

**Credit Unit System:
Information on Courses**

1. **Course Title** (*English*): Game and Play Studies

2. **Course Code:** SM 2259

3. **Course Aims & Objectives:**

The theory of play is a new and rapidly expanding field of academic research, which is closely connected to the rapid development of computer games as a cutting-edge art form. This course is an introduction to the basic theoretical questions concerning the nature of games and play. Rather than focusing exclusively on digital games, a broad spectrum of play activities will be discussed. The course will begin by asking how to define “play” and “games”; classical sociological and philosophical texts by Huizinga and Caillois will be compared. In tackling the definition of play, we will pay particular attention to the separation between play and life (play as an isolated “magic circle”) and the ways in which this separation can be undermined (“subversive” play). Students then consider different forms of play in literature, film, and art, as well as the subversive use of playing in everyday urban space (skateboarding, graffiti, etc.).

The theory of the “carnavalesque” developed by writer M. Bakhtin may be considered in this context. The course may also consider the work of artists or groups that have emphasized the concept of “play”, such as for instance Oulipo group or the Letterist International.

Students will then move on to discuss toys and games from an aesthetic, psychological, and cultural standpoint. The function of rules will be an important topic of discussion. The course will emphasize how users may be able to transform the structure of the games, as well as the formation of gamers’ communities.

Although the nature of the course is essentially theoretical, students will be required to produce creative projects to fulfill course requirements. Students are free to choose their preferred creative medium. They can, for instance: design games or toys; create multimedia performances that play with urban space; or develop forms of play in literature, film, or interactive formats. The relationship between theory and practice will always be at the forefront. Students must demonstrate an ability to integrate critical reflection and practical creation; this is the core skill that this course aims to nurture.

4. **Units:** 3

5. **Level:** B

6. **Keyword Syllabus:** Defining play, games, and toys; the magic circle and its subversion; playing with language (experimental literature); narrative play; carnival; the psychology of play; social and cultural aspects of games; play and everyday life; urban space; play as cultural resistance; the aesthetics of games; play as a rule-based activity; transformative play.

7. **Teaching pattern:**

Duration of course: 1 semester

Suggested lecture/tutorial/laboratory mix: 2 hours lecture + 1 hour workshop.

8. **Assessment pattern:**

100% Coursework

Grading pattern: Standard (A+AA-...F)

9. **Pre-requisites:** *(please quote course code & title)*

10. **Pre-cursor:** *(please quote course code & title)*

11. **Equivalent Courses:** *(please quote course code & title)*

12. **Key references:**

Morris, Pam (ed). The Bakhtin reader : selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov (London ; New York : E. Arnold, 1994.)

Caillois, Roger. Man, play, and games (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 2001)

Huizinga, Johann. Homo Ludens : a study of the play-element in culture (London : Routledge, 1998)

Roopnarine, Jaipaul L. Conceptual, social-cognitive, and contextual issues in the fields of play (Westport, Conn: Ablex Pub., 2002).

Salen, Katie and Zimmerman, Eric. Rules of play : game design fundamentals (Cambridge, Mass. ; London : MIT Press, 2004).

Sutton-Smith, Brian. The ambiguity of play (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997)

Returned by:

Name: Hector Rodriguez

Department: School of Creative Media

Extension: _____

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