

# JEPSON FELLOW PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

Academic Year 2012 — 2013 Application for Funding in Fiscal Year 2013 — 2014

**Due Monday, September 10, 2012**

Project Title: “A is for Atari: A Critical History of Videogame Textuality”

Name of Applicant: Zach Whalen

Department: English, Linguistics and Communication

Project Summary (50-75 words, insert in the box below):

This project, “A is for Atari,” is a book manuscript to be completed in the course of the fellowship period. The original research of this work examines the typography and textuality in videogames and related media and will offer a critical analysis of that history in the context of contemporary digital media scholarship. The project goal is to secure publication for a book that will contribute specifically to emerging scholarly conversations such as Platform Studies and Critical Code Studies.

## **Required Attachments:**

1. Description of a Research/Creative Project (following required format, no longer than five pages)
2. Copy of the Applicant’s *Curriculum Vitae*
3. One-page Teaching Statement (describing oneself as a teacher and relating the teaching statement to the proposed project)
4. One syllabus from a course taught within the last two years; if desired, one example of supplementary material from that course (such as an assignment description) that is relevant to the project being proposed may be included

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Jepson Fellowship Application

*Zach Whalen; English, Linguistics and Communication*

10 September 2012

## **Project Summary:**

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## Description of Research Project

### Project Description

The current project, "A is for Atari," is a critical history and theoretical inquiry into the typography and textuality of videogames, specifically focusing on game consoles and arcade systems through the 1980s. Specifically, this work of this fellowship will be to produce the first manuscript on videogame typography and ultimately secure a publishing contract for its completion and dissemination.

Following a "material turn" in digital media studies, the emphasis of this project is on the physical systems and programming practices which developed unique typographical ontologies for alphanumeric characters in videogames. This project will share the results of original research into the development of key typefaces and their relationships to specific game developers, publishers and physical hardware, but perhaps more importantly, it will bring to bear the literary critical methodology of Textual Studies onto a medium not typically construed as textual in nature.

Although this book's primary disciplinary home is Game Studies, by combining historical and critical methods, "A is for Atari" will join several books and dozens of articles and conferences organized under the specific themes of Platform Studies, Software Studies, and Critical Code Studies.

The basic structure of the book will be 6 larger chapters organized into 4 or 5 sections each, with each section keyed to (that is, beginning with) a letter of the alphabet. This structure, in conjunction with an appendix, will provide a framework for presenting the alphanumeric glyphs of the typefaces under discussion in the book text.

### Goals and Specific Objectives

The specific objective of this work will be to prepare a substantially complete manuscript of this work and secure a publishing contract by the end of the fellowship period in Spring 2014. Even a best-case scenario following this timeline (that is, with a contract in hand) might mean that I continue working on this project well beyond the fellowship period. The most time-consuming work will involve the research and drafting in this initial period.

### Potential Impact and Significance

This eventual book will contribute to established and emerging themes within the Digital Media Studies and Video Game Studies, but it will also contribute to the more narrowly conceived themes of Platform Studies (a focus on the platforms used for creating digital texts), Software Studies (the study and application of software for humanistic inquiry) and Critical Code Studies (humanistic analyses of the extra-functional signification of programming code).

Beyond these specific fields of inquiry, there is a significant, perhaps nostalgia-driven, public interest in the history of computers and videogames, so the potential impact of those book could possibly reach a wider appeal. For example, Matthew G. Kirschenbaum's *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* -- essentially a Derridean grammatology of the hard drive -- won several awards, including the 2009 Modern Language Association prize for a First Book.

I see my work as contributing to this growing body of scholarship. Currently, although a few works explicitly anchor digital studies within a textual framework no published scholarly work treats videogame typography in any substantial or sustained manner,

I have already brought my research in this area into my courses that focus on videogames, including most prominently FSEM 100E3: A Videogame Canon. My continued interest in the Critical Code Studies field was also crucial in my creating the senior seminar ENGL 457S: Code, Culture and the Postmodern. Continuing this work on typography in videogames will aid not only these courses which focus on digital media technology in videogames, but the broader exploration of digital design's relationship with the digital technology used to produce it will come to bear in any other courses which touch on Media Studies.

