

University of Kentucky
School of Information Science (SIS)

[LIS 618]: Games, literacy, meaning, and learning.

- Instructor:** Spencer Greenhalgh, PhD
- Contact Information:** *Office*—341 Lucille Little Library Bldg.
Phone—859.218.2294
Email—spencer.greenhalgh@uky.edu
Zoom—<https://uky.zoom.us/my/greenhalgh>
- Response Time:** During the week, I work to respond to all emails within 24 hours. I am slower to respond on weekends and may not get back to you until Monday. Please keep this in mind when preparing to submit assignments! I also ask that you check Canvas on a regular basis and that you respond to my messages within 48 hours.
- Office Hours:** I will hold office hours on Zoom (see above):
Monday, 9am to 11am,
Tuesday, 10pm to 12pm, or
by appointment
- Meeting Schedule:** This course takes place asynchronously on Canvas.
- Required Materials:** All course materials will be available through Canvas.

"Life is Difficult" Statement [inspired by [Dr. Andrew Heiss](#)]

The past few years have been characterized by a global pandemic, increased (and overdue) attention to inequalities and injustices, and stressful political tensions; we might hope that the worst of all of these has passed, but the truth is that none of them have disappeared. This is a difficult time to be in grad school.

Despite these difficulties, I am fully committed to making sure that you learn everything you were hoping to learn from this class! My late policy and willingness to make accommodations are generous even during normal times, and if your life is being turned upside down, I'm willing to be as flexible as you need me to be.

If you feel like you're behind, not understanding everything, or just plain stressed, do not suffer in silence! I'm usually quick to respond to email and more than happy to meet with you.

Course Information

Course Description

This course examines video, board, and roleplaying games as activities that involve literacy practices. You will learn how to think about literacy practices beyond just reading and writing and how to evaluate the design of a game. Building on these skills, you will then learn how to identify the literacy practices associated with meaningful games, meaningful game contexts, and game design activities for youth and/or adults. Practical considerations for using games in libraries and other contexts will also be addressed.

Course Objectives—“I Can Statements”

The following “I can” statements will guide all of the learning and assessment activities throughout this course. Although all of the statements build on each other, each module of the course will focus on one statement in particular. By the end of that module, you should feel comfortable making that statement about yourself and will demonstrate your ability to meet that objective through your completion of module activities.

- I can describe how the design of a game connects with particular literacies.
- I can explore and describe the contexts within and surrounding games.
- I can design a meaningful game by applying and reinforcing relevant literacies.
- I can explain how the design of a game produces meaning.
- I can develop a plan for fitting games into my professional context.

Course Assessment

Your grade for this course will be based on 100 points:

90 points – 100.0 points = **A (Exceptional Achievement)**

70 points – 89.9 points = **B (High Achievement)**

50 points – 69.9 points = **C (Average Achievement)**

0 points – 49.9 points = **E (Failing)**

These 100 points come from the following assessment activities:

Meaningful Game Design: 25 points (due 4 May 2022)

Throughout the semester, you will be working on designing a meaningful game, which you will ultimately submit as your final project. This is not a course on game design or on technical skills, so you will not be assessed on whether your game is technically impressive (or even fun). Rather, designing a meaningful game is simply a way for you to get some hands-on experience with what learning, literacies, and meaning in games look like (plus, it will give you some experience that you could use to organize game design activities in your professional context).

This assessment will consist of a simple-but-functional game as well as an 750- to 1,000-word essay that comments on how your game corresponds with the “I Can” statements described above. Activities throughout the semester will organize and structure your game design experience, and I will recommend resources that you can use to create your game (most notably, the Twine interactive storytelling software). However, you are free to use other resources to create your game so long as you understand that there will be no course support for them.

You will submit the Meaningful Game Design through Canvas, which contains a detailed rubric.

