



CHID 496
Section F
Thursday
1:30-3:20 PM
SAV 136
Winter 2010
Ed Chang &
Tim Welsh
University of
Washington



“Video games are an expressive medium. They represent how real and imagined systems work. They invite players to interact with those systems and form judgments about them. As part of the ongoing process of understanding this medium...we must strive to understand how to construct and critique the representations of our world in videogame form.”
—Ian Bogost

IN 1970, CLARK ABT DEFINES “serious games” as ones that have “an explicit and carefully thought-out educational purpose and are not intended to be played primarily for amusement.” More recently, scholars and developers have taken this “serious” approach to video games, experimenting with the potential of the video games as a persuasive medium. As Gonzalo Frasca, game scholar, game developer, and author of “Video Games of the Oppressed,” says, “There is a long tradition of dismissing games as trivial time-wasters. We now have a new generation of players who know better.”

OUR FOCUS GROUP, as part of a continuing series on video games generated by the Critical Gaming Project at UW, will join in this discussion to explore the development, critique, and play of “serious” video games, particularly those with political and/or propagandistic intentions. We will play a series of political and propaganda games alongside formal video game and cultural studies scholarship in order to investigate such questions as: Can video games be educational, political, or propaganda? What do video games articulate, argue, and reveal? If as *Gaming* author Alexander Galloway argues that “video games render social realities into playable form,” then how do we engage and analyze the rhetorical, informatic, and cultural arguments of video games? Or, in short, what is a serious video game?

TO APPROACH THESE QUESTIONS, we will play games such as *America's Army*, *Darfur is Dying*, *Positive or Not*, *Cutthroat Capitalism*, *Airport Security*, *Disaffected*, *September 12*, *Super Columbine Massacre*, and *Planet Green* in the context of readings from the likes of Ian Bogost, Alexander Galloway, Gonzalo Frasca, Jane McGonigal, Henry Jenkins, Constance Steinkuehler, James Paul Gee, 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, 250-500 word writings serve as reactions to, close readings of, and analyses of the game, texts, play, and the connections you see, read,

“Video games have an unmet potential to create complexity by letting people experience the world from different perspectives.”
—James Paul Gee



Required Course Texts & Materials

- CHID 496F course readings are available via e-reserve
- All games are available online (mostly PC).
- Web access and an active UW email account



Course Requirements

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

and talk about in class. These “play logs” 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 plog 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.

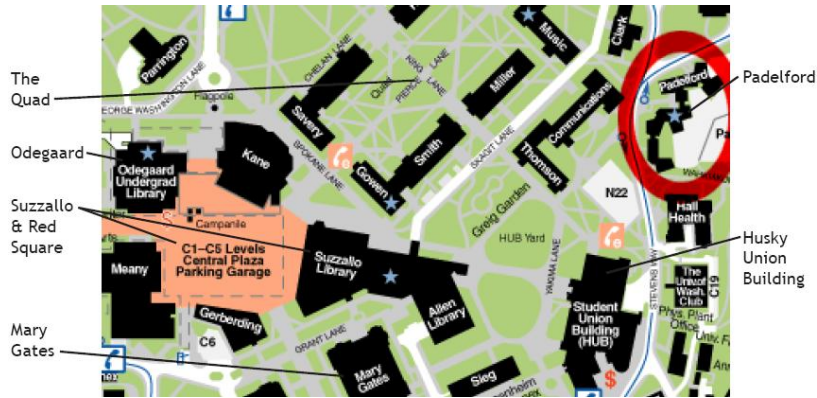


Contact Ed

Office:
 B33 Padelford
 Office Hours:
 TuTh 9:30-10:15 AM
 E-mail:
changed@u.washington.edu
 AIM & Google Talk:
 EDagogy

Contact Tim

Office:
 A307 Padelford
 Office Hours:
 by appointment
 E-mail:
twelsh@u.washington.edu
 Google Talk:
 tim.j.welsh



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>.



“My imagination makes me human and makes me a fool; it gives me all the world and exiles me from it.”
 –Ursula K. Le Guin

“The idea that kids can play video games like *Grand Theft Auto* or any video game is amazing. The video games are one step before a whole other virtual universe.”
 –Vin Diesel

**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 / Winter Quarter 2010 / University of Washington

Mon 1/4

First Day of Classes

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						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						

Week 1: January 4-8

Introduction to the Course, Close Reading & Close Playing

Second Skin (film)

Read McGonigal "Growing Up Gamer" & Jenkins "Art for the Digital Age"

Read: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serious_game

Week 2: January 11-15

Howard Dean Game: <http://www.deanforamericagame.com/>

Read & Play: <http://www.advergame.com/>

Read: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advergaming> & Friedman "Semiotics of SimCity"

Week 3: January 18-22

Disaffected:

<http://www.persuasivegames.com/games/game.aspx?game=disaffected>

McDonald's Video Game: <http://www.mcvideogame.com/index.html>

Read Stallabras "Just Gaming"

Week 4: January 25-29

Darfur is Dying: <http://www.darfurisdying.com/>

Catch the Landmine: <http://www.heelstone.com/banner/>

Read Frasca "Ideological Video Games: Press Left Button to Dissent" & "Video Games of the Oppressed" (article)

Week 5: February 1-5

Ethnic Cleansing (see instructor)

Border Patrol: <http://nerdnirvana.org/g4m3s/borderpatrol.htm>

Read Castronova "Topographies of Terror"

Week 6: February 8-12

America's Army: <http://www.americasarmy.com/>

Read *Night of Bush Killing* articles, Galloway "Social Realism" & Frasca "Serious Games, Serious Opportunities"

Week 7: February 15-19

Super Columbine Massacre: <http://www.columbinegame.com/>

September 12: <http://www.newsgaming.com/games/index12.htm>

Read SCM articles: <http://www.columbinegame.com/press.htm>

Week 8: February 22-26

Planet Green Game: <http://planetgreengame.com/>

ID the Creep: <http://www.idthecreep.com/>

Pos or Not: <http://posornot.com/>

Read Bogost "Taking *Bully* Seriously" & Herz "Game Theory"

Week 9: March 1-5

"Non-Serious" Games Presentations

Week 10: March 8-12

"Non-Serious" Games Presentations

Week 11:

3/15 - Finals Begin

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	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			

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

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	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						