GAM 206: History of Games
Professor Robin Burke
Fall 2007, Section 401. Rm. Lewis 1507
Mondays and Wednesdays 10:10-11:40 am

Office: CS&T 453
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Description
From "The Royal Game of Ur" (2500+ BCE) to "World of Warcraft" (2004) and beyond, games have been a constant in human history. The forms of games, their experiential qualities, and their cultural significance have varied enormously from era to era and place to place. This class will examine particular games and game genres in their historical context using a case study format. We will focus on "indoor" games, those of chance and skill, as opposed to physical games and sports. The examples will be chosen (i) to have global scope and historic diversity, (ii) to relate to games that students will find familiar, and (iii) to raise particular issues in historical interpretation, the use of primary sources and changing concepts of leisure activity.

Prerequisites
None

Liberal Studies Credit
Note: This course carries Liberal Studies credit in the Understanding the Past Learning Domain. It belongs to the geographical category of Intercontinental/Comparative. Students may not take more than one U. P. course in any given geographical category.

The central U. P. learning goal is to help you become literate about the past and the methods used to understand the past. DePaul considers that this learning goal is achieved if you are able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes in your written work, exams, and/or contributions to class discussions:

1. that you have acquired knowledge of prehistoric or historical events, themes, and ideas;
2. that you can reason through analysis, evaluation, and/or synthesis of a range of primary and secondary source evidence;
3. that you understand that there are different perspectives on the past, whether those be historical or methodological in nature;
4. that you can express knowledge and reason effectively in written work.

Course Readings and Supplies
There is no textbook for the class. There will be a variety of readings made available on-line and distributed in class.

Students will be required to purchase a deck of Pokemon Trading Cards, which tend to be available at large retail outlets such as Target. Specialized game stores are not such a good bet since Pokemon is no longer sufficiently "cool" to be worth their limited shelf space. EBay is also worth a try. We will play the game at the end of the quarter. Gameplay leaders for this unit will need decks sooner.

Resources
Students in the class will have access to the game library housed in the CTI Computer Game Lab, CS&T 920. Some assignments will require that students use specific games available from this library. Students performing assignments have priority for the use of the games. See http://defrag.depaul.edu/ for information on lab times. You will be required to provide your student ID when checking out games.
Web Site
The Course On-line web site will be an important resource for the course. All assignments except the final paper will be submitted here:

http://dlweb.cs.depaul.edu/

Lecture notes and other documents will be posted on my personal course site:

http://josquin.cs.depaul.edu/~rburke/courses/f07/gam206/

This site will contain the most up-to-date information about assignments, readings and other matters.

Organization and Assessment
GAM 206 is divided into four units. In each unit, we will study a particular culture and a game associated with it. Each unit will consist of four classes: a lecture covering the era with an emphasis on cultural issues, a lecture on the game genre and its history, an in-class game play session in which we play the chosen game, and a game discussion session in which we discuss the game and its milieu. There is no midterm or final exam, but there will daily quizzes (3 per unit) covering the assigned readings.

Attendance at this class is extremely important. This is particularly true of the game play sessions. **Students who do not attend the game play session will receive no credit for that unit.** Please make every effort to attend class on these dates. I will take attendance at all class meetings. More than two unexcused absences will result in a 50% reduction in the participation grade. More than four will result in a 0 in that area.

It is difficult to learn a new game without the guidance of someone who has played before. To make our gameplay sessions more efficient, the class will be divided into groups of four with a designated gameplay leader. There will be a designated day (9/12) in which the gameplay leaders will learn their respective games. Attendance for this day’s class is very important. Gameplay leaders are also encouraged to meet outside of class time and play the game among themselves before the in-class gameplay session. On the class meeting after the gameplay session, we will discuss the game. Gameplay leaders will be expected to participate actively in these sessions.

Sign up for the game play leader dates will begin on the first day of class. **You must be present at the leaders’ session, at the in-class gameplay session, and at the following discussion in order to receive credit for the gameplay leader component of the course.**

Each student will be required to complete a research project on a historic game other than one we consider together in class. The game must date from before 1900. I encourage you to look for a game that has particular relevance to your cultural heritage: games your grandparents (or great-great grandparents) might have played. There will be intermediate milestones for this project due throughout the quarter. Full details are available on the assignment handout.

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

- Daily quizzes (best 10 of 13) – 20%
- Gameplay leader – 25%
- Participation – 15%
- Research project – 40%
  - Preliminary Bibliography – 5%
  - Annotated Bibliography – 10%
  - Game analysis paper – 10%
  - Final paper – 15%
Tentative Schedule

Introduction


9/12: Gameplay Leader Session. In-class exercise for learning your designated game.

Unit 1: Death and Religion in Ancient Egypt
Reading: Spodek, H. "River Valley Civilizations" Chapter 3 in The World's History.


9/26: Sources: Senet and Egyptian Religion. Reconstructing Senet.
Reading: Piccione, Peter A. “In Search of the Meaning of Senet”. Available at http://gamesmuseum.uwaterloo.ca/Archives/Piccione/

Unit 2: Royalty and Society in Medieval Europe
10/1: History: Society and Culture in the Late Middle Ages. Social structure and hierarchy. Medieval Spain and the Muslim world.

Reading: Parlett, Ch. 16 “Conquering Kings.”

10/8: Play: Medieval Chess.

10/10: Sources: The Transformation of Chess.
Reading: Yalom, Chapter 11 “New Chess and Isabella of Castile,” and Chapter 12 “The Rise of ‘Queen's Chess.’ ”

Unit 3: People of Chance: America in the 19th Century


10/22: Play: Faro

10/24: Sources: Confessions and Exhortations
Stith, William The Sinfulness and pernicious Nature of Gaming, 1752.

Unit 4: Children’s Games as Global Mass Culture


11/5: Play: Pokemon Trading Card Game.

11/7: Sources: Games and Meta-Games.
Reading: Allison, A. Chapter 7 “Pokemon: Getting Monsters and Communicating Capitalism” in Millennial Monsters.

Conclusion
11/12: Conclusion. The changing role of games and leisure.
11/18: Final paper due.

Policies
Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in in-class exercises. Class will start promptly. Students are individually responsible for material they may have missed due to absence or tardiness, including obtaining readings handed out in class. Students are responsible for reading assigned material before class. Each class will start with a brief quiz on the readings. All assignments will be submitted to the Course On-Line site. Do not submit assignments by email. All other assignments are due at midnight on the due date. Assignments will not be submitted late.

Assignments (except for designated group assignments) must represent a student's individual effort. While students are permitted to discuss assignments at the conceptual level, under no circumstances should students share specific answers (electronically or otherwise). Papers must conform to the course guidelines on references and documentation. Use of sources without attribution constitutes plagiarism, a serious violation of academic integrity. Consult the assignment handouts or the instructor if you have questions about how or what to document.
School Policies

Online Instructor Evaluation
Course and instructor evaluations are critical for maintaining and improving course quality. To make evaluations as meaningful as possible, we need 100% student participation. Therefore, participation in the School’s web-based academic administration initiative during the eighth and ninth week of this course is a requirement of this course. Failure to participate in this process will result in a grade of incomplete for the course. This incomplete will be automatically removed within seven weeks after the end of the course and replaced by the grade you would have received if you had fulfilled this requirement.

Email
Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at http://campusconnect.depaul.edu/ is correct.

Plagiarism:
The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course, as well as all other courses in which independent research or writing play a vital part in the course requirements, should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report, or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

Incomplete:
An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final, and approved by the Dean of the School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.