ENG 342:
A Syllabus Zine on “Playful Literature and Literary Games”

Justin Wigard
Hello Everyone! My name is Justin Wigard (pronounced "Why-Guard"), and I'll be your instructor throughout this course. This is your syllabus in zine-format, so it both gives you a guide to the class and a physical example of what you'll be making as your final project. This zine is yours, now - write all over it, destroy it, use it for whatever you need to!

Class Hours: 1:00PM-2:20PM
Class Location: Holden C136
Instructor: Justin Wigard
Email Address: wigardju@msu.edu
Office Hours: 3PM-4PM, T/Th
Office: Wells C744
This course will explore methods and approaches to studying popular genres through the critical study of two particular popular genres: "Playful Literature" and "Literary Games."

Playful Literature is literature that offers readers some agency and control over narrative outcomes, while Literary Games are those ludic (meaning, "game-ic") artifacts that provide readers with some narrative impulse behind their actions.

To do so, we will be viewing these ludic artifacts through a primary critical lens: the theory of play. Thus, in this course, we will be analyzing literature and games as storytelling vehicles and look to understand popular literature by understanding the intersections and diversions between different popular mediums.

This will culminate in a project where students will forge their own entry point into these popular genres by creating a literary game in the form of a game-zine. Because zines are an intimate literary form designed for smallscale distribution and are handcrafted, the zine stands as a perfect entry point to blending scholarship with creation, design with theory.
Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate in written work a broad familiarity with the purpose, function, and history of popular genres within literature and games.

2. Identify and explain the significance of major literary and ludic genres from a range of cultural, personal, political, and aesthetic traditions.

3. Demonstrate an understanding of the aesthetic dimensions of these literary and ludic genres within games and literature.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of close reading to the analysis and interpretation of literary and ludic genres.

5. Engage in a process of drafting, revising, and editing assignments that integrates feedback into a graded final product.

6. Select, analyze, and evaluate information from sources that speak to the characteristics of genre, historical, and cultural movements of literary texts and draw conclusions from information.

7. Generate, participate in, and lead discussions of literary texts in a multimedia format.

8. Create a critical, playable game grounded in research and present this game in a public format.
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING SCALE

ASSIGNMENTS

Student Introduction Essay: 5pts
Online Writing Log (5 logs, 1pt/each): 5pts
Mid-Term Close Reading Essay: 5pts
Attendance/Participation: 15pts

Zine (final draft): 30pts
Zine Journal (5 entries, 2pts/each): 10pts
Zine Outline & Proposal: 10pts
Zine Essay: 10pts
Zine Publication: 10pts
Total: 100pts

GRADING SCALE (100PTS = 100%)

4.0 (100-93%) 2.0 (77-73%)
3.5 (88-92%) 1.5 (72-68%)
3.0 (87-83%) 1.0 (67-60%)
2.5 (82-78%) 0 (59-0%)

BEST PRACTICES

PREP FOR DISCUSSION

Be prepared for Discussion by coming up with and writing down three questions, two comments, and at least one connection from the readings to talk about. These may be collected periodically, so do make sure you are prepared for class.

PROACTIVE LEARNING

Complete the weekly readings early in the week and complete the weekly assignments ahead of time to give yourself a cushion should life happen.
**Text List**

*An Introduction to Game Studies: Games in Culture* by Frans Mayra

*Make a Zine! When Words and Graphics Collide* by Bill Brent and Joe Biel

*Choose Your Own Adventure #1: The Abominable Snowman* by R.A. Montgomery and Laurence Peguy

*Dungeons on a Dime, Vol. 1: "Into the Red"* by Bryan Tyrell

*Preparing the Ghost* by WorldChampGameCo

*Tetris: The Games People Play* by Box Brown

Other texts to be provided by Justin. These will be on D2L and free to students.
Course Policies

Assignment Submission: D2L

All graded, written assignments will be turned in electronically through the Desire2Learn (D2L) website, using Dropbox. If you are not familiar with this function, you should review the material provided by the D2L @ MSU help team.

Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

Late Work Policy

Late work of any kind will not be accepted. Part of becoming professional students and burgeoning professionals after leaving MSU is learning how to juggle responsibilities, manage time, and meet deadlines.
This is a 500w essay about yourself. That’s it! Due the end of the first week of classes.

Each week from Week 2-7, there will be a 1-pg Reading Log prompt. You must complete FIVE of these SIX Reading Logs. These Reading Log entries can be expanded into your Mid-Term Essay.

The Mid-Term Essay will be a 4-5pp close reading of just one text from class. Reading Logs can be expanded into your Mid-Term Essay. This must use at least one of the theoretical sources from class.

Your attendance, participation, and professionalism all count towards the same point total. You get three unexcused absences. After that, your points go down. Likewise, not participating or acting unprofessionally can also result in a grade penalty.
1st Half of Semester: Critical Study

Week 1:
Introductions

Week 2:
Game Studies & Play

Week 3–5:
Playful Literature

Week 6–8:
Literary Games
Over the course of the second half of the semester, you will create a 12-pg zine that is related to the course themes of Playful Literature and/or Literary Games. This zine will be completed by the end of the semester and is your final project.

Each week from 10-15, there will be a 1-pg (or equivalent) Zine Journal prompt. You must complete FIVE of these Zine Journals. These Zine Journal Entries scaffold into your Zine.

In Week 11, you will turn in a Zine Proposal which includes a 1-pg bulleted outline, a 1-pg written summary of the project, and a 1-pg thumbnail layout of all 12 pages.

As part of this zine, you will create four separate 250w-sections of writing. These will be included within your zine, but are up to you on how you incorporate these different components into the zine.

For the final stage of this zine project, you will publish your zine. This involves sending a PDF of your zine to the MSU Publishing Services, where two hard copies will be printed: one for you, and one to be submitted to the MSU Library's Zine Collection.
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JUSTIN WIGARD ("Why-Guard") is a PhD candidate in the Department of English, where he works with and teaches popular culture, game studies, comic studies, children's literature, and digital humanities in the literature classroom.

This zine was created as a supplement to the traditional academic syllabus, but also as an exercise in playful literature itself. Justin’s always been inspired by 16-bit art, so most of this zine follows that aesthetic.

His work covers a wide range of subjects, including the Hallmark Channel’s Garage Sale Mystery film series; professional wrestling and Street Fighter; chronotopal representations of feminism in Marvel’s Jessica Jones; the visual rhetoric of dinosaurs in Calvin and Hobbes; monstrous motherhood in Neil Gaiman’s Coraline; and more.

Justin’s dissertation, Level 101: A Video Game About Video Games, focuses on utilizing, and developing, video games as learning tools within the classroom.

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Typical Wigard attire: Thick glasses, red flannel, messy hair, shaggy beard, and cheesy grin.