

# ENC 1101-0241: THE PLAY'S THE THING: ARGUMENT AND RHETORIC IN VIDEO GAME CULTURE

CBD 210, MWF 3 (9:35-10:25)

## INSTRUCTORS

J. Stephen Addcox  
[stevox@ufl.edu](mailto:stevox@ufl.edu)

**Office:** Pascal's Coffeehouse  
**Office hours:** MW, Periods 4-5

Paulette Bane  
[pbane1@ufl.edu](mailto:pbane1@ufl.edu)

**Office:** Tigert 302  
**Office hours:** M, Period 2  
or by appointment

Jonathan Hernandez  
[jhernandez4@ufl.edu](mailto:jhernandez4@ufl.edu)

**Office:** Tigert 302  
**Office hours:** M, Periods 5-6

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Writing is an integral component for almost every professional career; and yet, the work of developing effective writing practices is a life-long process. Every writer is capable of improvement, and in this course we will be focusing specifically on how to both analyze and write effective arguments for contemporary academic audiences. In particular, this class will approach these learning objectives through the lens of a very significant cultural phenomenon: video games. Over the past forty years video games have grown from a niche form of entertainment to one of the most dominant and profitable cultural products of our time. As such, the impact and significance of video games on our culture can provide fertile soil for writing and argumentative development.

The course is divided into four units, and in each unit, students will write a paper using a variety of argumentative and rhetorical techniques. In the first unit, we will consider what argument is and its function in academic writing. With the question of argument we will consider the question of what video games are: art, entertainment, distractions, or something else?

In units two and three, we will explore two particular forms of argument: definition and evaluation arguments. Building upon the readings and discussions of the first unit, students will then begin to explore the nature of video games and how we define them. Then students will consider how a particular video game has impacted our culture in a specific way. Through these papers, students will develop skills for writing persuasively to address issues that have wide ranging ramifications.

Finally, students will propose how video games and the video game industry might address cultural issues in the future, and consider how video games might evolve to solve these issues. Throughout the semester, students will be reading from academic and journalistic sources to gain a deeper understanding of the current issues facing video game culture. Additionally, students will be encouraged to sample several video games and consider how they contribute to or contrast with the issues we discuss.

## OUTCOMES

By the end of ENC 1101, students will be able to

- plan, draft, revise, edit, and proofread forms of argumentative essays
- read, write, and think critically
- adapt writing to different audiences, purposes, and contexts
- use evidence to effectively support argumentative claims or theses
- write an organized, logical argument
- avoid plagiarism
- write coherent, cohesive, and clear paragraphs
- create direct, grammatically-correct sentences
- demonstrate a clear, graceful writing style

## REQUIRED READINGS

- John D. Ramage, *Writing Arguments*, Brief 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2012
- Lester Faigley, *The Brief Penguin Handbook*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2012
- Additional readings will be made available online via Sakai

## GRADING & COURSE CREDIT POLICIES

Grading for this course will be rigorous. If an assignment illustrates disregard for spelling, grammar, citation guidelines, or a general carelessness in the writing, the assignment will be failed. Do not rely on your instructor for copy-editing, even on drafts.

The writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the minimum requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit. To satisfy this requirement, **every** assignment's word count must be fulfilled. **Submitted assignments short of the minimum word count will receive zero credit.**

### Grading Scale

A	4.0	930-1000	C	2.0	730-769
A-	3.67	900-929	C-	1.67	700-729
B+	3.33	870-899	D+	1.33	670-699
B	3.0	830-869	D	1.0	630-669
B-	2.67	800-829	D-	0.67	600-629
C+	2.33	770-799	E	0.00	0-599

### General Education Learning Outcomes

Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (i.e. grammar, punctuation, usage) and the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive, require multiple drafts submitted to the instructor for feedback prior to final submission, and fulfill 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement.

You must pass this course with a "C" or better to satisfy the CLAS requirement for Composition (C) and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit (E6). You must turn in all papers totaling 6,000 words to receive credit for writing 6,000 words.

PLEASE NOTE: a grade of "C-" **will not** confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition (C) requirement.

The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to content, organization and coherence, argument and support, style, clarity, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. Conferring credit for the University Writing Requirement, this course requires that papers conform to the following assessment rubric. More specific rubrics and guidelines applicable to individual assignments may be delivered during the course of the semester.