While the Meaningful Game Design final project described above is a practical, comprehensive way for you to demonstrate all of your learning in this class, it suffers from two practical problems:

- because many of you have likely never designed a (meaningful) game before, it's probably asking a lot of you, and
- because you're submitting it at the end of the semester, there would normally be no chance to learn from the feedback I'll give you before the class is over.

To respond to both of these issues, you will complete activities throughout the semester that both:

- break the final project down into more manageable steps, and
- allow me to provide feedback after each of these steps so that you can course correct as you go!

Meaningful Game Design Drafts: 20 points (4 points due at the end of each of five modules)

As described earlier, this class is divided into three-week modules, each of which focuses on one of the "I Can" statements that are the foundation of this course. To assess your understanding of these statements—and support your work on your Meaningful Game Design—I will have you turn in a 150- to 200-word draft response at the end of each module that connects your work so far to that module's "I Can" statement. I will not hold you to any game design decisions or ideas that you express in these draft responses; however, this will be an opportunity for me to provide you with feedback and correct any misunderstandings of the class material (or the prompts, which will be the same as for your final essay).

You will submit the Meaningful Game Design Drafts through Canvas, which contains a detailed rubric for each (based on the overall rubric for the final project).

Module Participation: 45 points (3 points due at end of each of fifteen weeks)

Module Participation activities will consist of both readings and small, low-stakes activities that let you learn about, reflect on, and apply concepts and ideas that can help us describe how games can be meaningful. Each week of the course will have three activities, each worth one point.

All of the activities for a week will be due by Sunday evening. Most of the reading activities will consist of reviewing an article, book chapter, or other resource and leaving your thoughts in the form of social annotations. Most of the other activities will be discussion prompts where you demonstrate your understanding of specific ideas from the readings by applying them to your own game design efforts.

You will complete your participation activities through the Hypothesis and discussion board tools embedded in the Canvas course. You will complete reading activities by leaving at least one annotation (but preferably more!) for that reading. You will complete other activities by following the prompts in discussion forum posts.

Playing Games Reports: 10 points (2 points due at the end of each of five modules)

What's the point in taking a class about games if you aren't having a little bit of fun?! I will ask you at the end of each module to submit a short report where you describe an out-of-class experience you've had over the past three weeks that's helped better appreciate the class readings. You will submit Playing Games Reports through Canvas, following the prompt found there. However, the prompt is loosely structured, and you will have a tremendous amount of flexibility in how you respond to it. If you don't have a lot of "out-of-class" experiences with games, don't worry! I will provide a prompt for each Playing Games Report that you are free—but not obligated—to follow.

Late Work Policy

Officially, each assignment is due at 11:59pm on the night at the end of the corresponding week. Practically speaking, however, I will grade without penalty (for graded assessments) and provide feedback on (for all assessments) any assessment that is turned in by the time I begin looking over that assessment. I reserve the right to not grade or provide feedback on any work that is completed after this time unless you have made other arrangements with me. Naturally, because my schedule varies from week to week and because I try to provide feedback as quickly as possible, your best bet is to turn in your work by the official deadline or—if life has thrown you a curveball—to get in touch with me ahead of time to make other arrangements.

Course Policies

All of the policies listed on [this page](#) are in effect for this course. Also in effect are [these rules](#) related to academic offenses; plagiarism is a serious concern, and I will not tolerate it. It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The University of Kentucky is committed to our core values of diversity and inclusion, mutual respect and human dignity, and a sense of community ([Governing Regulations XIV](#)). We acknowledge and respect the seen and unseen diverse identities and experiences of all members of the university community (<https://www.uky.edu/regs/gr14>). These identities include but are not limited to those based on race, ethnicity, gender identity and expressions, ideas and perspectives, religious and cultural beliefs, sexual orientation, national origin, age, ability, and socioeconomic status. We are committed to equity and justice and providing a learning and engaging community in which every member is engaged, heard, and valued.

