MCS 352: Topics in New Media
GAMES AND COMMUNITIES

I will answer every email I get within 24 hours (unless otherwise necessary). If you do not hear from me within one day, you can assume that I did not get your email. Please make sure that you send email to the correct email address (pbooth@depaul.edu). You may also get in touch with me through Twitter at @pbooth81, although your questions and my answers will then necessarily be brief.

Course Description:
This course examines how games can make the world a better place. We will discuss games and play as concepts, analyze new types of games, and examine the “gamification” of the world. At the end of the course, we will design an Alternate Reality Game, a new form of game that involves multiple mediations and ubiquitous gameplay. We will look at the evolution of games as role-play, from tabletop simulations to MMORPGs and beyond. The concept of “gaming” will be interrogated for both its critical function in today’s society as well as its cultural role in the solution of social problems. Students will create their own ARG and will be encouraged to attend a gaming environment in the process of this class. Collaboration between students, the instructor, and the Chicago community will be encouraged.

Course Rationale:
Games can be a powerful tool to enact social change. They are also, by definition, fun to play. Studying games as cultural artifacts allows us to focus on new ways of interacting with the world around us. Games have been a part of human society for thousands of years – and the idea of “play” is even older. Some have hypothesized that it is the notion of structured play that makes us human. Throughout human history, playing and games have structured our leisure time and focused our informal learning. From the earliest days of chess and Go to modern day video games and location-based digital gaming, it is hard to imagine a more universal or successful form of play than the game.

The contemporary media environment sees multiple modes of mediation structuring our life. We are surrounded by the media, and often experience multiple screens and interactions at the same time. Games, as cultural objects, have always reflected the world around them; and in contemporary times, it is no different. The games that are coming out today mirror this multi-media environment.

This class offers a cultural examination of games and the communities that play them. We will focus specifically on Alternate Reality Games, both as a new style of audience-engineered gameplay and as a tool for social change. Given both DePaul’s Vincentian mission as well as its commitment to the city of Chicago, this class will require students to engage with social change in the city through gaming.

Course Goals:
This course has three main goals. The first is to gain a better understanding of key concepts in game and play theories. The second is to gain the ability to analyze the production, distribution, and consumption of game texts in today’s media-rich environment. The third is to artfully play and critique the methods and types of alternate reality games in new media.

Course Objectives:
At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1) Identify the key elements of games, including play, narrative, and economics
2) Critique different styles of gaming in different cultural frameworks
3) Demonstrate an understanding of the theory behind games and play
4) Synthesize readings, lessons, and discussions in a game project
5) Collaborate in groups to create a project
Class Readings
To Buy: (DePaul Loop bookstore, or online)


Additional readings will be available via D2L, under Course Documents. Readings should be done before class on the day that they are due.

Grading and Assignments:
Your grade is based on 700 points:

- Digital Profile: 50 points
- Research on ARG: 50 points
- ARG Essay: 100 points
- SF0.org Report: 50 points
- ARG Project: 200 points
  - (Outline: 50 points)
  - (Rough Draft: 50 points)
  - (Final: 100 points)
- ARG Final Report: 100 points
- Teamwork: 50 points
- Participation: 100 points

Digital Profile: Due 13 September, 50 points
For this class, you must have a working Twitter account, YouTube account, Facebook account, Gmail account, and cell phone. You must also pledge to check each of these accounts at least once a day— you never know when someone— or something— might contact you. By 13 Sept, you should give your contact information (user names) to Prof. Booth to distribute to the class. If you are worried about privacy, you may create new profiles to use for class; however, you are still required to check every day.

Research on ARG: Due 20 September, 50 points
In 500 words, define what an ARG is in your own words, using McGonigal’s reading as a reference to guide your definition. What are the key characteristics? How are they played? Do some Internet research (DON’T just use the first page of Google search results!) to find an ARG not mentioned in McGonigal — explain how it matches your definition.

ARG Essay: Due 04 October, 100 points
This essay asks you to examine the Alternate Reality Game played in class. Please note that you will be expected to play an Alternate Reality Game during the weekend of Week 3 (Thursday Sept 20 - Sunday Sept 23). While you will not be needed the entire time, you will be expected to participate at least some of the time. Please speak to Prof. Booth if this will be a problem. In 1000 words, you should analyze the experience of the game. How does it match what McGonigal writes about? What is different from what McGonigal writes about? What was unexpected? What was difficult and what was easy?

