INF 171: eSports and the Digital Gaming Ecosystem (Class 6881, Section 0001) (3 Credits)

Semester	Fall 2023
Day/Time	Monday 6:00 PM to 8:50 PM
Location	Science Library G12
Instructor	Sarah Lauser, Adjunct Lecturer
Contact	For all course content and assignment questions, use the "Ask a Question" discussion board on Brightspace. If you require private communication with me to discuss a non-public or sensitive matter, email me at slauser@albany.edu
Office Hours	Thursdays 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM or by appointment. Office hours are fully online/remote unless scheduled otherwise.
Attribution	Original course development by Michael C. Leczinsky, Professor of Practice

Course Description:

This course examines the eSports and digital gaming industries through a variety of perspectives including game development, competitive gaming, content creation, design, broadcasting, networking, digital citizenship and entrepreneurship. Students will participate in hands on activities within a laboratory environment, and participate in individual and team-based scholarship focused on the digital gaming and simulation. In addition, professionalism, ethical implications, and intersectional issues within the digital gaming ecosystem will also be discussed.

Course Structure and Requirements:

This course will feature multimodal instruction, including traditional lectures, team-based activities, and sessions in virtual spaces. Students will be working actively as practitioners in the field and will be required to emphasize professionalism at all times.

Course Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to accomplish the following activities:
Related to the field of eSports
- Define the terms "sports" and "eSports".
- Understand key terms and concepts within the eSports & gaming field.
- Develop a historical perspective of the eSports & gaming industries.
- Develop an understanding of current practices within eSports & gaming.
- Develop skills to make informed predictions about potential future progressions within the field.

Related to technical and gaming skills
- Develop an understanding of various types of digital games.
- Develop an appreciation for game design & development.
- Demonstrate the ability to learn and play various types of games.
- Play in individual and cooperative environments.
- Teach and interact with others in game environments.
- Demonstrate best practices for digital citizenship and responsible use.
- Create internet broadcasts, generate video content, stream gameplay, and utilize basic graphic design skills.
- Troubleshoot hardware and software.
- Produce and host eSports events.

Related to general academic and business success
- Apply information and knowledge in a wide variety of situations.
- Summarize technical concepts in a plain and succinct manner.
- Evaluate the reputability of information gathered from a wide variety of sources.
- Apply information and knowledge gathered in executing open-ended creative projects.
- Interface, collaborate, and engage with team members of various backgrounds and skill levels.

The instructor will help you meet these objectives by fostering an open, supportive environment where you will develop:
- Verbal and written communication skills as you engage in class activities and work on assignments.
- Hands-on skills working with hardware, equipment, and software in the labs.
- Critical reading skills as you progress through readings in multiple formats.
- Problem-solving and troubleshooting skills.
- Project management skills as you execute projects of various scopes.
- Critical thinking skills.

Prerequisites:

None.

Grading:

This course is A-E graded and the grades are determined based on graded assignments:

In-Class Discussions and Activities	20%
Homework and Individual Assignments	25%
Events and Team Assignments	20%
Quizzes	15% (4 quizzes throughout the semester)
Final Project	20% (multiple stages)
Total	100%

In-Class Discussions and Activities: 20%

Students will have the opportunity to earn up to 2 points in each class session for participating in class discussions. Prepare for each class session by completing the readings and homework assignments and participate in class activities to gain full credit.

Homework and Individual Assignments: 25%

Each student will have to complete a series of homework assignments, including:
- Social annotation and discussion boards
- Journal assignments
- Hands-on project-based work
- Additional assignments to be announced

Full details for all assignments will be posted to Brightspace. **I do not accept assignments via email. All assignments must be submitted on Brightspace.**

Events and Team Assignments: 20%

This course requires attendance, participation, and involvement with a series of eSports events. Students will participate in events from start to finish, employing skills in project management, logistics, design/social media, casting and hosting.

Quizzes: 15%

There will be four quizzes based on course readings throughout the semester.

Final Project: 20%

Each student will complete a final project where they will independently work on a topic related to course content. Milestones for the project will be spread throughout the semester, and the final project should reflect a semester's worth of work. This project is meant to challenge you in many ways and to facilitate your personal and professional growth.

Students will be completing a game broadcast using custom graphics & design, commentary, and gameplay using OBS broadcasting software. This will involve:
1) Readings & research
2) Development & hands-on work
3) Presentation of work for feedback/testing
4) Iteration and refinement of work
5) A presentation of final work at CEHC Showcase

Your final grade will be based on a scale of 100 points:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
100-94	93-89	88-85	84-82	81-79	78-76	75-73	72-70	69-67	66-64	63-60	59-0

Required Readings:
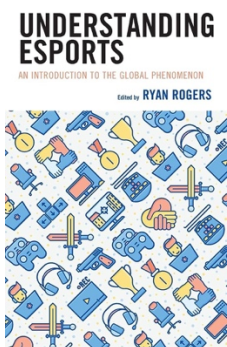
TEXTBOOK
> Rogers, R. (Ed.). (2019). *Understanding esports: An introduction to the global phenomenon*. Lexington Books.