We strive to rectify and change behavior that is inconsistent with our principles and commitment to creating a safe, equitable, and anti-racist environment. If students encounter such behavior in a course, they are encouraged to speak with the instructor of record or the [college's diversity officer](#), who is charged with addressing concerns about diversity, equity, and inclusiveness (uky.edu/inclusiveexcellence/college-diversity-inclusion-officers). Students may also contact a faculty member within the department, program director, the director of undergraduate or graduate studies, the department chair, or the dean. To submit an official report of bias, hatred, racism, or identity-based violence, visit the Bias Incident Support Services [website](#) (<https://www.uky.edu/biss/report-bias-incident>).

Please also consider the following resources related to diversity, equity, and inclusion:

Counseling Center

The UK Counseling Center (UKCC) provides a range of confidential psychological services to students enrolled in 6 credit hours or more, psychoeducational outreach programming (including QPR suicide prevention), and consultation to members of the UK community (students, faculty, staff, administrators, parents, concerned others). Please visit the [UKCC's website](#) (uky.edu/counselingcenter) for more detailed information or call (859) 257-8701.

Bias Incident Support Services

Bias Incident Support Services (BISS) provides confidential support and advocacy for any student, staff, or faculty member impacted by bias, hatred, and/or an act of identity-based violence. BISS staff aid impacted parties in accessing campus and community resources, including the Bias Incident Response Team, the University's official reporting system for acts that negatively impact a sense of belonging. Campus and community consultation and educational opportunities centered on inclusion, diversity, equity and belonging is a resource also provided by BISS. For more detailed information please visit the [BISS website](#) (uky.edu/biss) or contact them [via email](#) (biss@uky.edu).

Disability Resource Center

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please inform your instructor as soon as possible during scheduled office hours. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide your instructor with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC coordinates campus disability services available to students with disabilities. It is located on the corner of Rose Street and Huguelet Drive in the Multidisciplinary Science Building, Suite 407. You can reach them via phone at (859) 257-2754, [via email \(drc@uky.edu\)](mailto:drc@uky.edu) or visit their [website \(uky.edu/DisabilityResourceCenter\)](http://uky.edu/DisabilityResourceCenter).

Martin Luther King Center

The Martin Luther King Center (MLKC) supports an inclusive learning environment where diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, and appreciated as a source of strength. The MLKC's year-round programs and activities that focus on the importance of cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding support its three primary goals: 1) sponsoring cultural and educational programming; 2) offering opportunities for student support and development; and 3) through programmatic linkages with a wide variety of civic and community agencies, promoting community outreach, engagement, and collaboration. Students can reach the MLKC via phone at (859) 257-4130, by visiting them in Gatton Student Center Suite A230, [via email \(mlkc@uky.edu\)](mailto:mlkc@uky.edu), and by visiting the [MLKC website \(uky.edu/mlkc\)](http://uky.edu/mlkc).

If there are aspects within your experience here at UK that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible and/or email the Office for Institutional Diversity [via email \(vpid@uky.edu\)](mailto:vpid@uky.edu).

Non-Discrimination / Title IX

In accordance with federal law, UK is committed to providing a safe learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community. The University maintains a comprehensive program which protects all members from discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. For complete information about UK's prohibition on discrimination and harassment on aspects such as race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, and sexual orientation, please see [the electronic version of UK's Administrative Regulation 6:1 \("Policy on Discrimination and Harassment"\) \(https://www.uky.edu/regs/ar6-1\)](https://www.uky.edu/regs/ar6-1). In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of sex in academics, employment, and all of its programs and activities. Sexual misconduct is a form of sexual harassment in which one act is severe enough to create a hostile environment based on sex and is prohibited between members of the University community and shall not be tolerated. For more details, please see [the electronic version of Administrative Regulations 6:2 \("Policy and Procedures for Addressing and Resolving Allegations of Sexual Assault, Stalking, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, and Sexual Exploitation"\) \(https://www.uky.edu/regs/ar6-2\)](https://www.uky.edu/regs/ar6-2). Complaints regarding violations of University policies on discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct are handled by the Office of Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity (Institutional Equity), which is located in 13 Main Building and can be reached by phone at (859) 257-8927. You can also visit [Institutional Equity's website \(https://www.uky.edu/eoo\)](https://www.uky.edu/eoo).

