

Memory Games

AME_4_MGM

Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences
Department of Arts, Media and English

Semester 2, 2009–2010

Level 4

become what you want to be

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1. UNIT DETAILS

Unit Title:	Memory Games
Unit Level:	4
Unit Reference Number:	AME_4_MGM
Credit Value:	20 CAT points
Student Study Hours:	164
Contact Hours:	36
Pre-requisite Learning (If applicable):	None
Co-requisite Units (If applicable):	None
Course(s):	Game Cultures
Year and Semester	Year 1, Semester 2
Unit Coordinator:	Siobhán Thomas
UC Contact Details (Tel, Email, Room)	Telephone: 0207 815 5809 Email: thomass5@lsbu.ac.uk Room: B401, Borough Road
Teaching Team & Contact Details (If applicable):	Siobhán Thomas
Subject Area:	Arts, Media and English
Summary of Assessment Method:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Videogame history research project (worth 75% of the marks for the unit). Due week 10 and 11.• Written in-class exam (worth 25% of the marks for the unit). Week 12.

2. SHORT DESCRIPTION

Memory Games traces the rich cultural heritage of videogames. The unit examines pivotal events in videogame history and, along the way, pays homage to the designers, developers and players who have made the industry what it is today. During the unit you will be introduced to practical research skills as you participate in a small-scale group qualitative research project related to videogame history. By the end of the unit, you'll be able to see the crucial role the past plays in shaping the games you are going to create in the future.

3. AIMS OF THE UNIT

The aims of this unit are to:

- Familiarise the student with the origin and history of videogames, charting pivotal events that have shaped the industry today
- Develop strategies for analysing videogames
- Explore the influence of the cultural heritage of games on student's own individual play and design practices
- Introduce research methods and data collection techniques, such as interviewing and questionnaires

4. LEARNING OUTCOMES

4.1 Knowledge and Understanding

- Identify and evaluate key events in videogame history, and explain why they are key
- Discuss the influence videogame culture has on play and design practices

4.2 Intellectual Skills

- Critically engage with a variety of game texts
- Construct thematic frameworks that can be used to connect and categorise videogame “periods” and phenomenon

4.3 Practical Skills

- Plan and conduct one-to-one face-to-face interviews
- Prepare and analyse questionnaires

4.4 Transferable Skills

- Understanding of game history is transferable to all other units, particularly dissertation
- Interview and questionnaire preparation and analysis techniques
- Written communication skills

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIT

5.1 General Statement about the Philosophy of Teaching and Learning in Game Cultures Classes

Be prepared to receive and give constructive criticism. Part of presenting your work is being able to gracefully accept other people’s ideas and critiques, and to assimilate this feedback into your work. You also need to be prepared to give criticism—to share your ideas about other’s work—in a constructive way.

5.2 Production Diary

You are required to document your progress for all Game Cultures classes in a production diary. Your production diary can take a digital form (e.g. a blog or Evernote) or be paper based (e.g. a sketchbook or other type of notebook). If you choose to document your work using video or sound recordings, you will need to provide an interface/ table of contents to access this work which explains what is in the video or sound recording and highlights key points. You will be asked to share your production diary at various points throughout the course and you will be expected to share your production diary with the Course Director during PDP meetings (see the Game Cultures Course Handbook for more information on PDP). In some units your production diary forms an integral part of your assessment. As the production diary is a tool for you to document your *ongoing* progress and development, you are expected to regularly contribute to your production diary (at least one entry per week). Completing diary entries immediately prior to the assessment due date, rather than at regular weekly intervals, will most likely result in a fail for that portion of the assessment.

5.3 Assessment Overview

- Videogame history research project (worth 75% of the marks for the unit). Due week 10 and 11.
- Written in-class exam (worth 25% of the marks for the unit). Week 12.

The above coursework will both test the learning outcomes of this unit and relate to the broader assessment criteria for Level 4. **In order to pass the unit you must achieve a mark of over 40% in each piece of assessment.**

5.4 Videogame history research project, report and presentation

Conducting professional research and presenting the results of that research in both oral and written formats is an essential skill for both business and academia. Over the course of the semester you will be introduced to practical research skills as you participate in a

small-scale group qualitative research project related to videogame history. Outside of class, you will conduct, using a prepared script, structured face-to-face interviews, which you will video record. In class, as a group, we will analyse the data you collect and discuss findings. Individually, you will write a 1,500 word written report detailing the results of the group research. Then, in weeks 10 (group 1) and 11 (group 2) you'll present the findings of your report.

