

Spring 2025 ENG 400 Seminars

Tuning for Gaming Activism

Dr. Laquana Cooke

There was a time (maybe to some people even today) when gaming sounded trivial, but the international gaming industry earned \$108.9 billion in 2017; and its formats can be found everywhere from military training to anti-war activism. Since the 1980s, gaming hardware has been at the forefront of computing innovation (e.g., see cryptocurrencies and computing power).

At the same time, game development has become increasingly accessible to lay users. As a woman of color scholar and rhetorical theorist, Dr. Cooke knows, both personally and professionally, the pathways that gaming affords in underserved communities. If any technology stands a chance of helping us understand what it means to be tuned for justice, it is gaming.

Social justice gaming, or what Dr. Cooke describes in her work as gaming activism, is a type of movement that takes a variety of forms, including organizing, resisting, and intervening in ways to increase representation in games and to create equitable access to careers in the gaming industry.

This class is about that labor.

In this seminar, you will critically analyze three types of gaming activism, looking specifically at the type of transformations and how they work: The Gaming Model, Social Gaming Model, and Institutional Model. You will also critique games as texts and via academic texts; you will play games, tune game systems as a form of critique and evaluation; and you will design games, as a reflective practice and research method.

Monsters, Medicine, and Media

Dr. Kristin Kondrlik

Fears of scientific progress and gaps in medical knowledge, coupled with social and cultural changes, have often manifested in the appearance of “monstrous” figures: from Frankenstein to zombies. These “medical monsters” have been shaped by the technological evolution of print, visual, and digital genres. Students will analyze how textual genres shaped and were shaped by society’s attitudes about medicine in the last two centuries. We will examine various genres, including newspapers, medical journals, radio dramas, movies, online forums, and design of haunted houses. We will also read four novels (Frankenstein, Dracula, The Haunting of Hill House, and Warm Bodies), watch four films (Get Out, Night of the Living Dead, Malignant, and Freaks), and discuss interactions between medicine and print and digital media with relationship to “monstrous” figures such as Jack the Ripper. Students will be able to complete a research project on the “monster” of their choice.

The Rhetoric of Community Organizing: Persuasive Tools for Our Political Moment

Dr. Ben Kuebrich

Those of us who do our work in writing and rhetoric have an important role in social movements. From the making of protest banners to the writing of speeches to the details of a policy demand, writing and organizing go hand-in-hand. This course brings all the tools that you’ve developed in coursework through the English major to bear on the important collective work of transforming our social institutions.

You will analyze and apply lessons from a variety of social movements and activist organizations, include the Civil Rights Movement, ACT UP, the Movement for Black Lives, the labor movement, #MeToo, Occupy Wall Street, the Global Climate Strike, the Zapatistas, and more.

This class is meant to develop your tools for transformative social change by focusing on the rhetoric and tactics of organizing. As we begin reading the materials, you’ll notice how prominently

ideas like the rhetorical situation and rhetorical analysis play in the everyday work of organizing. You'll also see the relationships between organizing and decolonial and post-colonial theory, intersectionality, feminist and queer theory, and other literary, cultural, and social theories that help develop our analysis of power in society.

Nineteenth-Century Native American Literature and Print Culture

Dr. Carolyn Sorisio

This course examines American Indian authors' diverse, creative, and extensive use of authorship and print culture in the nineteenth century. We will ask what circumstances encouraged some American Indians to become authors and examine the choices they made when doing so. We will discover how authors such as Black Hawk, William Apess, Elias Boudinot, John Rollin Ridge, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, and Zitkala-Sa wrote in diverse and evolving genres such as life writing, non-fiction, poetry, and fiction. Drawing upon Native American literary studies, book history, and postcolonial and historical methods, this course will build upon methods and methodologies that you may have been introduced to in ENG202 or ENG 206/296.

See more about Professor Carolyn Sorisio's scholarship [here](#).