EBOOK ISBN: 978-1498589819
HARDCOVER ISBN: 978-1498589802

Readings will be posted on Brightspace and are listed in the schedule.
Additional readings and exercises will be added during the semester.

Software Packages & Materials:

We will be utilizing various games and software throughout the semester. You will not be able to complete your coursework without the required software. We will be using free, open-source software available for Windows, Mac, and Linux computers.

You will need to create or use existing online accounts for Discord, YouTube, Twitch, etc. (to be discussed in class).

Computer Hardware Requirements:

You will need a computer capable of running OBS (https://obsproject.com/; available for Windows, Mac, and Linux). While you are not required to have the most expensive, up-to-date gaming PC, a computer that functions well will serve you in all aspects of your education, and your investment in a computer you can afford comfortably is encouraged.

You will also need access to a webcam (720p HD or higher) & computer microphone (internal or external). Webcams are required for your final project.

Recommended/Optional Materials:

- A gaming headset (recommended / optional): Has built in headphones and microphone.
- A game controller (recommended / optional): A Bluetooth or USB game controller (Xbox, PS4, Nintendo, etc.) may be helpful for this course, although it is not required.
- Capture card (not required, but may be of interest if you play console games) such as Elgato HD60 X.
- Elgato Stream Deck Mobile App (iOS/Android; Free): Allows one-touch control for tasks such as switching OBS scenes.

Course outline:

Please note that the professor reserves the right to alter this syllabus and preliminary outline with timely notice to students. Any changes to the class schedule or assignments will be announced in class and posted on Brightspace in sufficient time to avoid misunderstandings. On occasions when you must miss class, make sure to consult the syllabus and log on to Brightspace so that you are aware of what is going on in class. Also, make sure to consult your teammates, classmates, and the professor in case of any confusion.

Date	Class topic	Readings/multimedia due before class	Assignments due before class	Notes
8/21	What is eSports?	N/A	N/A	
8/28	Defining gaming	Syllabus	Article #1	Quiz #1
9/4	NO CLASS – Labor Day			
9/11	Content: creators, platforms, and tools	Living the Stream documentary	Annotation #1	
9/18	Evolution of eSports	Textbook: Preface-56	Reading synopsis #1	Quiz #2
9/25	CEHC State of Grace 9/25 – 9/29			
9/25	Open Broadcast Software (OBS)	(pace) Text 70-84	Discord participation OBS #1	
10/2	Producing eSports events	(pace) Text 85-94	OBS #2	
10/9	NO CLASS – Fall Break			
10/16	Digital citizenship	(pace) Text 95-114	Tournament plan Annotation #2	
10/23	The business of eSports	Textbook: 70-114	Reading synopsis #2	Quiz #3
10/30	Diversity in gaming	(pace) Text 117-134	Annotation #3 Article #2	
11/6	ESports' influence on game development	(pace) Text 135-166	OBS #3	
11/13	Streaming platforms	(pace) Text 167-184	Annotation #4	
11/20	Healthy gaming	(pace) Text 185-200	Article #3	
11/27	What makes a pro gamer successful?	(pace) Text 201-211	Final project Showcase	
11/27	CEHC Showcase 11/30			
12/4	The future of eSports	Textbook: 117-211	Reading synopsis #3	Quiz #4

Events:

It is important that we have shared experience of Internet-connected gaming together as a class. While we will be able to do some in-class activities, online game nights allow students to practice skills learned in class in a more realistic format.

Game nights will be offered on a regular basis (date and time to be determined based on students' availability). Students will pick a day that they can participate and "show up" virtually for gaming activities. More details will be provided in class.

Students will be required to attend a minimum of two game events throughout the semester. If you have extreme and extenuating circumstances and cannot attend a game night, you must let me know in advance so we can make alternate arrangements.

CEHC Showcase:

CEHC Showcase was designed as an opportunity for students within the information, informatics, game design and development, emergency management, homeland security and cybersecurity fields to highlight and present interesting projects, research, and concepts they are learning within their courses. It also provides students with an opportunity to showcase their findings to others and develop highly desired presentation and people skills. The CEHC Showcase is *November 30*. All students in INF 171 will be presenting at this event and should reserve that time in their schedule. If your schedule does not permit you to attend, you will have an alternative assignment. Note: I grade easier for Showcase presentations than for the alternative assignment so you should seriously consider your schedule limitations!