You will be assessed on the overall quality of your research, the accuracy of your interpretation of the data collected as a group and the effectiveness of your oral and written reports.

Due: week 10 (group 1) and 11 (group 2). In class, at the time of your presentation, you must submit two printed copies of your research report, as well as a CD/DVD that contains the following:

- Clearly labelled disc (must include your ID number and name). No printed labels.
- A read me file detailing what is contained on the disc
- A 1,500 word research report professionally prepared to the specifications of the template provided to you in class
- A digital copy of your presentation (in ppt, pdf or other appropriate professional presentation format)
- A video recording of your interview and your transcription of the interview
- Interview script used to conduct the interview
- Signed consent form

5.5 Written test

In week 12, you will complete an in-class test to assess your knowledge of the videogame history covered during lectures, films and in the assigned readings. Full details of the exam and examination process will be provided to you in week 9.

6. FEEDBACK

Feedback will normally be given to students 20 working days after the submission of an assignment.

7. INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING THE UNIT

7.1 Overview of the Main Content

- Before Space Wars: Ancient games, chess and pinball
- Parentage: Steve Russell, Ralph Baer, Nolan Bushnell
- Atari, Nintendo, Sega, Sony, Microsoft
- Hardware developments/ the console wars
- Software: game mechanics and subversive play strategies (e.g. the Nagoya Method of playing Space Invaders)
- Videogame culture
- Influential designers
- Game mechanics
- Research methodology, data analysis, report writing

7.2 Overview of Types of Classes

- Tutor-led, thematic contextual sessions
- In-class exercises
- Student-led presentation sessions
- In-class tutorials

7.3 Importance of Student Self-Managed Learning Time

As with every theory-led unit on the BA (Hons) Game Cultures course, you are expected to work independently outside of class hours researching videogame culture. You should play and think critically about both contemporary games and older games. You should also attempt to relate your personal gameplay practices to the historical context learned in class. Further, you will be required to complete research related activities in your own time, in order to complete the research components of the unit.

7.4 Employability

An awareness of the history of the field of videogame design and development is essential for credibility and understanding. Knowing what has been produced before will enable you to talk critically about the games you play and design as well as to produce new and innovative works.

8. THE PROGRAMME OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Block One Wks 1-3	Block Two Wks 4-8	Block Three Wks 9-12
Introduction to unit; overview of history of games	1970s; 1980s; 1990s; Nostalgia	Research report feedback; presentations; written exam

Week 1:

In this first three-hour block of **Memory Games** we'll introduce the unit and explore its content week-by-week. We'll discuss the assessment for the unit and how it prepares you for **Re:Creation** in year 2 and the **Dissertation** in year 3. We'll spend most of the session brainstorming ideas for our group research project.

Week 2: Overview of the History of Games

In second week of **Memory Games** we'll watch a documentary on the history of video games, which touches on key events and people in videogame history. We'll discuss key methodological considerations of our group research project—sampling and participant selection, data collection, and ethics. During the session we'll start to generate an interview script, the data collection instrument you will use when interviewing your participants.

Week 3: Self-Managed Study, Participant Selection and Interview Scripts

The third week of **Memory Games** is dedicated to enabling you to carry out self-managed study. You should use the time allocated to identify a list of potential participants from which you can choose your interviewee and to write additional interview questions so that we can finalise the interview script in week 4.

Week 4: The 1970s

In the first part of the session, we'll go back in videogame history to the 1970s, chronicling, in particular, the rise and fall of Atari. We'll look at such pivotal games as *Pong*, *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*. In the second half of the session we'll finalise our interview script and try out a few test interviews so that you will be prepared when you conduct your interviews with your participants.

Week 5: The 1980s

Pac Man, *Donkey Kong*, *Tetris*, *The Legend of Zelda* and *Final Fantasy* are just a handful of games that rose to fame in the same decade that Nintendo gave birth to the Famicom and

Game Boy consoles. This week, for a bit of inspiration, we'll start by watching a BAFTA interview with David Braben, who started developing *Elite* whilst he was at Cambridge University. Then, we'll spend the rest of the session playing the videogames that epitomised the decade. Bring along your 80s games and consoles (and monitors!).

On the research front, you should have conducted your interview and begun transcribing it.

Week 6: Self-Managed Study, Data Entry and Data Organisation

Week 6 represents the second of your self-managed study sessions. You'll need to spend this time finishing your participant interview transcription and entering data into excel. By Sunday March 7 email your excel spreadsheet to Siobhan, so that she can combine all of the data in time for the not-to-be-missed data analysis session in week 7.

