Objective:

Your research project this quarter will be to identify, analyze, and contextualize a particular game that was invented and played prior to 1900. You cannot pick one of the games we are considering together during the course. Instead, you may choose a game that has some relevance to your own cultural background or that is from a historical era that you find particularly interesting. You do not necessarily need to study the moment of a game’s origin. (For many games, this may be unknown.) You should select a particular historical era in which there is evidence of the game’s play and popularity.

Each project must be unique, that is, you cannot choose the same game and historical context as another student. If multiple proposals for the same game are received, priority will go to the earliest submission to Course On-Line. (See below.)

Regardless of the game you choose, your research should center on the following questions:

1) How was the game played? By whom? Where? In what circumstances?
2) Why was the game fun, interesting, compelling, challenging, or otherwise engaging for its players?
3) Why was the game culturally significant? What does the game and its popularity reveal about the society that produced and played it?

In order to answer these questions you will need to:

- Do Research: Locate and analyze primary and secondary sources that provide information about the game, its rules and materials, its players, its historical context, and its evolution. For the final paper, you must use in a meaningful way a minimum of three primary sources, one of which must be the game itself.
- Play the Game: You will need to play the game on a regular basis and teach at least one other person how to play.
- Write: You will write two papers in the course of this project.

Game analysis. The game itself is an indispensable historical source. By playing and teaching the game, you will be in a position to try to understand its structure and appeal. What aspects of its rules and play may be thought of as culturally and historically significant? Throughout this course, we will be developing our skills in analyzing historical sources, in particular game rules and experiential qualities. This project will be your opportunity to put these skills to use.

Final paper. This paper will describe the findings of your research and your experience in playing the game. You will be attempting to understand what the game’s appeal and significance were in the particular context of your investigation.

What to do:

There are multiple milestones throughout the quarter to keep you on track to completing this project. More detailed assignment handouts will be distributed for each milestone (except the first.)

9/13: Identification of game and context. On this date, you must identify the game and precise historical context that you will be researching for this project.
9/20: Preliminary bibliography. Your bibliography will identify the game and its era as well as two other relevant primary sources. You also need to identify the secondary sources you will draw on to help contextualize the game, including your source for the game’s rules if there is no primary source available for them. The primary sources do not necessarily need to refer to the game itself, but they must be relevant to your discussion of it in the Final Paper.
9/27: Game analysis. By this time, you will have played the game multiple times and taught at least one other person how to play it. In the paper, you will reflect on the structure and characteristics of the game and their possible relevance to the historical context. What characteristics might have made this game compelling to a particular group of people at a particular time?

10/18: Annotated bibliography. For this milestone, you will finalize your sources and more fully investigate them, writing a brief descriptive and evaluative paragraph for each, informing the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the source.

11/22: Final paper. Combining your analysis of the game and that of the primary sources with your reading in secondary material, you will write a short paper that sets forward your thesis and argument that answers the three central research questions.

What to turn in:
Each component of the assignment will be submitted on the CTI Course On-Line site. All except the first milestone should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents. For the first milestone you need only to submit the name of the game and the place and historical era in which you intend to study it. This can be done in the “Comment Box” on the Course On-Line assignment submission page.

Hints and Notes:

- To get started, you may wish to look at any one of a number of on-line references including the two Parlett books found on Course On-Line. There are also a number of texts placed on reserve at the Loop library and there are some specific works in the Game Lab where the games are stored. There are also the following on-line sites:
  - The Game Cabinet http://www.gamecabinet.com/ An on-line magazine on board games with some interesting reference material
  - Playing Card Picture Gallery Index http://a_pollett.tripod.com/cardpgal.htm Discussion of many types of playing cards including good discussion of non-Western card games.

- You should try as much as possible to use authentic materials in your game play. The Game Lab in CS&T 920 has many such materials including game boards, historical playing cards, etc. Please contact the instructor if you are having difficult finding materials for game play.