## Procedures and Methods

### Methodology

The primary methodology for this project will be literary critical analysis of videogame technology. In order to accomplish this, I will also be employing historical, technical and archival methods as well. In this case, the primary texts of my work will be videogames and videogame technology, so acquiring and accessing these texts will be somewhat different than in a similar literary project.

The primary application of historical methodology will be discover and ultimately tell the stories of key technologies and artifacts relevant to videogame textuality. For instance, certain typefaces can be said to be emblematic of videogame culture. These designs have a historical origin, but in most cases, that origin is unknown and the story remains untold. I hope to discover and tell those stories.

The technical aspect of my research methodology involves using some software I've designed to perform visual searches on the binary videogame data. I used an early version of this tool in my dissertation work to identify points of similarity and influence among Atari 2600 games, and I plan to continue to refine and ultimately to share this tool via a website.

### Timeline (2013 - 2014)

<b>August</b>	Complete outline structure and establish project's web presence.
<b>September - October</b>	Begin primary research.
<b>November</b>	Draft first two chapters.
<b>December</b>	Begin book proposal and third chapter.
<b>January</b>	Complete draft of first three chapters and proposal.
<b>February</b>	Begin sending book proposal to key publishers.
<b>March</b>	Continue secondary research and draft chapters 3 - 4.
<b>April</b>	Complete manuscript draft through chapter 4 and continue (if

	necessary) communicating with publishers.
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## **Experience and Capabilities**

Game Studies is my primary research field, and I have published several articles and essays on topics related to videogame history and critical analysis of game texts. I have established contacts in the field which be useful as I move forward with this work. The technical aspects of this research will require a different kind of work, and though I have no formal training in programming or electrical engineering, I have had experience developing web applications and I can utilize a working knowledge of most of the systems in question for this research.

## **Logistics**

Many of the texts I will need access to are available digitally or through the Interlibrary Loan system. Some of the consoles and other hardware I will work with will come from my own collection. In the case of expensive or harder to acquire materials, I have been in contact with the Learning Games Initiative housed at Arizona State who will lend me consoles and other material for their collection. While I cannot at this point say that research travel will be essential, it may ultimately be beneficial for me to visit the Computer History Museum in California or one of the larger university archives such as the one at the University of Texas or the University of Michigan.

## **Work already completed**

Some of the work for this current project will build on my 2008 dissertation, "The Videogame Text," which I defended at the University of Florida. The writing for this project will be entirely new, but some of the key research on the Atari 2600 and Channel F platforms in particular will be useful to apply here as well. In addition, the software tool I developed for my dissertation will receive a new application here in this current project, and I have already begun a complete refactoring of its core search function.

## **Anticipated Results**

The ultimate goal for this project is a publishing contract for the manuscript. However, since the success of the book proposal will depend on market factors and other concerns, the main evaluation of this project's success will be 1) a substantially completed manuscript (that is, through at least 4 chapters) and 2) a book proposal on the desk of at least one academic press.

## **Dissemination of Results**

Obviously, the publication of the book will be the primary dissemination of this work. In addition, I will construct a website around this work, much as I did for an earlier version of this project. On this website, I will post updates related to the draft in progress and invite commentary, which may help establish an audience for an eventual book. Also, I will host my software, "ROMScrape" on this website and make it open for users to search for images (alphanumeric or otherwise) that have been hidden in game code.

# Curriculum Vitae

## Zach Whalen

Department of English, Linguistics and  
Communication  
University of Mary Washington  
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Fredericksburg, VA 22405  
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## Professional Experience

### University of Mary Washington

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Linguistics and  
Communication. 2008 – present

### University of Florida

Teaching Assistant, Department of English. 2002 - 2008  
Alumni Doctoral Fellow. 2004 - 2008  
Image Lab Assistant, CLAS Computing. 2003 - 2008  
Research Assistant, Comics Studie 2004

## Education

**Ph.D. in English;** University of Florida, 2008

Focus: Digital Media/Visual Rhetoric, Video Game Studies

Dissertation: "The Videogame Text: Typography and Textuality."

Directors: Dr. Donald Ault and Dr. Terry Harpold.

