

CCT334H5 F

History and Theory of Game Production

Summer 2026 Syllabus

Course Meetings

CCT334H5 F

Section	Day & Time	Delivery Mode & Location
LEC0101	Monday, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM Wednesday, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM	In Person: DH 2070 In Person: DH 3000

Refer to ACORN for the most up-to-date information about the location of the course meetings.

Please note the above rooms: We will meet in different rooms on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Course Contacts

Instructor: Brendan Allen

Email: brendan.allen@mail.utoronto.ca

Office Hours and Location: Available by appointment via Teams video call (see Quercus for link).

Additional Notes: When emailing, please include the course code (CCT334) in the subject line of your email.

Teaching Assistant: Hamza Elshakankiri

Additional Notes: Please direct all emails regarding the course (including questions about extensions, grades, and class programming) to Instructor Brendan Allen.

Course Overview

This course will examine the principles, theory and practice behind the production of games. By examining the history and contributions of early founders such as Atari and Activision, all the way to present-day leaders such as Electronic Arts and Sony, students will gain an understanding of how the global video game industry operates. The lectures and practical work will foster an approach to the understanding of game production issues including technology, law, marketplace and audience demand.

Additionally, students will work directly with historic videogames housed at the Syd Bolton Video Game Collection to historicize the emergence and evolution of videogame genres and forms.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will have demonstrated an understanding of the evolving process of game production from their beginning to present day. They will understand industry terms and identify

key players and their roles over the history of videogames. To achieve this goal, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- Describe the game production styles, from the days of early experimentation to the present day formation of "Games as a Service."
- Understand and evaluate the factors that shape game culture and consumption.
- Describe the history of game production, and how this created the current global game industry.
- Identify past and present contributors (including corporations and individual innovators) and describe how their achievements shaped the industry.
- Describe the evolving role of technology in the game industry, and where it may lead in the near future.

Prerequisites: CCT109H5 and CCT110H5

Corequisites: None

Exclusions: None

Recommended Preparation: None

Credit Value: 0.5

Course Materials

Note: For the most part, we'll only be reading/viewing selected portions from the below materials, as pertinent for particular weeks. Please see the below schedule and/or specific weekly Quercus modules for information on the specific chapters or sections assigned each week.

All readings and materials will be made available online, with access links posted on our Quercus page. Many of our materials will require accessing materials through the University of Toronto Libraries system. Additional smaller readings (excerpts, articles, etc.) will be assigned in pertinent weeks.

Double Fine. PsychOdyssey. [Documentary series.]

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLlhLvue17Sd70y34zh2erWWpMyOnh4UN>

Montfort, Nick, and Ian Bogost. Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System. Platform

Studies. MIT Press, 2009. <https://doi->

[org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.7551/mitpress/7588.001.0001](https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.7551/mitpress/7588.001.0001)

The Strong National Museum of Play. "Video Game History Timeline." Museum of Play.

<https://www.museumofplay.org/video-game-history-timeline/>

Ryan, Jeff. Super Mario: How Nintendo Conquered America. 1st ed. Penguin Publishing Group,

2011. <https://ebookcentral-proquest->

[com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/lib/utoronto/detail.action?docID=6054293](https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/lib/utoronto/detail.action?docID=6054293)

Sotamaa, Olli, and Jan Svelch. Game Production Studies. 1st ed. Routledge, 2025.

<https://directory.doabooks.org/handle/20.500.12854/63896>.

Marking Scheme

Assessment	Percent	Details	Due Date
Attendance & Participation	10%	Attending class and participating in in-class activities and discussion.	Ongoing
Videogame Reception Response	5%	Once in the term, students will locate a substantial review of a game of their choice, published in a popular videogame periodical, blog, or video essay (physical or digital). Students will draft an informal response (about 500 words) discussing how the review characterizes the game's cultural reception. [For 3% extra credit in "Attendance & Participation," students can choose to informally present their response at the start of a class session.]	Flexibly throughout term, but no later than Mon., June 8
Weekly Reflection Journal	15%	At the end of each week, students will submit a short journal entry (200-400 words) applying lesson(s) from the week's readings and in-class discussions to a game of their choice. [The above Videogame Reception Response can count as one of these entries.]	Recurring: 11:59pm Friday of each week. 2026-05-08, 2026-05-15, 2026-05-22, 2026-05-29, 2026-06-12
Comparative Game Analysis	25%	Students will choose two games in a related genre and/or series: one released prior to 2005 and one released after 2005. After playing at least a substantial portion of each game, students will write a 5-7 page report in which they analyze notable production changes between games.	Friday, May 22
Historical Production Analysis	25%	Students will write a 5-7 page essay analyzing the development and production process of a videogame (or multi-title videogame series). This essay will trace the production	Friday, June 5