Faculty members are obligated to forward any report made by a student related to discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct to the Office of Institutional Equity. Students can confidentially report alleged incidences through the [Violence Intervention and Prevention Center \(https://www.uky.edu/vipcenter\)](https://www.uky.edu/vipcenter), [Counseling Center \(https://www.uky.edu/counselingcenter\)](https://www.uky.edu/counselingcenter), or [University Health Service \(https://ukhealthcare.uky.edu/university-health-service/student-health\)](https://ukhealthcare.uky.edu/university-health-service/student-health).

Reports of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct may be made to Institutional Equity [here](#).

Office of LGBTQ* Resources

UK is committed to supporting students and upholding the University's efforts to promote inclusion among our community. UK faculty and staff employees support inclusion and diversity throughout the University, including the ways in which faculty structure classroom conversations and manage those dynamics. To assist in these efforts, students are welcome to provide the names and pronouns they prefer. One easy way to do this is by using the pronoun feature of UK's Name Change Form. (More information about the form can be found on the [Office of LGBTQ*'s website \(uky.edu/lgbtq/forms-and-resources\)](https://www.uky.edu/lgbtq/forms-and-resources).) Otherwise, students can provide this information to instructors directly.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity is prohibited at UK. If you have questions about support, advocacy, and community-building services related to sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity, students are encouraged to visit the [website of the Office of LGBTQ* Resources \(uky.edu/lgbtq/forms-and-resources\)](https://www.uky.edu/lgbtq/forms-and-resources).

Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

Being both a member of the military community and a student can bring some complexities. If you are a member of the military or a military veteran or dependent, please let instructors know when these challenges arise. Drill schedules, calls to active duty, mandatory training exercises, issues with GI Bill disbursement, etc. can complicate your academic life. Let your instructor know if you experience complications.

The VRC is a great resource for members of our military family. If you have questions regarding your VA benefits or other related issues, the VRC has a full complement of staff to assist you. The VRC also provides study and lounge space, as well as free printing. Please visit the [VRC website \(uky.edu/veterans\)](https://www.uky.edu/veterans), [email the VRC \(vetcenter@uky.edu\)](mailto:vetcenter@uky.edu), visit them in the basement of Erikson Hall, or call the director, Colonel Tony Dotson, at (859) 257-1148.

If you are a military student serving in the National Guard or Reserve, it is in your best interest to let all of your instructors know that immediately. You might also consider sharing a copy of your training schedule.

If you are a military student who is a member of the National Guard or Military Reserve and are called to duty for one-fifth or less of this semester, provide a copy of your military orders to the Director of the Veterans Resource Center (contact information above) once you become aware of the call to duty. (Please also provide the Director with a list of all your current courses and

instructors.) The Director will verify the orders with the appropriate military authority and will, on the military student's behalf, notify their instructors as to the known extent of the absence.

Your absences will not be penalized and instructors will work with military students to create reasonable accommodations for making up missed assignments, quizzes, and tests.

Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) Center

If you experience an incident of sex- or gender-based discrimination or interpersonal violence, we encourage you to report it. While you may talk to a faculty member or TA/RA/GA, understand that as a "Responsible Employee" of the University these individuals **MUST** report any acts of violence (including verbal bullying and sexual harassment) to the University's Title IX Coordinator in the Institutional Equity Office. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you can visit the [Violence Intervention and Prevention \(VIP\) Center's website](http://uky.edu/vipcenter/content/faq) (uky.edu/vipcenter/content/faq) (offices located in Bosworth Hall, 1st Floor; (859) 257-3574), the [Counseling Center's \(CC\) website](http://uky.edu/counselingcenter/student-resources) (uky.edu/counselingcenter/student-resources), and the [University Health Services \(UHS\) website](http://uky.edu/university-health-service/student-health/our-student-services) (uky.edu/university-health-service/student-health/our-student-services). The VIP Center, CC, and UHS are confidential resources on campus. **The VIP Center accepts Zoom, phone, and walk-in appointments.**

Summary Course Schedule

This table provides an overview of the schedule for this course.