**M.A. in English;** University of Florida; May 2004

Focus: Digital Media Studies

Thesis: "Play Along: Video Game Music as Metaphor and Metonymy."

Directors: Dr. J. Yellowlees Douglas, Dr. Donald Ault.

**B.A. in Philosophy, English, minor in Music;** Carson-Newman College; May 2002

Thesis: "TheorySpace v2.03 : Applications of Critical Theory in Hypertext Literature"

Directors: Dr. Ernest Lee and Dr. D. Brian Austin.

## Honors, Grants and Awards

UMW Faculty Development Grants (travel funding), 4 total between 2009 and 2012  
Faculty Research Grant, Summer 2009 (UMW)  
Designated Travel Grant, 2009 (TeachUMW )  
Alumni Fellowship, 2004 - 2008 (University of Florida)  
Grinter Fellowship, 2002 - 2004 (University of Florida)  
Departmental Travel Awards, 3 awards from 2002 - 2007 (University of Florida)

## Publications

### *Edited Collection*

*Playing the Past: History and Nostalgia in Video Games.*

Eds. Zach Whalen and Laurie N. Taylor. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008.

### *Journal Articles*

"Deviant Materialities: Reflective Surfaces and Hollow Bodies in CSI"

*Refractory: a Journal of Entertainment Media*. 13 (2008). <<http://blogs.arts.unimelb.edu.au/refractory/2008/05/24/deviant-materials-reflecting-surfaces-and-hollow-bodies-in-csi-zach-whalen/>>

"Game Studies and Web 2.0: Finding an Audience Online"

*Flow*. Department of Radio-TV-Film at UT Austin. Special Video Games Issue (2007). <<http://flowtv.org/?p=51>>

"Game/Genre: A critique of Generic Formulas in Video Games in the Context of 'The Real'"

*Works and Days* 22:43/44 (2004): 289 - 303.

"Play Along: An Approach to Video Game Music"

*Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* <<http://www.gamestudies.org/0401/whalen/>>.

"Ludology -- Who Gets to Play?"

*M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture* 7:2. (March 2004). <<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0403/08-ludology.php>>.

### *Book Chapters*

"Mainframe Games."

*Encyclopedia of Video Games*. Ed. Mark J.P. Wolf. Greenwood Press, forthcoming 2013.

"Channel F for Forgotten: The Video Entertainment System."

*Before the Crash*. Ed. Mark J.P. Wolf. Wayne State University Press, 2012.

Taylor, Laurie N. and Zach Whalen. "Introduction to Playing the Past."

*Playing the Past: History and Nostalgia in Videogames*. Eds. Zach Whalen and Laurie N. Taylor. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt UP, 2008.

"Film Music vs. Game Music: The Case of Silent Hill."

*Music, Sound and Multimedia: From the Live to the Virtual*. Ed. Jamie Sexton. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U P, 2007.

"Cruising in San Andreas: Ludic Space and Urban Aesthetics in Grand Theft Auto"

*The Meaning and Culture of Grand Theft Auto*. Ed. Nathan Garrelts. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2006.

## Selected Conferences and Presentations

### *Invited Lectures*

- “game(text): videogames and textual aesthetics”  
Invited Guest Lecture. Center for Digital Discourse and Culture, Virginia Tech,  
Blacksburg, VA, February 12, 2010.
- “The Videogame Text”  
Invited Guest Lecture. Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities' Digital  
Dialogues series. University of Maryland. October 14, 2009.