Assessment	Percent	Details	Due Date
		strategies used by the developers, producers, and/or publishers involved with the game or series. This essay will also analyze how social, economic, political, and/or cultural factors impacted the development of this game or series.	
Videogame Production Pitch	20%	<p>In groups of 3-5, students will form their own mock videogame production studios and develop a pitch presentation and portfolio for a new game of their design. The pitch materials include, but are not limited to, the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breakdown of studio materials and labour (staff, engines/tools, industry research, etc.) - Mock-ups of game design, art, and mechanics. - Production timeline including release date and post-release support. - Player outreach and advertising strategies. <p>Groups will deliver in-class pitch presentations in the final week(s) of the course.</p> <p>Portfolio: 10% Presentation: 10% Total: 20%</p>	<p>Presentations (in class): Wed., June 10 Mon., June 15</p> <p>Portfolio (Quercus): Fri., June 12</p>

Late Assessment Submissions Policy

A sub-session summer course moves quickly. This means that the timely submission of your work is necessary to ensure that we have enough time to read and respond to your work as well as provide you with useful feedback. That said, I also understand that the constrained nature of a sub-session can require flexible scheduling, especially for those of you juggling multiple courses. The following late policy is designed with this in mind:

- Assignments submitted on time will receive written feedback and a numerical/letter grade.
- Late assignments submitted within five days of the deadline will not receive written feedback, simply a numerical/letter grade (without penalty).
- Late assignments submitted after five days of the deadline will not receive written feedback and will incur a 10% penalty to the assignment’s final grade.

If you submit a late assignment and would like feedback and/or clarification regarding your grade, please request an office hours appointment with me to discuss your work directly.

Course Schedule

Date	Description
May 4	<p>Welcome to the History and Theory of Game Production!</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Montfort & Bogost, <i>Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter 1: “Stella” <p>Video [in class]:</p> <p>Trailer: Double Fine, <i>PsychOdyssey</i>, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRII72bsNRc&list=PLlhLvUE17Sd70y34zh2erWWpMyOnh4UN&index=1</p> <p>Games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Spacewar!</i> – browser version: https://www.masswerk.at/spacewar/ - <i>Pong</i> – browser version: https://ponggame.io/
May 6	<p>Why Does Game Production Matter?</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Sotamaa & Švelch, <i>Game Production Studies</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Introduction: Why Game Production Matters?” <p>Montfort & Bogost, <i>Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter 3: “Adventure” - Chapter 6: “Pitfall!”

	<p>Games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Adventure</i> – browser version: https://atarionline.org/atari-2600/adventure - <i>Pitfall!</i> – browser version: https://atarionline.org/atari-2600/pitfall
May 11	<p>The Rise of Nintendo</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Ryan, <i>Super Mario: How Nintendo Conquered America</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part 1 (Chapters 1-4). <p>Games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Pac-Man</i> - <i>Donkey Kong</i> - <i>Super Mario Bros.</i> - <i>Tetris</i>
May 13	<p style="text-align: center;">CLASS VISIT: The Syd Bolton Collection at the UTM Library</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Horowitz, Ken. <i>Playing at the Next Level: A History of American Sega Games</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Sega Establishes Itself in America” - “Genesis Does!” <p>Wood, K., & Carter, D. S. (2018). Art and technology: archiving video games for humanities research in university libraries. <i>Art Libraries Journal</i>, 43(4), 185–195. https://doi.org/10.1017/alj.2018.29</p>
May 18	NO CLASS – VICTORIA DAY
May 20	<p>Capitalist Industry vs. Artistic Field / Videogame Violence and the Cultural Response</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Keogh, Brendan. <i>The Videogame Industry Does Not Exist</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ch. 1: From Videogame Industry to Videogame Fields