Week	Topic	Reading Activities	Other Activities
Module 1: Game Design and Literacies			
Week 1	Introduction to the Course	- read and annotate syllabus	- introduce yourself - introduce a meaningful game
Week 2	Introduction to Games and Literacies	- read and annotate Gee (2003), chapter 2 - read and annotate Willsher (2015)	- identify literacies for a meaningful game
Week 3	Introduction to Game Design	- read and annotate Mayer & Harris (2010), chapter 1 - read and annotate Romero & Schreiber (2009), chapter 2	- make some initial decisions about your meaningful game design
submit Playing Games Report and Meaningful Game Design Draft for Module 1			
Module 2: Contexts Within and Surrounding Games			
Week 4	Games, Communities, and Spaces	- read and annotate Gee (2017) - read and annotate Steinkuehler & Duncan (2008)	- explore helpful game design communities
Week 5	Games, Education, and Training	- read and annotate Mayer & Harris (2010), chapter 5 - read and annotate Allal-Chérif & Makhoul (2016)	- consider professional alignment of meaningful games
Week 6	Games and Culture(s)	- read and annotate Bayeck (2018) - read and annotate Salen Tekinbas (2020)	- consider cultural influences on meaningful games
submit Playing Games Report and Meaningful Game Design Draft for Module 2			
Module 3: Designing Meaningful Games			
Week 7	Literacies and Designing Games	- read and annotate Kafai & Burke (2016), chapter 1 - read and annotate Paula et al. (2018)	- report on meaningful game design progress
Week 8	Literacies and Repurposing Games	- read and annotate Owens (2011) - read and annotate Bissette (n.d.)	- report on meaningful game design progress
Week 9	Inclusivity and Game Design	- read and annotate Tran (2017) - read and annotate Frasier (2016)	- report on meaningful game design progress
submit Playing Games Report and Meaningful Game Design Draft for Module 3			
Week 10: Spring Vacation / Flex Week			

Module 4: Game Design and Meaning			
Week 11	Games and Representation	- read and annotate Codega (2022) - watch and discuss <i>Ms. Male Character</i>	- consider representation in your meaningful game
Week 12	Games and Values	- read and annotate Flanagan & Nissenbaum (2014), ch. 2 - read and annotate Loring-Albright (2017)	- consider values in your meaningful game
Week 13	Games and Arguments	- read and annotate Bogost (2008) - watch and discuss <i>The Hidden Genius of Monopoly's Rules</i>	- consider arguments in your meaningful game
submit Playing Games Report and Meaningful Game Design Draft for Module 4			
Module 5: Fitting Games into Professional Contexts			
Week 14	Learning About Games	- read and annotate Marklund & Taylor (2015) - read and annotate Dikkers (2015), chapter 5	- consider how you would implement your meaningful game
Week 15	Building a Game Collection	- read and annotate Robson et al. (2020) - read and annotate Slobuski et al. (2016)	- consider game collections and your professional context
Week 16	Organizing Game Design Activities	- read and annotate Akcaoglu (2016) - read and annotate Bishoff et al. (2015)	- consider game design activities in your professional context
submit Playing Games Report and Meaningful Game Design Draft for Module 5			
submit Meaningful Game Design			

Course Bibliography

These materials will all be available through Canvas. Full APA citations are listed here so that you can look up any materials that stand out to you.

