

IDS 2935: A Life Well-Played

Quest 1: The Examined Life

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Fall 2024
- Tuesdays 10:40-11:30am; Thursdays 10:40am-12:35pm
- Remote (Zoom)

Instructor

- Eamon O'Connor
- Office location: NRG 119
- [Office hours: Wednesdays 12:45-3pm, or by appointment
- Email: e.oconnor@ufl.edu or via Canvas messenger (preferred)

Course Description

If life is a game, how should we play it? What does it mean to live well? Are games simply diversions from more serious matters, or might they have something to teach us about how we relate to one another (and to ourselves)? A Life Well Played is an introductory-level humanities course examining these and other classic questions of ethics, aesthetics, and politics through the lens of play and games. With readings drawn from philosophy, sociology, art history, and media studies, this course exposes students to a broad range of thinkers and ideas that have been central to the development of contemporary society and its manifold expressions. And yes, we will talk about video games.

Course Prerequisites

[None]

Education Credit

- Quest 1
- Humanities
- Writing Requirement (WR) 4000 words

This course accomplishes the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.

Required Readings and Works

Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a

All reading materials will be provided via Canvas.

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

Graded assignments for this course break down into three main categories:

- 1) Weekly reading responses
- 2) Group Presentation
- 3) Essay Assignments

Weekly reading responses are designed as opportunities for students to display their engagement with the week's reading, and to connect ideas and themes from the readings to their own experience. These assignments are graded Complete/Incomplete.

Students will be divided into groups and required to deliver a one 10-15 minute presentation on the week's reading over the course of the semester. Group presentations are an opportunity for students to engage deeply with the course reading and to offer their own perspective on the material. These presentations are counted as part of the students' participation grades.

Essay assignments comprise the bulk of student grades for this course. There are three essay assignments in total, each meant to showcase a student's independent engagement with course material. Each essay is to be a thesis-driven, analytical essay. Essay 1 is to be a minimum of 1000 words while essays 2 and 3 are to be a minimum of 1500 words (totaling to the 4000 words of writing credit mandated by UF and Quest guidelines.)

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubric(s)

Writing Assessment Rubric and Statements

	EXCEPTIONAL	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit ample evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity and nuance, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources. And provide an advanced discussion with sophisticated understanding of sources.	Papers exhibit at least some evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide at least an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off-topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit clear and logical structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement.	Documents and paragraphs exhibit at least some identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement but may require readers to work to follow progression of ideas.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.
ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence.	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.
STYLE	Documents use a clear and sophisticated writing style with word choice appropriate to context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity, logical sentence structure, and economy of expression. Documents will display a precise use of vocabulary and even use of sentence structure with a considered and accurate word choice.	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical sentence structure. At a minimum, documents will display a less precise use of vocabulary and an uneven use of sentence structure or a writing style that occasionally veers away from word choice or tone appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct and error-free presentation of ideas. Papers will contain no spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors.	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, papers may contain some spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive so they do not muddy the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.

- The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.
- The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback before the end of the course on all of the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
- WR course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Participation Rubric

	High Quality	Average	Needs Improvement
Informed: Shows evidence of having done the assigned work.			
Thoughtful: Shows evidence of having understood and considered issues raised.			
Considerate: Takes the perspective others into account.			

III. Annotated Weekly Schedule*

*Please note that course schedule and readings are provisional and subject to change. Consult Canvas for the most up-to-date course assignments.

Week	Date	Theme	Readings
0	8/22	Course Introduction Going over assignments, logistics, and course policies.	n/a
1	8/27, 8/29	What is the Good Life? The central premise of this course presumes that play and games can teach us something about what it means to live well. In this module we will review both ancient and modern thought on what it means to “live well” in the first place/	Zena Hitz, “What is Time For”, Epictetus “Manual for Living”
2	9/3, 9/5	What is Play? Defining terms: what do we mean by play? How does play differ from other sorts of activities? In what domains of human experience does play figure?	Bogost <i>Play Anything</i> , Huizinga <i>Chapter 1</i>
3	9/10, 9/12	What are Games? Are games a subset type of play, or something else entirely? What defines a game? How do games relate to play?	De Koven “A Well-Played Game”

4	9/17, 9/19	Fairness and Cheating In which we enlist the help of Enlightenment era moral philosophy to consider the meaning of cheating and its implications for living a good life.	Kant "Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals"
5	9/24, 9/26	Playing Rhetoric How can you "read" a game? How do the unique affordances of games open themselves up to new and different forms of interpretation? How should we interpret and write about a game? And how is this different from our approach to other texts?	Bogost, "Procedural Rhetoric"
Essay #1 Due			
6	10/1, 10/3	Varieties of Play Reviewing Roger Caillois's famous delineation of play into four broad categories.	Caillois <i>Man, Play, and Games</i>
7	10/8, 10/10	Agon- Competitive Play Looking closely at practices that fit the description of a competitive style of play.	Lasch "The Corruption of Sports"
8	10/15, 10/17	Alea- Play of Chance Looking closely at games of chance and considering questions of luck, fortune, and mythopoesis.	Kriss "The Roaring of Things"
9	10/22, 10/24	Mimicry- Roleplay and Performance Mimicry – Caillois's name for a type of play that includes the performing arts – is a part of daily life. In this module we will evaluate how roleplay and related playstyles influence our approach to everyday life.	Goffman <i>The Performance of Self in Everyday Life</i>
10	10/29, 10/31	Illinx- The Pursuit of Vertigo Why do people engage in practices that do not benefit them and may even harm them? What does this irrational behavior have to do with play?	Wallace "E Unibus Plurem"
Essay #2 Due			
11	11/5, 11/7	Play and Addiction Taking a closer look at the darker side of play. What happens when play goes too far? Is compulsive play compatible with the good life?	Caillois "Corruption of Play;" <i>Addiction by Design</i> Chapter 1
12	11/12, 11/14	Games and Ideology Examining how procedural rhetoric can comment upon and reinforce existing narratives, assumptions and ideologies.	Bogost, "Ideological Frames", Strunk Chapter 1

13	11/19, 11/21	Games and Art Examining the aesthetic appreciation of play.	Nguyen <i>Games as Agency</i> chapter 1
14	11/26, 11/28	THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS	TBD
15	12/3	Course Conclusion TBD	TBD

IV. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) learning outcomes as follows:

Content: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Students will apply foundational concepts from the fields of philosophy, rhetoric, literary criticism, and play studies to basic questions of moral and ethical development.

Critical Thinking: *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Students will be held to rigorous standards of argumentation including how to advance and defend a thesis and how to anticipate and avoid fallacious reasoning.

Communication: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Students will receive feedback from the instructor, grading assistant, and their peers on their writing and presentation skills.

Connection: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

- This course provides an opportunity for students to examine their personal, professional, and intellectual development through the framework of play and play studies.

V. Quest Learning Experiences

1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

Students will be encouraged to apply class learnings to their daily experience as students and community members on campus through an assignment or assignments TBD.

2. Details of Self-Reflection Component

Students are asked to engage in self-reflection through weekly reading responses and to present a degree of self-reflection through group presentations.

VI. Required Policies

Attendance Policy

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.