GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE PROPOSAL
UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON

Use this form to submit **EXISTING** courses for review. If this course will be submitted for review in more than one category, submit a separate proposal for each category.

COURSE NUMBER:	**FSEM 100CC**		
COURSE TITLE:	**GAMES THAT PEOPLE PLAY**		
SUBMITTED BY:	Jennifer Polack-Wahl	**DATE:**	1/28/2008
This course proposal is submitted with the department's approval. (Put a check in the box to the right.) ***If part of a science sequence involving two departments, both departments approve.***			**X**

THIS COURSE IS PROPOSED FOR (check one).

First-Year Seminar ***(indicate in the rationale if this will also count for major credit)***				**X**
Quantitative Reasoning				
Global Inquiry				
Human Experience and Society				
Experiential Learning				
Arts, Literature, and Performance: Process		**or**	**Appreciation**	
Natural Science ***(include both parts of the sequence)***				

NOTE: See the report entitled "General Education Curriculum as Approved by the Faculty Senate," dated November 7, 2007, for details about the general education categories and the criteria that will be used to evaluate courses proposed. The report is available at www.jtmorello.org/gened.

RATIONALE: Using only the space provided in the box below, **briefly** state why this course should be approved as a general education course in the category specified above. *Attach a course syllabus*. **Submit this form and attached syllabus electronically as one document to John Morello (jmorello@umw.edu).** All submissions **must** be in electronic form.

This course was already taught as a freshman seminar in the Fall of 2007. This seminar focuses on several facets of computer games. These include the formal aspects of the computer game, the computer game in society and culture, and the economic impact of computer games. The class provides students with experience in critiquing sources, evaluating and analyzing games, reading primary sources about games and supporting an argument.

Most of the classroom time involves discussion of issues and examination of opposing viewpoints from the course readings. Additionally, class time will be spent in small group activities such as analyzing game play and theory in the lab. Students will also produce a great deal of writing, in the form of blogs, online responses to other blogs, and two formal written assignments. The writing assignments will range in topics from game evaluations to proposing their own game for development base on course readings. Both the classroom discussion and the writing assignments aim to provide students opportunities to articulate their ideas, and exercise critical thinking and analysis of arguments.

Freshman Seminar: The Games the People Play

Professor: Jennifer A. Polack, PHD Term: Fall 2007

Objective:	**General Course Objectives**: • To engage students in critical reading, discussion, and writing in the area of computer games • To explore subjects of interest while pursuing the above objectives
Prerequisite:	Freshman Status
Text:	**Textbooks**: • Mark J. P. Wolf (ed.), *The Medium of Video Games*. University of Texas Press: 2002. ISBN 029279150X • Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (ed.), *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*. MIT Press: 2005. ISBN 0-262-18240-8 **References:** • **Reading for Computer Algorithms:** Selected sections from: J. Glenn Brookshear, *Computer Science : An Overview* (8th Edition) ISBN 0321247264 • **Video Game History and Video Game Creators:** Selected TV episodes of G4TV *Icons*.

Grading

- 25%: full papers (2 full papers; total about 10 pages) + an oral presentation
- 25%: short papers (2 short papers; total about 4 pages)
- 25%: pre-class assignments + an 3d animation project including a presentation + game programming exercises
- 25%: class participation (contribution in class discussion)

Course Objectives Regarding the Subject of Interest:

The subject of interest of this seminar surrounds computer games, specifically, the formal aspects of the computer game, the computer game in society and culture, and the economic impact of the computer game. These goals are elaborated as follows:

- Look at games critically. Analyze some popular games from: (1) the computer scientist's point of view (human-computer interaction, speed of computer graphics, network speed, artificial intelligence, texture mapping, and particles), (2) the artist's points of view (aesthetics, emotion, and storytelling), and (3) the social scientist's points of view (the gamer culture, sense of community, psychology and gender issues); and (4) from the economic point of view (how are computer games brought to market: research & development, financing, channels of distribution, and marketing.)
- Explore in what ways studies of computer games deserve more serious evaluation, and can be treated as a scholarly research as are films and music.
- Discuss the possible evolution of video games as poetic and aesthetic forms of art. What does it take to make a game poetic and thought-provoking? Is it possible? Why or why not?
- Examine the game culture phenomenon, the impact of computer games to our lives, and how our culture and psychological needs may be driving the direction of the computer game industry.

- Examine how the game play may reflect our lives and our inner self.
  For examples, are computer games making people more solitary or social? Why are multi-player games and role-playing games becoming so popular? What are the kinds of social interaction and sense of community that the players thrive for in the virtual world? How are these kinds of socialization different from the real world?
- Discuss what defines a "game." What are the ingredients of a game? Are games necessarily competitive? Must there be a winner and a loser?
- Understand technical issues for good computer games, such as game design, human-computer interaction and computer programming.
- Research what the qualifications of game programmers are. What exactly are the roles of game programmers in game industries?
- Research and examine several game entrepreneurs' courses of game development -- evolving from ideas to reality -- as well as the passion it took to do so.

Format of the Course:
The format of classroom activities takes the form of a seminar setting. Most of the classroom time involves discussion of issues and examination of opposing viewpoints. In addition, there will be several writing assignments, total about 15 pages. Both the classroom discussion and the writing assignment aim to provide students opportunities to articulate their ideas and thoughts, and exercise critical thinking and analysis of arguments.

