four: Historical Event
- 10% Attendance, Participation, and Professionalism

Academic Calendar

All readings should be completed on the day they are listed. This schedule is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion; all changes will be furnished to students in writing.

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
1 Jan. 20	Introduction to Game History; <i>Spacewar!</i> '62;	<i>No readings</i>	
2 Jan. 27	The Rise and Fall of Atari: '78-'82	<i>Replay</i> Ch. 2: Avoid Missing Ball for High Score (online), <i>Replay</i> Ch. 7: Pac-Man Fever; <i>Replay</i> Ch. 8: Devilish Contraptions	
3 Feb. 3	Nintendo Conquers Japan, Then America: '83-'88	<i>Replay</i> Ch. 12: A Tool To Sell Software; <i>Replay</i> Ch. 13: I Could Have Sworn It Was 1983	Paper Zero: Digital or Analog Game Review, due Feb. 3
4 Feb. 10	Early PC Gaming, '78-'86; Sims and Interactive Movies, '82-'91	<i>Replay</i> Ch. 11: Macintoshization; <i>Replay</i> Ch. 14 Interactive Movies; <i>Replay</i> Ch. 15 Ah! You Must Be A God	
5 Feb. 17	The <i>Tetris</i> Story, '84-'88; Sega vs. the SNES, '89-'91	<i>Replay</i> Ch. 16: A Plane to Moscow; <i>Replay</i> Ch. 17: Sega Does What Nintendon't	Paper One: Analysis of 1980s Era Game, due Feb. 17

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
6 Feb. 24	Games Get Serious: <i>Myst</i> and <i>DOOM</i> , '93-'96	<i>Replay</i> Ch. 19 A Library in a Fish's Mouth; <i>Replay</i> Ch. 20 The Ultimate Display	
7 Mar. 3	Violence and <i>Mortal Kombat</i> , '94; The Playstation Arrives '97-'98	<i>Replay</i> Ch. 18 <i>Mortal Kombat</i> ; <i>Replay</i> Ch. 21 We Take Pride in Ripping Them to Shreds	
8 Mar. 10	Postmortem Session: Games of the 1990s	Postmortems of <i>Age of Empires</i> (1997), <i>Thief: The Dark Project</i> (1998), <i>Diablo II</i> (2000), and <i>Deus Ex</i> (2000) (online)	Paper Two: Analysis of 1990s Era Game, due Mar. 10
9 Mar. 17	<i>Spring Break</i>	<i>No readings</i>	
10 Mar. 24	MMORPGs, Mod Culture, Machinima, and <i>The SIMs</i>	<i>Replay</i> Ch. 23 You Haven't Lived Til You've Died in MUD; <i>Replay</i> Ch. 25, Little Computer People	
11 Mar. 31	The Dreamcast and the Wii; Games Get Serious Again: <i>Pokemon</i> , <i>GTA III</i> , <i>ICO</i> , and <i>Bioshock</i>	<i>Replay</i> Ch. 26: All-Access Gaming; <i>Replay</i> Ch. 27 The Grooviest Era of Crime; <i>All Your Base...</i> Ch. 12 <i>Bioshock</i> : Art for Game's Sake (online)	
12 Apr. 7	Rise of the Indie Games; Games as Art	<i>Replay</i> Ch. 28: Magic Shooting Out Of People's Fingers; <i>Rise of the Videogame Zinesters</i> Ch. 7 By Your Bootstraps (online)	Paper Three: Tracing a Mechanic's Historical Development, due Apr. 7
13 Apr. 14	Postmortem Session: Games of the 2010s	Postmortems of <i>Halo Wars</i> (2009), <i>Diablo III</i> (2012), <i>The Witcher III</i> (2015), and <i>Stardew Valley</i> (2016) (online)	

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
14 Apr. 21	Analog Games and Tabletop Systems	<i>It's All A Game</i> Ch. 13: Rise of the Machines (online); <i>It's All A Game</i> Ch. 16: Made in Germany (online)	Paper X: Game Feel Analysis, due Apr. 21
15 Apr. 28	Dungeons & Dragons, Magic the Gathering	<i>Of Dice and Men</i> Ch. 6: Temple of the Frog (online); <i>Of Dice and Men</i> Ch. 9 Arneson vs. Gygax (online)	
16 May 5	The Future of Games; course wrap-up	<i>No readings</i>	Paper Four: Analysis of Modern Historical Event in Gaming, due May 5

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected and will make up part of students' participation and professionalism grade. Students who fail to attend and participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. Attendance will be taken at every lecture, and attendance, participation, and professionalism together make up 10% of the total grade for this course.

Late Work

Late work is not accepted in this course, with the following exceptions:

- All papers, with the exception of Paper 4, may be granted extensions if requested by email (university emails only) and no more than 24 hours past the paper's deadline.
- In cases of serious emergency or extraordinary circumstances, late assignments may be accepted only at the professor's discretion.
- Make-up or extra credit assignments may be assigned at the professor's discretion.

Digital Game Assignments

Students in this course are expected to have a basic level of computer literacy such that they can download, install, and play games without assistance from the instructor. Students are expected to maintain a level of maturity when participating in semi-anonymous online spaces, including handling potential encounters with griefers and trolls. Students are also expected to be familiar with the Games and Media Library (ATC 3.705), and to make use of its resources for the duration of this course.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Students can find university rules and regulations on Academic Dishonesty at conduct.utdallas.edu/dishonesty/

Policy on Generative AI

In accordance with the UT Dallas Student Code of Conduct, students are expected to uphold honesty, integrity, and service in all that they do, including when using generative AI in academic work. Students should understand that academic work produced by generative AI does not replace the student's understanding and interpretation of the course material.

This course does not permit the use of generative AI. Students should present their work without the use of generative AI, including but not limited to use for ideating, outlining, writing, and creating text, both fiction and non-fiction. If generative AI is used, the assignment in question will not be graded. Assignments may be revised and resubmitted only at the instructor's discretion. Any questions about permissible use of AI must be submitted to the instructor in writing.

Required Textbooks and Materials

All readings and course materials will be provided online in eLearning by the instructor. Students are encouraged to focus their research on digital or analog games with which they are already familiar.

Class Materials

The Instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course; however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Class Attendance and Participation

Regular class attendance and participation is expected. Students who fail to attend class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. A portion of the grade for this course is directly tied to your participation in this class. It also includes engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in the lectures (and/or labs). Class participation is documented by faculty. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Email Use

Only UT Dallas email accounts will be used for this course. All email communication from the instructor will be mailed to students UT Dallas email accounts and no other. Students are responsible for checking their UT Dallas email regularly for course information and updates.

Class Recordings

Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

The instructor may record meetings of this course. These recordings will be made available to all students registered for this class if the intent is to supplement the classroom experience. If the instructor or a UTD school/department/office plans any other uses for the recordings, consent of the students identifiable in the recordings is required prior to such use unless an exception is allowed by law.

Additional Policies and Procedures*Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

Please review [the section](#) within the UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures webpage.

Academic Support Resources

Please visit the [Academic Support Resources](#) page to view the University's academic support resources for all students.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

Please visit the [Syllabus Policies](#) page to view the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please review the catalog sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) or [pass/fail](#) grading option and withdrawal from class.

Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”