### *Presentations*

- “From Digital Storytelling to Electronic Literature”  
2012 Faculty Academy. University of Mary Washington. May 16, 2012.
- “//create magnetic children': Game Code as Critical Paratext”  
2012 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference, Boston, MA, March 23,  
2012.
- “Close Enough”  
2012 Modern Language Association Convention, Seattle, WA, January 7, 2012.
- “Alternate Reality Games, Transmedia Textuality, and the Immaterial Archive”  
2011 Modern Language Association Convention, Los Angeles, CA, January 8, 2011.
- “Is Digital Scholarship Really Scholarship?”  
2010 Faculty Academy. University of Mary Washington. May 12, 2009.
- “Zork and the Videogame Canon, or, a Program for Videogame Pedagogy”  
2010 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA,  
March 20, 2010.
- “Alternate Reality Games and Futures of Textuality”  
5th Annual Florida Digital Assembly Conference: Futures of Digital Studies, University  
of Florida, Gainesville, FL. February 25, 2010.
- “How I use Drupal to roll my own”  
2009 Faculty Academy. University of Mary Washington. May 14, 2009.
- “Altering Reality: Teaching with and about ARGs”  
2009 Faculty Academy. University of Mary Washington. May 14, 2009.
- “Ideology and Discourse in Videogame Co[ntext]de”  
Southern American Studies Association Biennial Meeting. George Mason  
University. Fairfax, VA. February 12, 2009.
- “An Archaeology of the Videogame Image”  
2008 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference. Philadelphia, PA. March 7,  
2008.
- “Quest for Saddam / Quest for Bush: Fantastic Abstractions in Videogame Rhetoric”  
UF English Graduate Organization 7th Annual Conference. Gainesville, FL. October  
18, 2007.
- “Heads-Up Display: Text in the Videogame Interface”  
2007 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference. Chicago, IL. March 9,  
2007.
- “Lost in Emulation: World of Difference in Videogame Typography”  
3rd Annual UF Game Studies Conference, “World Building: Space and  
Community.” Gainesville, FL. March 1, 2007.
- “Bodies and/as/of Evidence: CSI: Dark Motives and Uncanny Doubles”  
PCAS/ACAS 2005 Conference. Jacksonville, FL. October 4, 2005.
- “Reading as Cryptography: The Role of Encoding and Decoding in Digital Print Culture”



- Elective Affinities IAWIS/AIERTI 7th International Conference on Word & Image Studies, Philadelphia, PA. September 26, 2005.
- "House of Leaves and Digital Ontology"  
Visual Culture: Image, Icon, and Ideology. 14th Annual KSU Cultural Studies Conference. Manhattan, KS. March 11, 2005.
- "Playing with the Past: Structural Pastiche and Visual Nostalgia XIII and Viewtiful Joe"  
Comics & Animation: Simultaneity & Sequentiality. 2004 UF Conference on Comics. Gainesville, FL. October 29, 2004.
- "Survival Horror Stories: Musical and Aural Landscapes"  
Narrative: Digital Storytelling, 2004. UCLA. Los Angeles, CA. April 23, 2004.

*Conference / Unconference Participation*

- Working Group Participation, "Critical Code Studies Working Group 2012."  
Online. <<http://wg12.criticalcodestudies.com/>>
- UnConference Participant., "THATCamp Games."  
University of Maryland. January 2012.
- Workshop Participant, "Doing Digital in the Classroom: Planning for a Course with Academic Technologies,"  
2011 Faculty Academy. University of Mary Washington, Stafford, VA, May 11, 2011.
- Workshop participant, "Teaching Media Studies with Video Games"  
2011 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference. New Orleans, LA. March 10, 2011.
- Led session, "ARGs, Archives, and Digital Scholarship."  
THATCamp 2010. Center for History and New Media, George Mason University, May 23, 2010. <<http://thatcamp.org>>
- Led session, "Using Drupal to Roll my Own."  
THATCamp 2009. Center for History and New Media, George Mason University, June 27, 2009. <<http://thatcamp.org/2009>>

## **Professional Memberships**

Electronic Literature Organization  
Society for Cinema and Media Studies  
Modern Language Association  
Society for Literature Science and the Arts

## **Courses Designed and Taught (UMW)**

### **ENGL 251Y: Adaptation (Spring 2012)**

This general education literature course considers the question of "adaptation" as an aspect of literary texts that are in some state of media transition; from book to film, from film to videogame, from novel to graphic novel, we are prone to taking for granted the very strange idea that the character we read in a book is somehow the same entity as the one we see portrayed on screen. This is the kind of idea we'll pursue as we chart a path through various media channels, following the traces of intertextuality that comprise our contemporary textual media ecology, particularly digital media. Along the way, we'll study the unique expressive vocabularies of different media, including film, comics, video games, novels, and more. The work for this class will include close readings of media texts, secondary readings in media studies, and several film screenings.