- Akcaoglu, M. (2016). Design and implementation of the game-design and learning program. *TechTrends*, 60, 114-123. doi:10.1007/s11528-016-0022-y
- Allal-Chérif, O., & Makhoulf, M. (2016). Using serious games for human resource management: Lessons from France's top 40 companies. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*. doi:10.1002/joe.21668
- Bayeck, R. Y. (2018). A review of five African board games: Is there any educational potential? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 48(5), 533-552. doi:10.1080/0305764X.2017.1371671
- Bishoff, C., Farrell, S. L., & Neeser, A. E. (2015). Outreach, collaboration, collegiality: Evolving approaches to library video game services. *Journal of Library Innovation*, 6(1), 92-109.
- Bissette, C. (n.d.). *The Wretched: Survive alone in the black* [roleplaying game]. Loot the Room.
- Bogost, I. (2008). The rhetoric of video games. In K. Salen (Ed.), *The ecology of games: Connecting youth, games, and learning* (pp. 117-140). The MIT Press.
- Brathwaite [Romero], B., & Schreiber, I. (2009). Challenges for game designers: Non-digital exercises for video game developers. Boston, MA: Course Technology
- Codega, L. (2022, September 15). Why race is still a problem in Dungeons & Dragons. *io9*. <https://gizmodo.com/one-dnd-racism-rpg-stereotypes-dungeons-dragons-wotc-1849531852>
- de Paula, B. H., Burn, A., Noss, R., & Valente, J. A. (2018). Playing Beowulf: Bridging computational thinking, arts and literature through game-making. *International Journal of Child-Computer Interaction*, 16, 39-46. doi:10.1016/j.ijcci.2017.11.003
- Dijkers, S. (2015). *Teachercraft: How teachers learn to use Minecraft in their classrooms*. ETC Press.
- Feminist Frequency. (2013, November 18). *Ms. male character - Tropes vs women in video games* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYqYLfm1rWA>
- Flanagan, M., & Nissenbaum, H. (2014). *Values at play in digital games*. The MIT Press.
- Frasier, C. (2016). Being iconic. In E. Teague (Ed.), *Girls on games: A look at the fairer sides of the tabletop industry* (pp. 24-30).

- Gee, J. P. (2003). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy* (revised and updated edition). New York, NY: St. Martin's Press
- Gee, J. P. (2017). Affinity spaces and 21st century learning. *Educational Technology*, 57(2), 27-31.
- Kafai, Y. B., & Burke, Q. (2016). *Connected gaming: What making video games can teach us about learning and literacy*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Loring-Albright, G. (2015). The first nations of Catan: Practices in critical modification. *Analog Game Studies*, 2(7).
- Marklund, B. B., & Alklind Taylor, A.-S. (2015). Teachers' many roles in game-based learning projects. In *European Conference on Games Based Learning 2015* (pp. 359-367). Academic Conferences and Publishing International Limited.
- Mayer, B., & Harris, C. (2010). *Libraries got game: Aligned learning through modern board games*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Owens, T. (2011). Modding the history of science: Values at play in modder discussions of Sid Meier's Civilization. *Simulation & Gaming*, 42(4), doi:10.1177/1046878110366277
- PBS Game/Show. (2015, June 9). *The hidden genius of Monopoly's rules* / Game/Show / PBS Digital Studios [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xELPNVmzerg>
- Robson, D., Sassen, C., & Rodriguez, A. (2020). Advances in academic video game collections. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 46. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102233
- Salen Tekinbas, K. (2020). *Raising good gamers: Envisioning an agenda for diversity, inclusion, and fair play*. Connected Learning Alliance.
- Slobuski, T., Robson, D., & Bentley, P. (2017). Arranging the pieces: A survey of library practices related to a tabletop game collection. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 12(1).
- Steinkuehler, C., & Duncan, S. (2008). Scientific habits of mind in virtual worlds. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 17(6), 530-543. doi:10.1007/s10956-008-9120-8
- Tran, K. M. (2017). "Her story was complex": A Twine workshop for ten- to twelve-year-old girls. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 13(5-6), 212-226. doi:10.1177/2042753016689635
- Willsher, K. (2015, July 21). The French Scrabble champion who doesn't speak French. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/jul/21/new-french-scrabble-champion-nigel-richards-doesnt-speak-french>