



CHID 496
Section F
Wednesday
1:30-3:20 PM
SAV 136
Autumn 2009
Ed Chang &
Tim Welsh
University of
Washington



"I am Andrew Ryan, and I'm here to ask you a question. Is a man not entitled to the sweat of his brow? 'No!' says the man in Washington, 'It belongs to the poor.' 'No!' says the man in the Vatican, 'It belongs to God.' 'No!' says the man in Moscow, 'It belongs to everyone.' I rejected those answers; instead, I chose something different. I chose the impossible. I chose...Rapture, a city where the artist would not fear the censor, where the scientist would not be bound by petty morality, where the great would not be constrained by the small!"
—*Bioshock*

ZK's CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED first-person shooter *Bioshock* (Xbox360, PS3, PC) presents body modification as the natural outgrowth of an individualist ethic institutionalized as the foundation of a utopian society called Rapture. The game box describes: "BioShock is a shooter unlike any you've ever played, loaded with weapons and tactics never seen. You'll have a complete arsenal at your disposal...but you'll be forced to genetically modify your DNA to create an even more deadly weapon: you." As players navigate the fallen city of Rapture, the game presumes to offer player the choice to embody its Ayn Rand-esque morality or to resist it, weaving the player's in-game decisions into the development of the plot. *Bioshock* thus affords us an excellent opportunity to investigate the moral, political, and cultural issues attached to body modification and posthumanism more broadly.

OUR FOCUS GROUP, as part of a continuing series on video games generated by the Critical Gaming Project at UW, will address technological and biological determinism, individuality and objectivism, post- and transhumanism, and technological mediations of race, gender, and sexuality. Playing *Bioshock* and a selection of cyberpunk short stories will be deployed as theory alongside formal video game and posthuman critical theory. Readings may include texts by Cory Doctorow, Maureen McHugh, Geoff Ryman, Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, Alexander Galloway, Clint Hocking, and others.

THE COURSE will meet once a week for 2 hours to engage guided discussion, analytical and reflective writing, and game play. There will be no formal paper requirements, but students will be asked to participate in online discussion and keep a weekly play-log (plog).

Requirements & Grading

Although CHID 496 is for credit/no credit and no numeric grade will be reported, for the purposes for the class, you will still need to earn a minimum of a 2.0 to receive credit for the course. With that in mind, passing with credit will be a reflection of engagement, effort, critical thinking, writing, and participation.

Critical Blog/Plog Entries (50%)

The majority of the writing you will do for this class is in the form of weekly short, critical, analytical response entries on the class message board or blog: <http://depts.washington.edu/critgame/forum_index.html>.

These single-spaced, 500-750 word writings serve as reactions to, close readings of, and analyses of the game, texts, play, and the connections you

"Every man builds his world in his own image. He has the power to choose, but no power to escape the necessity of choice."
—Ayn Rand



Required Course Texts & Materials

- CHID 496F course readings are available via e-reserve
- *Bioshock* (Xbox360, PS3, PC)
- Web access and an active UW email account



Course Requirements

- Play Log (50%)
- Presentation & Plog Discussion Lead (20%)
- Class Participation (30%)

see, read, and talk about in class. These “journal entries” are more than just summaries or personal reactions and will be graded on clarity, coherence, critique, and how well you concisely formulate arguments. Response entries are due weekly. See the critical blog/vlog prompt for more details.

Presentation & Plog Discussion Lead (20%)

Once during the quarter, you will be responsible for putting together a 3 to 5 minute oral presentation on the week’s readings and game play. For the presentation, you must provide brief background information on the reading, generate analytical questions to get the class discussion going for the day, and demonstrate a critical understanding of the text. Everyone must sign-up for at least one presentation. Presenters are then required to post their presentation information and questions to the class blog and facilitate online discussion.

Participation and Preparedness (30%)

Preparedness and participation forms a large component of your final grade. It is essential that you prepare for class, attend class, and participate. Missing class may seriously compromise your ability to do well in this class. Again, negative participation will hurt your participation grade. Participation is determined by 1) your **respectful** presence in class, 2) your **willingness** to discuss, comment, and ask questions, 3) your **preparation** for class, which includes bringing required materials to class and doing all of the assigned reading for class, 4) your **engagement** in group work and play, 5) your use of the **class blog**, 6) and your **interactions** with us and other students. Finally, failure to turn in homework, incomplete assignments, or late papers will negatively impact your participation grade.

Attendance

Attendance is strongly recommended. If you are absent, you miss the explanation of an assignment, the discussion of a reading, the chance to play and participate, and overall, the class as a community of learning. It is in your best interests to come to class. Also, you are expected to be in class on time. Class will start immediately at the appointed time. In the first minutes of class I may make important announcements, establish the agenda for the class meeting, begin immediately with an important lesson, or field questions. Therefore, it is particularly important for you to arrive on time. If you come in after we start class, even by only a few minutes, you are late and I will mark you as such.

Chronic or conspicuous attendance problems will negatively affect your credit for the class. If you know you are going to miss class, please let us know ahead of time (via email), if you can, and we will make any necessary arrangements. And when you do miss class, always find another student to get class notes and see me in order to make up missed work in a timely manner.

Finding Help

We are available during office hours and by appointment to help you. We encourage you to come see us early in the quarter even if it is just to talk about the class, about the assignments, or about school in general. We may ask you to meet with us when we think a conference would be useful. Our offices are located on the ground floor of Padelford Hall (northeast of the HUB). Ed’s office is in B-33. Tim’s office is in A-307. See map below.