SF0.org Report: Due 25 October, 50 points
For this essay, complete 3 tasks listed on the website SF0.org (that’s a zero, not the letter o). You do not need to register with the site to complete the tasks, but proof of your task completion will need to be turned in. Write about the experience of completing these tasks. What did you do? What was the reaction of the people around you? How could you integrate this into your ARG? This essay should be about 1000 words, not counting the proof of completion.
ARG Project: 200 points total

You will work in teams of 4 for this project. Your team will design an ARG for another team in the class to play. The game you design should last 4-5 days. Your game should integrate at least 4 different technologies, and should include both mediated and non-mediated play. Your game should have a narrative and a central mystery. Your game should also focus on a non-profit in Chicago (you should contact the non-profit to make sure this is OK; if you can integrate the non-profit into your project, all the better!). We will be working on this project in class as well as out of class. There are multiple deadlines for this project:

1. 11 October: Get into Groups
2. 18 October: Come up with a basic narrative structure and non-profit to work with
3. 25 October: Outline of ARG due (50 points)
4. 01 November: Rough Draft of ARG and a list of “left to finish” (50 points)
5. 08 November: Completed Plan of ARG and a report of the run-through (100 points)

Plan on running through your rough draft with your team the week of 01 Nov – 08 Nov. If you want, find some friends to test it. On the last day of class (08 Nov) you will begin to play the other team’s game. Each game should last 4-5 days.

ARG Final Report: Due 15 Nov, 2:45 pm (finals), 100 points
You should turn in a 1000-1500 word essay that does three things:
1. Report on the experience of playing the other team’s game. What worked? What didn’t? How was it different from yours? How does it fit into the readings we did for class?
2. Report on the experience of designing your game. What worked? What didn’t? What was it like having it be played? How does it fit into the readings we did for class?
3. Report on the behavior, energy, and motivations of your teammates. This is not “tattling” or NARC-ing on anyone, but is a chance for you to articulate how well your team worked. Include yourself in this report.

Teamwork: 50 points
You will receive a grade for your work within your group. This is based on the report by your teammates provided, as well as your own self-reflection. This is different from your “participation” grade, which measures your work in class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: GAMES AND COMMUNITIES

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<tr>
<th>Class 01</th>
<th>THURSDAY 06 SEPT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic: Introduction; Definitions</td>
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<td>Readings due today</td>
<td>McGonigal: Introduction, Appendix 2</td>
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<tr>
<th>Class 02</th>
<th>THURSDAY 13 SEPT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic: History of Games and Play</td>
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<tr>
<td>Readings due today</td>
<td>McGonigal: Ch 1-3</td>
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<th>Class 03</th>
<th>THURSDAY 20 SEPT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic: Alternate Reality Games I: Games as Play</td>
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<td>Readings due today</td>
<td>McGonigal: Ch 7-10</td>
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### UNIT 2: BUILDING AN ALTERNATE REALITY

**Class 04**  
**THURSDAY 27 SEPT**  
Topic: Alternate Reality Games II: Games as Narrative  
Readings due today:  
- McGonigal: Ch 4-6  
- Chess: “Diner Dash”

**Class 05**  
**THURSDAY 04 OCT**  
Topic: Worldbuilding: Games as Worlds  
Readings due today:  
- Phillips: Ch 5-11  
- Jenkins: “Transmedia Storytelling 101”  
Assignment due today: Alternate Reality Game essay

**Class 06**  
**THURSDAY 11 OCT**  
Topic: Games for Social Change: Games as Actions  
Readings due today:  
- McGonigal: Ch 11-14  
ARG Update: Get into Groups for ARG project

**Class 07**  
**THURSDAY 18 OCT**  
Topic: No Class, Instructor Out of the Country  
Readings due today: None; Watch *The Game* on D2L  
ARG Update: ARG narrative and non-profit

### UNIT 3: DESIGNING AND PLAYING THE ARG

**Class 08**  
**THURSDAY 25 OCT**  
Topic: Pervasive Gaming: Games and Characters  
Readings due today: Stenros and Montola, Fagone  
Assignment due today: SF0 Report  
ARG Update: Outline of ARG

**Class 09**  
**THURSDAY 01 NOV**  
Topic: Making ARGs: Game Design  
Readings due today: Case Studies (choose four each for class)  
ARG Update: ARG Rough Draft and what’s left to finish (run-through)

**Class 10**  
**THURSDAY 08 NOV**  
Topic: Playing ARGs  
Readings due today: McGonigal: Conclusion
ARG Update | ARG plan and notes

**FINAL EXAM**

**THURSDAY 15 NOV**

2:45 – 5:00 pm

Meet to debrief about game

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<tr>
<th>Readings due today</th>
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<tr>
<td>Due Today</td>
<td>Final report on game and team</td>
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**Bibliography**


**Case Studies:**

Case A: Killer: The Game of Assassination (pp. 3-7)
Case B: The Beast (pp. 25-30)
Case C: Shelby Logan’s Run (pp. 47-56)
Case D: Designing Spatial Expansion (pp. 73-76)
Case E: Mystery on Fifth Avenue (pp. 91-96)
Case F: Momentum (pp. 111-116)
Case G: PacManhattan (pp. 131-136)
Case H: Epidemic Menace (pp. 159-162)
Case I: Insectopia (pp. 175-178)
Case J: Vern Gräter (pp. 193-196)
Case K: REXplorer (pp. 215-218)
Case L: Uncle Roy All Around You (pp. 231-234)
Case M: The Amazing Race (pp. 251-256)