**Course description**

The intense period of experimentation in which modernist art developed has often been characterized as serious and earnest research. By contrast, this seminar will investigate the ways that games, play, and non-seriousness factored into the development of modern art. We will explore the emerging literature on game studies, discuss the challenges of game design, and investigate key moments in the history of 20th and 21st century art when games became part of art practice or models for writing about art. Our focus will be on the conceptual issues that arise in the attempts to define and develop games, as well as how to incite play. In addition, we will examine a range of methods used to study games as representational activities, from Surrealist art to computer and online gaming strategies.

**Course structure**

This is a participatory, discussion, and project-based course. Students are expected to engage fully in collaborative work, involving both the design of games and the study of their art-historical precedents. Classes will be devoted to discussions and applications of readings and concepts. *Independent work on class projects is essential to participation in this course*, and the range and quality of collaborative and individual projects will be the primary criteria for evaluation. In particular, a major resource for the class will be the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, especially the strong holdings in Surrealist art, and students should expect to devote out-of-class time to self-directed museum visits. There is one required book for the course: Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004). All other readings will be made available through the Docutek system. Students should refer to the syllabus, rather than the Docutek system, for page numbers of reading assignments.
Evaluation

1. **Attendance and participation**
   All students are expected to attend class meetings prepared to discuss the required readings. This is a discussion-based class, and all students should regularly and productively contribute to class discussions. Attendance at all class meetings is essential. More than two missed classes may be grounds for a “no credit.”

2. **Weekly written summaries of required readings**
   For each class, students must submit a typed summary of each non-textbook reading, consisting of
   a. An overview of the thesis and argument of the reading (one to two paragraphs)
   b. Three (3) questions for class discussion. Questions should be about the ideas or implications of the readings rather than merely factual.
   In order to receive credit for the course, all reading summaries must have been submitted by 26 April.

3. **Collaborative projects**
   The class will be divided into student teams who will each be responsible for a collaborative group project in the form of a game about the Art Institute of Chicago. Applying the principles from Salen and Zimmerman’s book, students will be expected to create a game that will introduce its player to some aspect of the collections of the museum. Students are responsible for fully researching the art objects included in the game, of which there should be at least six. A research and project development day has been provided early in the semester to allow students extra time to formulate their game and research its contents. The final project will be presented to the class, including all documentation and materials, midway through the semester. For this project students will be evaluated according to three major criteria
   a. **Application of game and rule design principles:** The game should reflect an understanding of the challenges of game design, as outlined in *Rules of Play*, and students should strive to create an engaging game that is neither overly complex nor overly simple.
   b. **Content:** The content of the game will be the individual histories of the objects and artists chosen to represent the Art Institute’s collections. The game should introduce players to basic information about artists and artworks to an adult-level audience. Research must be documented. While this is not as extensive as a research paper, it is expected that the game will convey knowledge useful to introducing a lay viewer to art and the museum.
   c. **Project materials:** On the day of their presentation, each group should submit a highly-finished and fully-realized game ready to be played. This must include:
      i. A set of rules, fully articulated
      ii. All materials required to play the game (gameboards, performance instructions, game pieces, etc.)
      iii. An introductory statement explaining the purpose of the game, the priorities of the designers, and the way it should ideally be played.
      iv. A bibliography covering all artworks and artists used in the game design.
      v. For each student: a 2-page statement, handed in individually, discussing your own contribution to the design and content of the game, what you like best about it, and what you disagree with in terms of its design and content.
Students are encouraged to think expansively about what and how to constitute a game. Those students with skills in new media should feel free to develop computer and/or web-based games, though this is by no means required. The technology level of the game design will not be a criterion for evaluation, though the overall level of execution (at any tech level) will be.

4. Take home examination
Instead of a research paper, students will be given an open-book, take home examination that will test comprehension of core concepts and historical issues covered in the class. It will be expected that students will make use of the Flaxman and Ryerson libraries in completing the examination. Further details TBA. The tests will be distributed on 26 April and are due at the beginning of class on 10 May. All exams must be typed, and double-spaced. No late exams will be accepted, but students who wish to hand in their exam early may do so.

Differently-abled students
Any students with exceptional needs or concerns (including 'invisible' difficulties such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, or psychiatric complications) are encouraged to make an appointment with the professor to discuss these issues by the end of the second week of the term so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged. Any student in need of academic adjustments or accommodations should first contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). SSD can be reached by phone at 312.345.9478 or by sending an email to Sara Baum, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (sbaum@artic.edu).

Plagiarism
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago prohibits “dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the School.” See Students’ Rights and Responsibilities, Student Handbook: www.artic.edu/saic/life/studenthandbook/rights.pdf. One plagiarizes when one presents another’s work as one’s own. It is a form of intellectual theft. Plagiarism need not always be intentional. One can plagiarize even if one does not intend to. The penalty for plagiarizing ranges from a failing grade on the plagiarized assignment to not earning credit for the course. This may also result in some loss of some types of financial aid (for example, a No Credit in a course can lead to a loss of the Presidential Scholarship), and in cases of regular offenses can lead to expulsion from the School. The Faculty Senate Student Life Subcommittee has prepared a 28-page handbook entitled Plagiarism: How to Recognize It and Avoid It. The document is available online on at http://www.artic.edu/saic/programs/resources/library/plagiarism_packet.pdf

Course calendar

1 February
Introduction

8 February
Fundamentals

Required reading SALEN and ZIMMERMAN, pp. 31-83 + 101-105

Screening The Twilight Zone #64: “Will the Real Martian Please Stand Up!” (1961)
Further reference


15 February

Rules

Required readings
SALEN and ZIMMERMAN, pp. 119-39 + 151-201

Further reference

22 February

Project Development and Group Meeting Time

NO REGULAR CLASS SESSION

Required reading
SALEN and ZIMMERMAN, 266-83 + 461-87

1 March

Play

Required readings
SALEN and ZIMMERMAN, 301-74

Further reference
8 March

Surrealism: Exquisite Corpses and Gameboards

Required readings

Further reference

15 March

Games as/or Art: Duchamp (and Chess) and Cornell

Required readings
22 March

**Games as historical method**

**Required readings**

- *SALEN and ZIMMERMAN*, 233-46

**Further reference**


29 March

**Collaborative project presentations I**

5 April

**Collaborative project presentations II**

12 April

**Contemporary Art, Internet Art, and Video Games**

**Required readings**

- *SALEN and ZIMMERMAN*, 505-69.
19 April
Fluxus

Guest lecture by SIMON ANDERSON, Dept. of Art History, Theory, and Criticism, SAIC
readings TBA

26 April
Contemporary Art, Internet Art, and Video Games II

NOTE: Take-home final examination distributed

Required readings


http://www.gamestudies.org/0301/walther/

Further reference

http://www.gamestudies.org/0401/woods/


http://www.duke.edu/~tlove/civ.htm


3 May
CRITIQUE WEEK: No class

10 May
Crying Wolf: Games, performance art, and ‘reality’ entertainment in popular culture

NOTE: Final examination papers due.

Screenings