### **ENGL 457S: Code, Culture and the Postmodern (Spring 2010)**

In this seminar, students explore the concept of code as both a figure in and function of 20th century culture, specifically postmodern literature. The texts we examine in the course of this intensive study will either treat code thematically or figuratively, or they will literally involve the reader in decoding content. Some texts will be “born-digital” works of electronic literature. Taken together, the texts in this class will reside within the realm of the literary postmodern, broadly considered. Secondary readings will also include relevant critical theory, philosophy, or technical documentation as appropriate to inform our study.

### **ENGL 202H: Writing through Media (Spring 2010)**

This course is about media and it is about writing. The operative preposition through comprises the key, two-fold premise of this seminar: that new media technologies offer new literacies and that these literacies depend to some extent on using media technology to communicate effectively. In this advanced writing course, the successful student will balance theory with practice, and the successful student will leave with technical, working knowledge of some New Media technology and a deeper fluency in media culture. She will also be familiar with what it means to think critically with and through these technologies. The final output of the seminar will be a portfolio-style website – built on the UMW Blogs platform – around which students will build their digital identities.

### **FSEM 100E3: A Videogame Canon (Fall 2009)**

This first-year seminar is an investigation of seminal videogames. This seminar examine the cultural role of canon formation by exploring the history of early videogames and building an archive around a collaboratively-derived concept of canon. Ultimately, the seminar generates a proposal for the next 10 games to be added to this canon list.

### **ENGL 386: Graphic Novel (Spring 2009)**

In this class, we study stories conveyed through the combination of images and text. The graphic novel is the primary genre under examination, but other specific forms (comic books, comic strips, and especially webcomics, etc.) are be considered as well. Indeed, the term 'graphic novel' is interrogated for its significance and relevance to specific works, especially in light of the fact that creators of these works often eschew the term. Primary readings include five or six graphic novel texts, and these will be supplemented by relevant literary theory and comics-specific theory and criticism. This will include work by such authors as Donald Ault, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Thierry Groensteen, Jan Baetens, Will Eisner, and Scott McCloud. Ultimately, the goal of our study will be to understand the formal structures of comics in the context of a long history of medial shifts.

### **ENGL 251J: Electronic Literature (Spring 2009)**

This class is a survey of the emerging digital field of electronic literature, that which may be the future for literary expression. Within the scope of this class, the specific genres of electronic literature will primarily include hypertext fiction, flash animation, interactive fiction, and videogames. The successful student will gain an appreciation of these forms and technologies, both through careful critical analysis as well as through experimentation with creating works of e-lit.

### **ENGL 251A Forms of Narrative (Fall 2008)**

Stories are all around us, helping us make sense of the world and communicate that understanding to others. As media change and new expressive forms exploit technological resources in novel ways, the underlying principle of storytelling or narrative provides a useful framework for understanding how these forms work. In this course, we use narratology (the formal study of narrative) to analyze fictional forms such as short stories, comics, animation, film, videogames, and electronic literature. The successful student will become fluent in the unique vocabulary of narrative analysis and bring those tools to bear on media texts.

### **ENGL 376MM New Media: The Virtual and the False (Fall 2008)**

This course is an exploration of New Media culture, focusing on an interrogation of the subject of world building. Since the 1980s, Virtual Reality has held out the utopian ideal of a better reality. Alternatively, some authors have used VR as a dystopic warning about things to come. More recently, the creative genre of Alternate Reality Gaming (ARG) has shifted the question into the very lives of its players -- making for experiences with stories and games that are much more meaningful and, therefore, politically recuperative. This class will explore these ideas by reading texts which build virtual worlds or alternate realities in order to make the case that the real world could be a better place. Students will learn about this phenomenon in order to create and run their own ARG(s) within the course of the semester.

### **Professional and University Service**

MIT Press, Proposal and Manuscript review, 2011, 2012.

University of Mary Washington, Academic Affairs Committee Secretary, 2011 – 2012.

Department of English Linguistics and Communication, Secretary, 2011 – 2012.

College of Arts and Sciences, Arts, Literature and Performance General Education Assessment Working Group, 2011.

College of Arts and Sciences, Academic Affairs Committee, 2010 – 2011.