- Examine opposing viewpoints:
  - In addition to helping students to make explicit their ideas and thoughts, the writing assignments also require the students to include discussion and examination of opposing viewpoints expressed by other students. This is to train the students to listen to others' opinions during discussion and acknowledge different viewpoints in their writings.
- Literature research:
  - The writing assignments also require students to conduct literature research and quote the credible sources to provide a basis in constructing and supporting their rationales and arguments.
    There will be one to two library instructional sessions in literature research.
- Encourage creative thinking and open-mindedness to comments:
  - Each student will be required to propose and design his/her ideal computer game. The students will need to present their ideas, vision, and intellectual justifications clearly in writing and as an oral class presentation at the end of the semester. This writing assignment will require students to incorporate the examination and analysis of games, from the perspectives of computer science, art, and humanities. Class discussion encourages students to contribute constructive comments and take into consideration of comments from other students. Students will have the opportunity to revise their game ideas and turn in a revised writing after the discussion. You will get feedback and advice for the first draft. Students with similar ideas are encouraged to pair up to work on their ideas. But they are still required to turn in the writing assignment separately.
- Learn to write scholarly reviews:
  - There will be reading assignments on scholarly articles on films and video games for students to learn the writing style of critics. Students will analyze and discuss the approach of the writings, and then apply it to writing a review of a game.

Tentative Schedule

Week	**Topic**	**Reading Assignments due (Read before coming to the class of that date)**	**Writing Assignments due**
1	General historical perspectives and aspects for studies of the computer game	1. Wolf: Foreword, pp. iv-xvi 2. Introduction, pp. 1-9 3. Video: Ralph Baer 4. Video: Nolan Bushnell	1. Questionnaire 2. pre-class assignment
2	Computer game as a medium Emergence of the computer game Timeline of computer game development events in the history	1. Wolf: Chapter 1 2. Wolf: Chapter 2 3. Video: Atari (the video and audio are slightly out of sync in some places) 4. 4 Videos While you are watching the videos and reading the chapter, write down the **years and the names of the key products** (consoles and game titles) in the video game industry. You will need this information to complete the pre-class assignment.	pre-class assignment
3	Critical and analytical writing Issue Writing	1. 6 sample essays to score 2. Scoring guide for these essays 3.. For the **previous** 6 essays ("best ideas"): 4. **Another 6 sample essays to score** (generalists vs. specialists) 5. For the 2nd set of the essays (generalists vs. specialists):	pre-class assignment
4	Exercises: Identify writing problems Space in the computer game ▪ Human Perception of Depth ▪ One-point Perspective ▪ True 3D and real-time 3D computation ▪ Demo of 3D projects viewing of black-and-white film examples referenced in	1. Wolf: Chapter 3 2. Wolf: Chapter 4 3. Video: Prince of Persia (pay attention to the segment at 12:30-13:30 of the video regarding time in this game)	pre-class assignment **short paper #1** due (based on the space aspect of games)

	the chapter		
5	Time in the computer game Narrative in the computer game About the full paper Library session on literature research	1. Wolf: Chapter 5 2. Optional: Video: Mario (the video and audio are in sync now) Link to the research guide for this course, shown in class	pre-class assignment
6	continue: Narrative in the computer game Mythology and storytelling Intro to Alice	1.Raessens & Goldstein book: #14 "Games Telling Stories?" by Jesper Juul 2. Video: The Legend of Zelda 3. Video: Final Fantasy 4. Wolf: Chapter 6	pre-class assignment
7	Genre and the video game Intro to 3d animation using Alice: add object, say and think methods, add camera dummies Computer programming basics	More 3d models for Alice are available at Alice's gallery Web site Criteria for this 3-D animation project	1. Download and install Alice (right-click on the link to save the Alice.zip in a folder, say in userdata, then right-click on the Alice.zip file and choose WinZip > Extract to here; you should then have a folder called Alice) 2. Go through Tutorials 1 and 4 3. Go through Alice Tutorial 3 (pages 1-38)
8	Creating an interactive 3d animated story segment using Alice		**Full paper #1** (formal analysis of a game) due 5pm on Oct 12 (Thu)
9	Student presentation of their 3d animation stories		Alice animation due
11	Computer game in society and culture Entrepreneurs in the computer game industry	1. Wolf: Chapter 9 2. Reality Bytes: Eight Myths About Video Games Debunked 3. Raessens & Goldstein: #8 Holmes and Pellegrini, *Children's Social Behavior During Video Games*	pre-class assignment
12	Continue: Computer game in society and culture Entrepreneurs in the computer game industry	1. Video: Will Wright 2. Video: Richard Garriott (the audio is slightly out of sync in some parts of this video) 3. Raessens & Goldstein: #22 7Jeffrey Goldstein, *Violent Video Games* 4. Video: Bioware	pre-class assignment
13	Second Life Interaction	1. Raessens & Goldstein: #23	Create a Second Life Character

		Griffiths and Davies, *Does Video Game addiction exist?* 2. Video: Peter Molyneux 3. Chapter 7 4. Video: Sid Meier	
14	Second Life Games		
15	Student presentation		