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS (TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE: 1000)

### **Argument Analysis (600-900 words; 50 total points)**

In this paper, students will select either the Zimbardo or the Williams article and analyze how the author tries to persuade its readers through the use of argumentative claims and evidence. These essays are essential in establishing the cultural relevance of video games, and that their significance transcends gender division.

### **Definition (900-1200 words; 100 points total)**

In this unit, students will consider what qualifies as a video game, and how we should understand the continually evolving genres of video games. Essays will be evaluated on the quality of the definition/classification and the strength of the evidence used in support of the definition.

### **Evaluation Argument (1200-1500 words; 200 points total)**

In this paper, students will select a particular issue that intersects with video games and video game culture today. Topics could include representations of women, the effects of graphic violence, the question of games as art, the relationship between games and narrative, and games used as educational tools. Students will then evaluate the kind of impact that video games are having on that issue. Drawing upon examples from video games, students will explain and highlight the ethical relationship between video games and their cultural issue.

### **Writing Self-Assessment (600-900 words, not including references; 100 points total)**

Looking back at the first three papers, students will analyze their progress in the course thus far. Specifically, students will identify areas of their writing that need work and describe a plan for improvement.

### **Proposal (1800-2100 words; 400 points total)**

For the final paper, students will propose a solution to the problem that they have been discussing in the class. Their solution needs to have three parts: 1) define the “need” for a solution to the problem; 2) describe the solution; 3) analyze the feasibility of the solution. Students must use at least 5 academic sources to support their solution and its feasibility. Particular attention will be paid to logical organization and the ability to adequately address possible objections to the proposed solution.

### **In-Class Work and Homework (900 Words; 150 total points)**

Throughout the term, students will work in class and at home on activities that strengthen specific writing skills. These activities include quizzes, drafts, workshops, peer reviews, and reading responses. For peer reviews, a completed paper must be submitted; missed peer reviews will lower the final grade on the paper by 20%. The reading responses, assigned during class, will total 900 words or more.

## CLASSROOM POLICIES

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required. The policy of the University Writing Program is that if a student misses more than **six** periods during a summer or spring semester, he or she will fail the entire course. Missing class on a double period counts as **two** absences. The UWP exempts from this policy **only** those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed.

Please Note: If students are absent, it is their responsibility to make themselves aware of all due dates. If absent due to a scheduled event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

Tardiness: If students enter class after roll has been called, they are late. Two instances of tardiness count as one absence.

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

(University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8 July 2011)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code. Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

## **Classroom Behavior**

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

## **In-Class Work**

Papers and drafts are due at the beginning of class or on-line at the assigned deadline. Late papers will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse.

Participation is a crucial part of success in this class. Students will be expected to work in small groups and participate in group discussions, writing workshops, peer reviews, and other in-class activities. Be prepared for unannounced quizzes or activities on the readings or classroom discussion. Students must be present for all in-class activities to receive credit for them. In-class work cannot be made up. Writing workshops require that students provide constructive feedback about their peers' writing.

In general, students are expected to contribute constructively to each class session.

## **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities**

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.

All papers will be submitted as MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) documents to E-learning/Sakai and as hard copies. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and pages numbered. Be sure to staple papers before submitting hard copies. Unstapled papers will not be accepted.

## **Students with Disabilities**

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting accommodation should contact the Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202. That office will provide

documentation to the student whom must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

## **Course Schedule**

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### **Unit 1 – Argument and Rhetoric in Video Games**

#### Week 1 (August 22 – August 24)

W - Course and Syllabus || Introduction to rhetoric and video games

F - *Writing Arguments (WA)*, Chs. 3-4

- **Diagnostic Essay assigned**

#### Week 2 (August 27 – August 31)

M - **Diagnostic Essay due**

- Katie Williams, “I Can Be Just as Capable. Let Me” (2012) [E-Learning]

- Philip Zimbardo, “The Demise of Guys” (2012) [E-Learning]