Assignment Format

All writing must be typed or produced on a computer. Word processing is preferable because it makes the mechanics of revision--rearranging, adding, and deleting--easy. If you do not have your own computer with word processing capability, computer labs are available on campus with a variety of software that is easy to learn. All documents should be saved in Microsoft Word format, preferably in Word format; if you do not have access to Word, then save your documents in RTF or Rich Text Format. Always make a backup copy of every paper you turn in (e.g. on disk, flash drive, by email).

Treat all writing as formal, academic writing, even on the class blog. All papers must follow the manuscript format outlined by the assignment. All papers must use MLA citation and documentation conventions. All papers must be neatly printed (in black), stapled in the top, left-hand corner if necessary, and not be three-hole punched. Papers that do not follow these format guidelines will not be accepted. They will be returned unread to you. Papers will be regarded as late until they are resubmitted in the proper format.

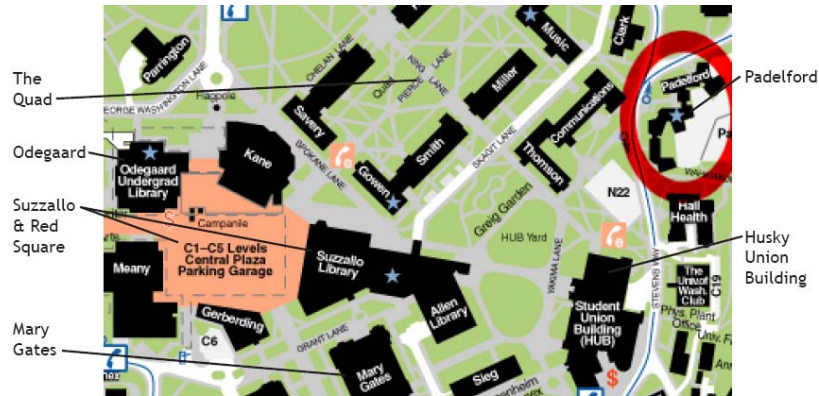


Contact Ed

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Contact Tim

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We are also available electronically by email and the course blog. Email and the blog are the best means of contacting us. We will do our best to answer your emails and blog posts, usually within twenty-four hours. If there is an emergency and you need to reach us, please contact the CHID office in B-102 Padelford.

We will also supplement our office hours with virtual hours via instant messenger. Ed uses AOL Instant Messenger and Google Talk (AIM & Gtalk nickname: **EDagogy**); Tim just uses Google Talk (Gtalk nickname: **tim.j.welsh**). If we are logged in, during reasonable hours, you are more than welcome to discuss the class or ask questions. Please, when you initiate an IM conversation for the first time, please identify yourself to us – be polite and respectful – and please be patient because our responses may not be immediate.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people's thoughts and writing – as long as you cite them. Many students do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes plagiarism, so feel free to ask questions about these matters at any time. Plagiarism includes:

- a student failing to cite sources of ideas
- a student failing to cite sources of paraphrased material
- a student failing to site sources of specific language and/or passages
- a student submitting someone else's work as his or her own
- a student submitting his or her own work produced for another class

If you have any doubt about how to cite or acknowledge another's writing, please talk to me. It is always better to be safe than sorry. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review. For further information, please refer to UW's Student Conduct Code at <http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html>. **Play it smart, don't plagiarize!**

Accommodations

If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please see me immediately. I will gladly do my best to provide appropriate accommodation you require. If you have a disability and have not yet registered it with Disability Resources for Students in 448 Schmitz Hall, you should do so immediately. Please contact DRS at 206-543-8924 (Voice) or 206-543-8925 (V/TTY) or 206-616-8379 (FAX) or via their website at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/ada/dss.htm>.

**syl-la-bus: n 1: a summary outline of a discourse, treatise, or course of study or of examination requirements
2: subject to change**

Chang & Welsh / CHID 496 F / Autumn Quarter 2009-10 / University of Washington

Wed 9/30
First Day of Classes

September 2009						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

November 2009						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Week 1: September 28-October 2

Introduction to the Course
Welcome to Rapture, Close Reading & Close Playing
Sicart, Chapter 4 "The Ethics of Computer Games"

Week 2: October 5-9

Rand, "Introducing Objectivism" & "Objectivist Ethics"
Chait, "Wealthcare" and Brook, "Is Rand Relevant?"
Save Point: Welcome to Rapture, Medical Pavilion

Week 3: October 12-16

Gordijn & Chadwick, Eds., "Posthumanism"
Humanity+, <http://humanityplus.org/learn/philosophy>
Save Point: Neptune's Bounty, Smuggler's Hideout

Week 4: October 19-23

Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto"
Save Point: Arcadia, Farmer's Market

Week 5: October 26-30

Hayles, "Toward Embodied Virtuality"
Save Point: Farmer's Market, Arcadia

Week 6: November 2-6

Doctorow, "0wnz0red" & Egan, "Chaff"
McHugh, "Coney Island of the Mind"
Save Point: Fort Frolic

Week 7: November 9-13

No Class: Catch-Up Week
Save Point: Hephaestus, All is Revealed

Week 8: November 16-20

Galloway, "Algorithms of Control"
Save Point: Olympus Heights, Apollo Square

Week 9: November 23-27

No Class: Catch-Up Week
Parker, "Free Play" and Jenkins, "Art Form"
Steinkuehler, "Why Game (Culture) Studies Now?"

Week 10: November 30-December 4

Hocking, "Bioshock"
Save Point: Point Prometheus

Week 11: December 7-11

Sicart, Chapter 5.1 "Bioshock and Single-Player Ethics"
Save Point: Proving Ground, The Endgame

Week 12:

12/14 - Finals Begin

Week 13:

12/21 - Grades Due

Make sure to check the class blog regularly and contribute to the weekly play log prompt.

October 2009						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Wed 11/11
Veteran's Day
Holiday

Thur & Fri
11/26-11/27
Thanksgiving Holiday

December 2009						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		