Department of English Linguistics and Communication, Outcomes and Assessment Committee, 2009 – 2012.

Department of English Linguistics and Communication, Events Committee, 2008 – 2009.

*ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, Production Consultant, 2008 – present.

**Design and Implementation of Educational Games: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives**, Editorial Review Board Member, 2008 – 2009.

Gameology.org, 2004 – present.

*ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, Production Editor, 2007 – 2008.

## Teaching Statement

I teach courses in the Department of English, Linguistics and Communication focusing on New Media (or “Digital Media”) in a literary context -- courses which I have, for the most part, designed myself in order to articulate the unique intersections of critical analysis, culture currency and creative practice that characters many digital genres. My pedagogy is, therefore, often exploratory as I encourage students to locate themselves within their own critical, cultural and creative moment as everyday users of technology. Thus, the informed approach to historical digital materiality that I pursue in this project provides the basis for a media ecology that encompasses each of the topics I pursue in my syllabi.

The enclosed syllabus for my FSEM 100E3: A Videogame Canon is the most obviously relevant curriculum because I invite students to study and make their own discoveries about early digital games by using the same tools and artifacts that I work on for my own research. This semester (Fall 2012), for example, I am making some consoles from my own collection accessible to students so that they can make their own discoveries through play and, if nothing else, experience directly the significant features of gameplay which are not captured through software-based emulation.

More broadly, I consider that one of my most important goals as an educator is to foster a kind of informed digital practice that students so often take for granted but in reality rarely possess. Students may be good at using Facebook, for example, but have no idea how Facebook works, what it really does, or what kind of decisions it routinely makes on our behalf. My response is not to encourage paranoia about systems of control, but rather to guide students toward thoughtful choices informed by a better understanding of these systems. In some cases, in videogames, for instance, this understanding properly begins at the platform level -- the material hardware necessary for experiencing the digital text. So the proposed project will take my own understanding deeper into this layer of content, centering on the processes of text generation which comprise the elemental semantic units of meaning production on videogames.

# Sample Syllabus:

## FSEM 100E3: A Videogame Canon

**What:** FSEM 100E3: A Videogame Canon

**Where:** Combs 111, 2:00 - 3:15 TR

**Who:** Zach Whalen (@zachwhalen, www.zachwhalen.net, zwhalen@umw.edu)

### Course Description

What are the most important videogames ever made? What role do these games play in our culture, and how should cultural institutions like the university preserve and protect these artifacts?

In this seminar, students will undertake a study of one such proposed list, compiled in 2007 by a group of experts: Spacewar!, Star Raiders, Zork, Tetris, SimCity, Super Mario Bros. 3, Civilization I/II, Doom, Warcraft and Sensible Soccer. We will then research, annotate and exhibit our own list of games.

Two key disciplinary contexts will come to bear on our discussion and, ultimately, our canonization decisions: literature studies (especially the notion of the literary canon) and video game studies.

### Outcomes and Objectives

By completing this seminar, the successful student should ...

- learn more about the history of videogames and how to critically evaluate videogames as cultural texts
- conduct historical research on videogames, including issues related to preservation and historicization
- examine critical issues surrounding the formation of other cultural canons
- examine current scholarly discourse in videogame studies
- make persuasive arguments through both oral and written argumentation

To put this another way, by April, you will know more about videogames, how to analyze them, and why they're important. You might even be a better gamer.

### Requirements

- Bogost, Ian. *How to do things with videogames*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Donovan, Tristan. *Replay: The history of Video Games*. Yellow Ant, 2010.
- A game of your choice to study.

### Schedule

A complete calendar will be available on the [course blog](#). The general structure of the semester will be as follows: 1) study the 10 canonical games, 2) propose your own game for our new canon, 3) create an online exhibit around our own canonized games.

## Assignments

**Gaming Journal [25%]** Your gaming log will be a major component of your grade this semester. Early on, you'll choose a game to study, and play it throughout the semester.

**Blogging [15%]** In this class, blogging will be a major part of what you do. Blogs -- which are separate from glogs -- will exist separately, on a course website.

