

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF VIDEO GAMES

Responsible Faculty Instructor:
Anantha U. G. [anantha.ug@jgu.edu.in]
Lecturer

Credits: 4

Credits Type: Non-Law

Cross-registration: The course can be opened to students from related disciplines, such as JIBS and JSPC.

Pre-requisites: No formal prerequisites.

COURSE DESCRIPTION (COURSE VISION):

The course “Critical Analysis of Video Games” outlines the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of gaming in contemporary society. Students get to learn the history and evolution of video games and explore psychological theories that explain gameplay and player behavior. This course also situates video games within the broader digital ecosystem, examining issues such as moral panics, recurring debates over bans and regulation, and generational differences in how video games are adopted and experienced. Taking a balanced perspective, the course evaluates the effects of video games by examining both potential benefits and risks across different psychosocial domains.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY:

1. Foundational concepts of video games and relevant psychological theories will be introduced through structured lectures supported by multimedia examples.
2. Illustrative case studies and personal anecdotes help students understand gameplay mechanics and player behavior across different game genres.
3. Group discussions and structured debates will be held to facilitate critical engagement with contested topics, such as the potential benefits and risks of video games.
4. Guided reviews of scholarly articles, supported by library resources, will expose students to scientific literature and help them understand ongoing debates in contemporary video game research.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Weightage (%)	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessments
1. Factual and conceptual understanding video games and relevant psychological theories.	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures illustrating case studies on the evolution of video games, rating systems, genre classification etc. Discussion of foundational experiments and empirical studies. Guided reading of core theoretical texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class short analytical writing MCQs Mid-semester examination (Open book)
2. Application and critical evaluation of the issues pertaining to the effects of video games.	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured classroom debates and group discussions. Case analysis sessions. Seminar presentations on policy controversies in line with APA recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written case analysis Group seminar presentation
3. Analytical integration of psychological theories to interpret and evaluate the effects of video games.	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures integrating multimedia case illustrations. Guided reading of core theoretical texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End-semester examination (Closed book)

READING LIST:

- Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2002). Human aggression. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 27–51. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135231>
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. *Media Psychology*, 3(3), 265–299. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303_03
- Baron, R. A., & Misra, G. (2018). *Psychology* (5th ed.). Pearson Education India. ISBN 9789332558540

4. Ferguson, C. J. (2015). Do angry birds make for angry children? A meta-analysis of video game influences on children’s and adolescents’ aggression. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(5), 646–666.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691615592234>
5. Greenfield, P. M. (1984). *Mind and media: The effects of television, video games, and computers*. Harvard University Press. ISBN 9780006365938
6. Ryan, R. M., Rigby, C. S., & Przybylski, A. (2006). The motivational pull of video games: A self-determination theory approach. *Motivation and emotion*, 30(4), 344-360. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-006-9051-8>
7. Ubaradka, A., & Khanganba, S. P. (2025). Habitual violent media exposure does not bias facial emotional processing: a comparison of interactive vs. non-interactive content. *Scientific Reports*, 15(1), 42213.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-26041-w>

WEEKLY READING PLAN (WEEKLY OUTLINE):

A weekly plan is provided below:

MODULES	WEEKS
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO GAMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Video games as interactive media; Games vs. play vs. gamification; Ubiquity of video games in contemporary society. 	Week 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Synthetic gaming world vs. real-world conflicts; Video gamer as a key social actor; Anecdotes of video gamers. 	Week 2
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 2: EVOLUTION OF VIDEO GAMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Early arcade games; Home console revolution; Contemporary video games. 	Week 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Online gaming and the concept of esports; Emergence of VR gaming. 	Week 4
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 3: GENRES, GAME MECHANICS, AND RATINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Typologies in video games; Game mechanics across the genres – Action/adventure games, strategy games, role-playing games, shooters, and puzzles. 	Week 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Video game rating systems – ESRB, IARC and PEGI; Content descriptors and video game regulations. 	Week 6
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 4: VIDEO GAMES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Video games in the lens of classical theories – Psychoanalytical Theory (Freud, Žižek); Operant Conditioning (Skinner); Social Learning Theory (Bandura). 	Week 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Video games in the lens of contemporary theories – General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman), Sensation Seeking Model (Zuckerman). 	Week 8
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 5: CRITICAL ISSUES ON THE EFFECTS OF VIDEO GAMES</p>	Week 9

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Effects of contemporary video games; Addiction & deviance; Hazard games & regulation frameworks; Healthy gaming. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Video games and cognition; Emotional and behavioral expressions of video gamers; Effects of habitual vs. occasional gaming. 	Week 10
<p>MODULE 6: MORAL PANICS AND MEDIA SKEPTICISM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Violence in video games and moral panic; Video games as cultural folk devils; Violent video games and aggression debates. 	Week 11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Replication crisis in video game research; Methodological critiques; Policy reactions; Generational anxieties around video games. 	Week 12
<p>MODULE 7: GENERATIONAL INFLUENCE OF NEW MEDIA & FUTURE TRAJECTORIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Video game usage pattern and preferences – Millennials vs. Gen Z vs. Gen Alpha; Communication pattern in multiplayer video games. 	Week 13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Description: Role of video games in influencing culture; Video games and Indian society. 	Week 14
<p>REVISION WEEK</p>	Week 15