	<p>Games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Mortal Kombat</i> - <i>DOOM</i> - <i>Grand Theft Auto</i>
<p>May 25</p>	<p>Delineating Video Game Publishers / The Wave of 3D Platformers</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p><i>Game Production Studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - David B. Nieborg: Ch. 9: “How to Study Game Publishers: Activision Blizzard’s Corporate History” <p>Games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Super Mario 64</i> - <i>Banjo-Kazooie</i>
<p>May 27</p>	<p>Making the Video Game Maker / The Role-Playing Game, Made and Re-Made and Re-Made Again</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p><i>Game Production Studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aleena Chia. Ch. 2: “Self-Making and Game Making in the Future of Work.” <p>Games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Dragon Quest VII</i> - <i>Final Fantasy VIII</i> - <i>Final Fantasy Tactics</i> - <i>Harvest Moon 64</i> - <i>Stardew Valley</i>

<p>June 1</p>	<p>Massively Multiplayer Online Games and “Games as a Service”</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Nicholas Lovell, "The Pyramid of Game Design: Designing, Tuning, and Profiting from Game-as-a-Service" Chapter 16</p> <p>Dubois, Louis-Etienne, and Alex Chalk. 2025. “Service Withdrawal: The Uncertain Future of the Games-as-a-Service Model.” <i>Convergence (London, England)</i> (London, England) 31 (2): 479–99. https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565241256888.</p> <p>Games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>RuneScape</i> - <i>World of Warcraft</i> - <i>Among Us</i> - <i>PUBG / PlayerUnknown’s Battlegrounds</i> - <i>Fortnite</i>
<p>June 3</p>	<p>Videogame Production, Labour, and Access</p> <p>Guest Lecture: Adrian Petterson, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Information</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p><i>Game Production Studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lies van Roessel and Jan Svelch. Ch. 10: “Who Creates Microtransactions: The Production Context of Video Game Monetization” <p>Video:</p> <p>“Investigation: How Roblox is Exploiting Young Game Developers.” <i>People Make Games</i>. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gXlauRB1EQ</p> <p>Games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Roblox</i>

<p>June 8</p>	<p>Contemporary Independent Game Production</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Excerpt from Anna Anthropy, <i>Rise of the Videogame Zinesters</i></p> <p>Bonnie Ruberg, <i>The Queer Games Avant-Garde</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ch. 9: Interview with Elizabeth Sampat - Ch. 14: Interview with Nicky Case <p>Excerpt from Jordan Magnuson, <i>Game Poems</i></p> <p>Play Test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>We Become What We Behold</i> - <i>Dys4ia</i> - <i>Loneliness</i> - <i>Fast Car</i> - <i>Stealth Crossword</i>
<p>June 10</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Group Pitch Presentations Day 1</p>
<p>June 15</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Group Pitch Presentations Day 2</p>

Policies & Statements

Academic Integrity

The Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters states that:

The University and its members have a responsibility to ensure that a climate that might encourage, or conditions that might enable, cheating, misrepresentation, or unfairness is not tolerated. To this end, all must acknowledge that seeking credit or other advantages by fraud or misrepresentation, or seeking to disadvantage others by disruptive behaviour, is unacceptable, as is any dishonesty or unfairness in dealing with the work or record of a student.

It is your responsibility as a student at the University of Toronto to familiarize yourself with, and adhere to, both the Code of Student Conduct and the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.

This means, first and foremost, that you should read them carefully.

[Code of Student Conduct](#) and the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) are available from the U of T website.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The use of any and all forms of artificial intelligence as a means of generating work submitted on course assignments is **comprehensively prohibited**. Additionally, I strongly discourage all students from using AI tools throughout the thinking, writing, and/or editing process of any course assignment.

If you are concerned about how this policy may impact your scholarly practices, I earnestly welcome you to reach out to me directly—I would be very glad to brainstorm alternative strategies with you.

Religious Accommodations

Information about the University's Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances is at <https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/student-resources/rights-responsibilities/accommodation-religious/>

Declaration of Temporary Absence

Students who miss an academic obligation during the term (i.e., in-class assessment, quiz, paper or lab report) may use the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool to record an absence in one or more courses. Students may utilize this option once per term for a single absence period of up to seven consecutive days. The declaration period must include the day of declaration and may include past and/or future dates, for a total of up to 7 calendar days.

