

University of Bucharest | Department of English

Elective, 3rd Year, Winter Semester

Introduction to the Study of Video Games as Narrative Media

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The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the main critical tools necessary for understanding how video games communicate narrative meaning. The course relies on recent developments in narrative theory and draws connections to more conventional storytelling media, such as novels, films, and comics. In addition to this, the course also discusses video games by placing them in their larger social and political contexts.

The topics tackled in this course are:

- Video games and narrativity: To what extent can video games be considered narratives? What is it about video games that allows a narratological analysis?
- Multimodal narrative communication: What are the specific means whereby video games communicate narrative meaning? How are they different from other narrative media?
- The diegetic dimension of gameplay: Does gameplay contribute to the game's narrative?
- The narrator in video games: Is there such thing as a narrator in video games? If the answer is yes, then how does the act of narration unfold?
- The emotional reception of games: How do games cue emotional responses and identification with characters? How do we morally assess the events of a video game?
- The cultural dimension of games: How do American history and American notions of self and other structure the narratives of games?

The topics above will be discussed in relation to the following video games: *Red Dead Redemption*, *Red Dead Redemption II*, *Resident Evil Remake*, *Alien: Isolation*, *God of War III*, *God of War* (2018), *The Last of Us*, *Bioshock Infinite*, and others.

Students who sign up for this course will have to play at least one video game or watch a walkthrough.

Student evaluation is based on a final essay. In-class activity can result in students obtaining bonus points for the final grade.

Selected Bibliography

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- Juul, Jesper. "Games Telling Stories?" *Game Studies* 1, no. 1 (2001), <http://gamestudies.org/0101/juul-gts/>.
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- Nae, Andrei. *Horror Video Games as Procedural Narratives: Extreme Colonial Encounters in the Digital Heart of Darkness*. Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2019.
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- Wolf, Mark J. P. "Abstraction on the Video Game." In *The Video Game Theory Reader*, edited Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron, 47-66. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.