

## Game Design Studies – 25% Component

### Module List

Undergraduate students take **120 credits** in each academic year. The remaining credits will be taken in your other subject.

*Please note: all information was correct at time of publication but may be subject to change, either during the session because of unforeseen circumstances, or following review of the module at the end of the session.*

#### 25% Minor subject component (Another Subject *WITH* Game Design Studies)

30 credits per year; the remaining 90 credits to be taken in your other subject.

See pages 2-4 for module descriptors.

#### Year 1

	Module Title	Code	Credits	Type
Semester 1	Introduction to Game Design Studies	SOTA101	15	Required
Semester 2	Games and Meaning	SOTA102	15	Required

#### Year 2

	Module Title	Code	Credits	Type
Semester 1	<i>Choose 1 of the 3:</i>			
	Immersive Media and Virtual Worlds	COMM211	15	Optional
	Games Playing Roles	ENGL297	15	Optional
	Music in Gaming	MUSI273	15	Optional
Semester 2	Different Play	SOTA202	15	Required

#### Year 3

	Module Title	Code	Credits	Type
Semester 1	Philosophy of Play and the Virtual	PHIL343	15	Required
Semester 2	Academic Games Studies	SOTA302	15	Required

## Module Descriptors

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### **REQUIRED MODULES:**

#### **SOTA101: Intro to Game Design Studies**

The module *Introduction to Game Design Studies* explores the phenomenon of video game studies from a variety of Arts and Humanities perspectives. Therefore, the module will focus on three key interrelated contexts for the analysis and theorisation of video games as digital media culture: the text of the game itself as an aesthetic and formal virtual object, genre and system of representation; the video game player as a type of audience or user who is immersed, interactive, and embodied; the video game industry as a global media business, one with a strong Japanese presence and with a profound effect on the wider media context.

**Assessment:** essay (50%) and report (50%)

#### **SOTA102: Games and Meaning**

This module introduces students to the semantics of video game design and the techniques of close reading. It examines how mechanics, environment and audio design, genre conventions and iconography can be used to create meaning, both in support and subversion of explicit narrative. Students will learn to make connections between the disparate artforms involved in game design and develop the ability to form their own readings of games. The module is taught in 2-hour workshops which involve a mixture of theory lectures and in-depth discussion of specific games, including student-led choices. Assessment consists of a 2000-word coursework essay (85%), of which there is a formative, peer-reviewed 'pitching' exercise in week 6, and a 5-10 minute in-class presentation or video essay (15%), delivered during the second half of the module.

**Assessment:** presentation (15%) and essay (85%)

### **SOTA202: Different Play**

This module introduces students to academic work that challenges the conventions of mainstream gaming, or what has been called 'queer game studies'. It examines the relationship between queerness and play, and how the formalising of play into games, especially digital and technological games, has sustained and promoted societal norms. Themes covered include the representation of marginalised identities, queer reclamation of 'failure' and the ways that technology can reproduce or subvert social structures. Students will learn to reexamine the conventions of game design with a view to conceiving a wider range of possibility for games, as well as engaging with the fundamental concepts of academic queer theory.

**Assessment:** design sketch for a game (40%) and essay (60%)

### **PHIL343: Philosophy of Play and the Virtual**

This module introduces students to the major philosophical issues associated with play, games (especially digital games) and virtual worlds. It examines both the philosophical literature around play and contemporary concerns expressed in relationship to the growth of the video games industry, including addiction, violence, 'gamification' and the use of play and software for education and therapy. Students will learn to challenge common assumptions, including their own, about the triviality of play in relation to modern constructions of labour and value, and develop an understanding of how these assumptions underpin both popular and academic discussion of games.

**Assessment:** presentation/video (15%) and essay (85%)

### **SOTA302: Academic Games Studies**

This module provides a critical introduction to the emergence of modern academic game studies, the first dominant paradigm for academic engagement with video games. The first half of the module examines three key 20<sup>th</sup>-century works which are frequently cited as foundational to game studies: Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, Roger Caillois' *Man, Play and Games* and Bernard Suits' *The Grasshopper*. These texts will then, in the second half of the module, be challenged and compared with the work of self-identified 'Game Studies' academics such as Espen Aarseth, Jesper Juul and Gonzalo Frasca. Students will be encouraged to question whether and in what ways these two groups of theorists connect, and will learn to look into the blind spots of contemporary academic game studies and their relationships to wider games culture.

**Assessment:** essay (50%) and exam (50%)

## **OPTIONAL MODULES:**

### **COMM211: Immersive Media and Virtual Worlds**

The second-year module *Immersive Media and Virtual Worlds* explores the histories, theories, and industries related to the production of immersive experiences, digital technologies and virtual realities and worlds. In particular, the module will focus on video games and cinema.

**Assessment:** essay (100%)

### **ENGL297: Games Playing Roles**

Games are ubiquitous today; even if you don't think you play them, you do, via schemes like loyalty cards. This module examines the role of games in contemporary society, and the ways in which this has been reflected within contemporary literature. Throughout this module, we will consider the relationship between games and literature in relation to three key areas—"Ludic Literature", "Gaming Cultures", and "Games of the Future"—with each area involving the analysis of particular literary texts to consider what they reveal about contemporary society and its interests in games and gaming. Illustrative authors include: Raymond Queneau and members of the *OuLiPo*, Orson Scott Card, William Gibson, Daniel Suarez, and Ernest Cline.

**Assessment:** coursework (100%)

### **MUSI273: Music in Gaming**

This module examines the function and design of music in video-games (including games-consoles, PCs, and smart-phone 'apps'). It considers the historical development of music in gaming, the relationship between game-music and technological advance, and the role and function of music in different types of game (and how this dictates compositional choice). This is achieved via a combination of case-study analyses and engagement with appropriate literature and research. Delivery incorporates lectures, workshop/seminars, and directed activity. Assessment incorporates a discursive essay and a portfolio of case-study analyses. The module assumes the study and discussion of case-study examples, but is delivered and assessed in a manner which does not require technical music skills (i.e. notational literacy or formal analytical method).

**Assessment:** 2x coursework, one at 1,500 words (40%) and the other at 3,000 words (60%)