Use of the ACORN Absence Declaration does not require supporting documentation and should be used in addition to the missed term work policy outlined in the course syllabus. It remains the student's responsibility to initiate the process for missed academic obligations by following the instructions in the course syllabus.

Re-grading Term Work

A student who believes that their written term work has been unfairly marked may ask the person who marked the work for re-evaluation. Students have up to one month from the date of return of an item of term work to inquire about the mark. If the student is not satisfied with this re-evaluation, they may appeal to the instructor in charge of the course if the work was not marked by the instructor (e.g., was marked by a TA). Such re-marking may involve the entire piece of work and may raise or lower the mark. For more information on policies regarding re-marking of term work, please refer to [Re-marking Pieces of Term Work in the Academic Calendar](#).

Accommodation for Missed Tests and Late Assignments

Students must use the new [UTM Special Consideration Request \[Pilot\] application](#) for all ICCIT courses.

Students in **CCT109H5, CCT110H5, CCT111H5, CCT112H5 and CCT208H5** should always follow the Special Consideration Request (SCR) process outlined below. Students in other classes should follow the process below only if they are seeking accommodation for tests or assignments worth 20% or more of the final grade. Students in other classes seeking accommodation for tests or assignments worth less than 20% should contact their instructors directly.

Reasons for special consideration could **include**:

- Accident
- Illness
- Emergency procedure
- Bereavement
- University-sponsored athletics/competitions
- Compulsory legal duties e.g. (jury duty)
- Religious accommodations
- Disability accommodations

Reasons for special consideration **do not include***

- Pre-planned vacations or social commitments
- Transportation delays
- Technology malfunctions
- Time management, course loads Course conflicts, team work conflicts
- Misreading a deadline/timetable
- Late course enrolment
- Scheduled elective medical appointments

* For these situations, refer to your course syllabus and speak directly with your instructor.

You have **three days or 72 Hours (including weekends)** from the assignment deadline or date of the missed test/quiz to **complete the SCR process in full**.

The first time in the semester that you are seeking accommodation, please complete the following steps:

1. Login to [ACORN](#), and click on Profile & Settings from the left-hand menu.

2. Click on Absence Declaration.
3. Record each day that you are absent – as soon as it begins up until the day you return to campus for classes or other activities.
4. Login to the [UTM Special Consideration Request \[Pilot\] application system](#) and complete the required steps. Documentation is not required.

For all subsequent times that you require an accommodation, you should only login to the [UTM Special Consideration Request \[Pilot\] application system](#) and complete the required steps.

Documentation is not required, however, it may be requested after the SCR has been reviewed.

On your SCR form, please attach a screenshot from Quercus showing the assessment title and deadline. This will help us process your SCR accurately and avoid any misunderstandings.

Important note about missed makeup tests: As stated in the [Academic Calendar](#), "If the student is granted permission to take a makeup test and misses it, then they are assigned a mark of zero for the test unless the instructor is satisfied that missing the makeup test was unavoidable.

Students are not automatically entitled to a second makeup test."

If you are registered with Accessibility Services, and the reason for missing a test or a deadline pertains to a disability, you are still required to submit an SCR at the link above. In such cases, the department will accept documentation supplied by Accessibility Services. If you require further information, please speak with your Accessibility Services advisor.

Further details regarding SCR policy are available here:

<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/jccit/students/student-resources/policies-procedures/special-consideration-requests-scr-late-assignments>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services as soon as possible. Accessibility staff (located in room 2240, Student Services Hub, Davis Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. Please call 905-569-4699 or email access.utm@utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Code of Student Conduct

All students are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct ([Code of Student Conduct \[July 1, 2025\] | The Office of the Governing Council, Secretariat](#)).

University of Toronto Mississauga Library Statement

University of Toronto Mississauga Library. The UTM Library (UTML) is located in the Hazel McCallion Academic Learning Centre (HM). [Open](#) seven days a week, UTML welcomes you to the Information Commons where our public services staff and [liaison librarians](#) offer individual walk-in research assistance, in-person or virtual appointments, workshops, and programs such as the CCR-accredited Library 101 session series focused on helping you develop the information literacy skills you need to excel in your coursework. Visit the UTML [website](#) to find online books, journals, databases, [research](#)

[guides](#), [special collections](#) and more information on [on technology-enriched library spaces](#) such as the [Digital Exploration Lab](#) and the [Outer Circle Recording Studio](#).