**Proposal - Oral [10%]** The key problem or question of this semester is to determine which games we will add to our new list of games to be canonized. This will be negotiated through a deliberate, persuasive effort on your part.

**Proposal - Essay [10%]** In addition, your argument will also extend to a written, web-based essay in which you continue to make the case for your chosen game's significance.

**Quizzes [10%]** Quizzes will be short (1 - 3 questions), frequent (nearly every day), and easy (hopefully).

**Exhibit [20%]** The final project for this seminar will be a series of web-based "exhibits," showcasing the games we have chosen for canonization.

**Participation [10%]** Come to class every day, prepared to discuss the material. Use the blogs, glogs, and Twitter discussions to take our conversations beyond the classroom.

## Grading

### Philosophy

As of right now (August), you are failing this class. If you'd like to finish the class with a passing or higher grade, you're going to need to earn points by completing the assignments in the syllabus. To earn an A, do excellent work on your assignments so you can earn as many points as possible. At the conclusion of the semester, your final grade will be calculated according to the delineation of point totals in the table below.

Your work this semester will fall into several different categories, but generally speaking, you can earn an A in this class by completing all of the work in a timely manner, and paying close attention to the published rubrics for each assignment. After I grade your work, make sure to view my comments and your rubric score to see how you can improve your efforts for future assignments. As far as I am concerned, an A grade is reserved for work that demonstrates the highest intellectual engagement, creativity and attentiveness to detail. Note: some technical proficiency will be necessary to complete some assignments, but technical skill is a relatively minor consideration in all of my grading rubrics.

### Grade Calculations

In cases where assignments are awarded a letter grade, the point value will calculate according to the chart on the left. At the end of the semester, the sum total of your points will determine your final grade, as delineated in the chart on the following chart.

Policies and Expectations

### Computer Use in the Classroom

You are welcome to bring your own computing devices to class. I simply ask that you be responsible with your computer use. You may take notes or even use Twitter as a backchannel, using the hashtag #vgc100. While we are having a discussion, however, I must ask that you keep your attention away from the screen and instead engage fully with the conversation around you. Failure to do so, i.e. Facebook chatting while I'm attempting to draw you in to a conversation, will result in my revoking your computer use privileges.

### **Contacting the Professor**

I am generally available through a variety of channels: email (zwhalen@umw.edu), Twitter ([@zachwhalen](https://twitter.com/zachwhalen)) and Canvas. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions about the class or your work specifically. However, to make the best use of my time and yours, I'd like to establish a few parameters about technical questions. Often, I will assign a videogame or other piece of software for you to play with. Sometimes, it's not going to work as expected. When that happens, you may contact me with your question, but only if you have first done some due diligence:

1. review the instructions I've provided,
2. Google any error messages,
3. Make sure you're not using Internet Explorer (for web-based readings),
4. try again.

If you do these things and you still need to contact me, please include the following information in your message:

1. the software/game/thing in question,
2. the unexpected behavior (e.g. won't install, can't save work, other errors),
3. your operating system and (if applicable) browser software,
4. the steps you've already taken to try and solve the problem.

If you follow these steps and provide the information I've requested here, there's a much better chance that I can help you figure it out. For more general or non-technical questions about the class, feel free to contact me at any time. I do my best to respond quickly, but please note, however, that I tend to fall asleep shortly after 10:00 PM. In any case, if I haven't replied to you within 24 hours, please send me a reminder.

### **Late Work**

Unless otherwise noted, assignments may be submitted after their due date, but your work will be worth fewer points, equal to a 10% deduction for the first 24 hours after the specified due date and time, followed by a 20% reduction for each 24-hour period following. Effectively, this means work that is more than 5 days late will not be graded.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

The UMW Honor System is in effect for our course. I will authorize specific assignments as collaborative work, but all other work must be your own, as per Article 1, Sections 1 and 2 of the University of Mary Washington Student Honor Code.

### **Disability Resources**

The Office of Disability Resources has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you already receive services through the Office of Disability Resources and require accommodations for this class, get in touch with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Please bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you have not contacted the Office of Disability Services and need accommodations, (note taking

assistance, extended time for tests, etc.), I will be happy to refer you. The office will require appropriate documentation of disability. Their phone number is 540-654-1266.