Week 7: 1990s

The first half of this week's session is dedicated to the 1990s. A decade which saw the genesis of three generations of hardware: the fourth generation Genesis and the SuperNES; the fifth generation PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and Saturn; and the sixth generation Dreamcast and PlayStation 2. However, there was something more mind-bending going on in the 90s than the array of hardware the decade produced. The time period saw pixels transform into 3D graphics in games such as Super Mario 64. Videogame genres were defined with "paradigm shifting" titles such as id's FPS, *Doom* and *Capcom's* and Konami's survival horrors *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*. Lara Croft became not only a household name, but arguably, videogames first female sex symbol.

In the second half of the session, we'll concentrate on data analysis techniques. You'll be expected to continue data analysis during the week and bring a list of findings to class for discussion in week 8.

Week 8: Nostalgia

In week 8 we'll discuss two key concepts in the field of Memory Studies--collective memory and prosthetic memory--as we discuss the idea of nostalgia in video games. We'll watch the film *The King of Kong*.

We will also discuss, as a group, the findings for the study.

In week 9, in order to ensure you are fully prepared for your research report assessment, you are expected to attend a mandatory editing and feedback session. This will be an intensive session where you are expected to review and edit both your own and other students' work. You will need to bring five printed copies of your report to this session. YOU MUST ENSURE YOUR REPORT IS EDITED AND POLISHED AND FORMATTED AND REFERENCED CORRECTLY. NO ROUGH DRAFTS.

Week 9: Research Project Report Editing and Feedback Session

This editing and feedback session is dedicated to feedback on your research project report. You will need to bring 5 printed copies of your report for discussion with your tutorial group. YOU MUST ENSURE YOUR DISSERTATION PROPOSAL IS EDITED AND POLISHED AND FORMATTED CORRECTLY, WITH CORRECT CITATIONS. NO ROUGH DRAFTS. The feedback sessions will take place in B401.

Week 10 and 11: Research Report Presentations

Individually, you will have 10-minutes to present the findings from your videogame history research project in weeks 10 (group 1) and 11 (group 2). Ensure you bring your accompanying printed reports and CDs/DVDs.

Week 12: Game Over

In the final session of Memory Games, you'll write a written videogame history exam. You'll also complete feedback forms for the unit.

9. STUDENT EVALUATION

This is a new unit, so a student evaluation has not been conducted. This unit's student evaluation will occur in week 12 and will be an opportunity for you to provide feedback about the unit in a formal way. We encourage students, however, to provide feedback regarding teaching and learning on an ongoing basis throughout the semester. In the Game Cultures Course we take excellence in teaching very seriously. You can play a pivotal role in helping us achieve teaching excellence by providing us with feedback.

If you have suggestions, questions or concerns about the unit please discuss them with your unit lecturers or tutors. If you have any suggestions, questions or concerns about the Course in general please contact the Game Cultures Course Director, Siobhan Thomas via email thomass5@lsbu.ac.uk.

10. LEARNING RESOURCES

10.1 Core Materials

Kent, S. (2001). *The ultimate history of video games: From Pong to Pokémon and beyond... the story behind the craze that touched our lives and changed the world*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Kushner, D. (2003). *Masters of Doom: How two guys created an empire and transformed pop culture*. New York: Random House.

Landsberg, A. (2009). Memory, empathy, and the politics of identification. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 22(2), 221-229.

Landsberg, A. (2003). *Prosthetic memory: The ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture*. In P. Grainge (Ed.), *Memory and popular film*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Loguidice, B., & Barton, M. (2009). *Vintage games: An insider look at the history of Grand Theft Auto, Super Mario, and the most influential games of all time*. Boston: Focal Press/Elsevier.

Mäyrä, F. (2008). *An introduction to game studies: Games in culture*. London: Sage Publications.

Poole, S. (2000). *Trigger happy: The inner life of videogames*. London: Fourth Estate.

DVDs

Cunningham, S. (Producer) & Gordon, S. (Director). (2008). *The king of Kong: A fist full of quarters* [DVD]. United Kingdom: Revolver Entertainment.

URLs

The History of Video Games

<http://video.google.co.uk/videoplay?docid=3637639460474263178&ei=T3pcS8ObOtyf-Aa5xLDIBA&q=the+history+of+video+games&hl=en&client=firefox-a#>

A Life in Video Games: David Braben

<http://www.bafta.org/access-all-areas/videos/a-life-in-video-games-david-braben,915,BA.html>