

Elective course “**Online Games: Literature, New Media, and Narrative**”

Abstract: Intended for both newcomers who are curious about video games and experienced gamers who want to reflect on their passion, this course will explore what happens to stories, paintings, and films when they become the basis of massively multiplayer online games. The Lord of the Rings trilogy—the novels, films, and video game—are our central example of how “remediation” transforms familiar stories as they move across media. Drawing on centuries of romance narrative conventions, the twenty-first century gaming industry has become a creative and economic powerhouse. It engages the talents of some of our brightest writers, artists, composers, computer engineers, game theorists, video producers, and marketing professionals, and in 2012, it generated an estimated \$64 billion in revenue. Anyone interested in today’s culture needs to be conversant with the ways this new medium is altering our understanding of stories. Join me as we set out on an intellectual adventure, the quest to discover the cultural heritage of online games.

Learning Objectives: The course is intended for immersion in the cultural context of the theory and history of computer games.

Learning Outcomes: Our journey will enable us to learn something about narrative theory, introduce us to some key topics in media studies and cover some of the history and theory of video games. It will also take us to some landmarks of romance literature, the neverending story that lies behind most fantasy games: J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Ring*, a bit of Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, and poems by Keats, Tennyson, Browning, and others.

Plan:

- a. Game on! The History and Theory of MMOs
- b. LOTRO and Tolkien
- c. Romance and Realism
- d. Space and Time in Three Media
- e. Pwning Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*
- f. The Holy Grail: A Good End Game

Reading List: Crawford G. Gosling V.K. Light B. (2013) *Online gaming in context: the social and cultural significance of online games*. London; New York: Routledge.

Yee N. (2014) *The Proteus paradox: how online games and virtual worlds change us- and how they don’t*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press.

Grading System: 80% Cumulative Grade +20% Exam

Methods of Instruction: Video lectures