English 294: Game Culture

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This is a first course in the critical study of games, especially computer games, and the culture of participatory media to which they belong. It will introduce the concept of games and play as meaning-making activities; survey forms, conventions, and practices that inform the design and reception of games; outline major theoretical trends within the field of Game Studies; examine the place of games in contemporary culture, and consider some of the problems and challenges they pose for our society.

The course is intended for students in any major who want to think critically, creatively, and (yes) seriously about playful media. The work will involve a certain amount of reading and writing: critical evaluation of games, applications and evaluations of theory. It may also entail a good deal of game play, both in and out of class, and/or observation of play by others. Fun should be unavoidable -- and so, hopefully, will be a sense that computer games represent a significant medium for expression.

Here are the “texts,” we might be working with:

Colossal Cave Adventure &
Adventure 2600
Dungeons & Dragons
World of Warcraft
Myst
The Beginner’s Guide
A Mind Forever Voyaging
Photopia & 9:05
Queers in Love at the End of the World
Galatea
Kentucky Route Zero
Undertale