- **Argument Analysis assigned**

W - Penguin Handbook, Ch. 6

- *WA*, Chapter 8

F - Penguin, Ch. 5

- Discussion: Video Games and Rhetoric in *Flower*

#### Week 3 (September 3 – September 7)

M - Labor Day, No Class

W - Penguin, Ch. 2

F - Peer Review, Argument Analysis

### **Unit 2 – Defining the Nature of Video Games**

#### Week 4 (September 10 – September 14)

M - **Argument Analysis Due**

- Penguin, Ch. 8: Write an Informative Essay

- **Definition Argument assigned**

W - Ian Bogost, “Art” and “Empathy” from *How to do things with Videogames* (2011) [E-Learning]

- The Artist is Present

F - *WA* Chapter 11: Definition Arguments

- Due: Topic and List of Criteria

#### Week 5 (September 17 – September 21)

M - Discussion: *The Marriage and Passage*

- Developing a thesis

W - Penguin Chs. 27-28

- Style: Topic Sentences, Paragraphs, Essay Structure

- F - Taylor Clark, “The Most Dangerous Gamer” from *The Atlantic* (2012) [E-Learning]  
- Outline of paper due

Week 6 (September 24 – September 28)

- M - *WA* Chapter 5: What Counts as Evidence

- W - Thesis Workshop  
- Due: Claim/Thesis, Revised Outline || Workshop: Essay logic and Organization ||  
Introduction/Conclusions

- F - Peer Review: Evaluation Argument

**Unit 3 – Evaluating the Cultural Impact of Video Games**

Week 7 (October 1 – October 5)

- M - **Definition Argument due**  
- **Evaluation Analysis assigned**

**[Violence in Video Games]**

- Ryan Smith, “For Our Consideration: Partners in Arms” from *The Gameological Society* (2012)

- W - Tom Bissell, “The Unbearable Lightness of Games” from *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter* (2010)  
[E-Learning]

**[Use of Narrative in Video Games]**

- Discussion: *Gravity Bone* (2009)

- F - Discussion: *Coma* (2010)

Week 8 (October 8 – October 12)

**[Gender and Video Games]**

- M - Jon Cogburn, “‘Realistic Blood and Gore’: Do Violent Games Make Violent Gamers?” from *Philosophy Through Videogames* (2009), pp. 1-6  
- Discussion: *Darfur is Dying* (2006) & *Robot Unicorn Attack* (2010)

**[Games and Global Justice]**

- W - Cogburn, cont., pp. 6-12  
- Discussion: *Sweatshop* (2011)

- F - *WA*, Ch. 13: Evaluation and Ethical Arguments

Week 9 (October 15 – October 19)

- M - Penguin Ch. 9: Writing a Position Argument  
- Introductions and Conclusions

- W - Penguin Ch. 3: Developing Paragraphs  
- **Rough Draft due**

- F - **Peer Review Discussion: Evaluation Argument**

**Unit 4 – We Are All Gamers: Proposing Persuasive Solutions (WA 15, 16, 6, 7)**

Week 10 (October 22 – October 26)

- M - **Evaluation Argument Due**  
- **Writing Self-Assessment assigned**  
- **Proposal Assigned**

W - Ian Bogost, Ch. 3 Reverence and Conclusion: The End of Gamers; from *How to do Things with Videogames* (2011) [E-Learning]

F - *Indie Game: The Movie*

Week 11 (October 29 – November 2)

M - *Indie Game: The Movie* (cont.)

W - Columbia, “Games without Play” (2009)

F - Discussion: Games that try to change things about games (*Myst, Papo & Yo*, others?)  
- **Writing Self-Assessment Due**

Week 12 (November 5 – November 9)

M - Discuss **Prospectus**  
- The Research Process (WA, Chs. 15-16; Penguin Chs. 16-18)  
- Review of Library resources

W - Workshop of Proposal Topics

F - Homecoming, No Class

Week 13 (November 12 – November 16)

M - Veteran’s Day, No Class

W - Mandatory Conferences

F - *WA*, Chs. 6-7  
- **Prospectus Due**

Week 14 (November 19 – November 23)

M - *WA*, Chapter 17

W & F - Thanksgiving Break

Week 15 (November 26 – November 30)

M - Incorporating research and embedding quotes

W - **Peer Review Drafts Due**  
- Optional conferences & Work Day

F - Peer Review: Proposal

Week 16 (December 3 – December 5)

M - Mandatory Conferences

W - Course Wrap-up  
- **Proposal Due**