Policies:

Attendance Policy: *Attendance is mandatory in every class and students are expected to arrive on time*. Your in-class and online performance is key to your success in this course. Graded in-class activities and assignments constitute an important part of the course grade and learning process. It is not possible to maintain a passing average without consistent attendance. It is the student's responsibility to find out about any future homework, readings or assignments assigned during classes they might have missed. **If you miss two classes, your final letter grade may be reduced by <u>one full letter grade</u>. Each subsequent unexcused absence will reduce your grade by a half-letter grade.**

In-Class Discussions and Activities Grade Policy: Missing class means the student earns an automatic zero for the In-Class Discussions and Activities missed. Because of the nature of these discussions and activities, no make-up opportunities will be available.

Tardiness
Missing an assignment or activity that happened before a student arrives or after a student leaves class also earns a zero. No make-up opportunities will be available.

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If you know that it will be difficult for you to consistently get to class on time and stay for the entire period, you should take this course at a time that better fits your schedule. Being late frequently will guarantee a low grade for the course.
If you are tardy three times, it counts as one absence.

If you are late to class, it is your responsibility to see me after class to register your attendance. I will not interrupt class to mark tardy students. If you are tardy and do not see me, you will not receive credit for attending class.

Missed Exams and Assignments: Missed assignments receive no credit. As many of the assignments build on previous coursework and require interaction with teammates, it is nearly impossible to schedule make-up opportunities. Since there will be occasions in your life when missing a class meeting or missing a deadline for an assignment is simply unavoidable (illness, personal crisis), this course has a few built-in safety valves. These are your tools to use in managing your life during the course of the semester. Please manage these carefully.

Safety Valve One: Class is scheduled to meet 14 times this semester, with a total of 28 points available to earn for in-class discussions and activities. Your final grade will count a maximum of 20 points for in-class discussions and activities, so you have ample opportunity to participate throughout the semester. In case of inclement weather or other class cancellations, this policy may be adjusted based on the actual number of class sessions held in the semester.

Safety Valve Two: Your lowest weekly homework assignment will be dropped. Final project milestone assignments (OBS #1-3) are not eligible to be dropped.

Safety Valve Three: Your lowest quiz score will be dropped. Be careful not to waste your safety valves carelessly early in the semester since you may need your droppable grades to offset any unforeseen low scores or difficulties later in the semester.

Safety Valve Four: If you become seriously ill during the semester, or become derailed by unforeseen life problems, and have to miss so many assignments that it will ruin your grade, you and the instructor are encouraged to meet to discuss withdrawal from the course with the proper documentation to save your GPA. Don't wait until too late to arrange a meeting if you see that you're getting into trouble.

Disability Policy: Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, medical, cognitive, learning and mental health (psychiatric) disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Disability Access and Inclusion Student Services (518-442-5501; daiss@albany.edu). Upon verification and after the registration process is complete, DAISS will provide you with a letter that informs the course instructor that you are a student with a disability registered with the DAISS and list the recommended reasonable accommodations.

Extra Credit: Extra credit can be earned in a number of ways. All require consultation with the instructor before they are commenced, documentation, and a related assignment. All extra-credit opportunities are capped at no more than 5 points (5%) of your overall grade.

Community: CEHC sponsors several events throughout the semester. Any student who attends one or more of those events may receive extra credit.

Other extra credit opportunities may be available. Details to follow.

Withdrawal from the Course: The drop date for the Fall 2023 semester is November 1 for undergraduate students. That is the last date you can drop a course and receive a 'W'. It is your responsibility to take action by this date if you wish to drop the course. In particular, grades of "incomplete" will not be awarded to students because they missed the drop deadline.

Cellphones & Laptops: Please make sure your electronic devices are turned to "do not disturb" mode before entering the classroom and put them away unless we are doing a class exercise where they are helpful. Use of phones, tablets, computers, etc. for non-class purposes during class will count against you in your class participation grade. While you may be using computers for class activities, social/personal use such as general texting, Facebook, *etc.*, are not appropriate uses of class time, and your instructor-evaluated grade will suffer for it.

Incomplete Grade Policy:
I: Incomplete. A grade of I is a temporary grade assigned at the discretion of the instructor when a student has been unable to complete a class for reasons which are considered to be extenuating and beyond the student's control. These reasons must be documented at the time of the request. Incomplete grades do not count toward graduation.
Undergraduate students taking graduate level classes will be subject to the Graduate Incomplete Policy for the graduate class.

Incomplete grades should ONLY be assigned:
1. When a student makes a direct request to the instructor;
2. The student's work to date is passing;
3. An illness or other extenuating circumstance prevents completion of required work by the due date;
4. Required work may reasonably be completed in an agreed-upon period (not to exceed the maximum allowable time for the completion of work as stated in the Timeline for Incomplete Grades), and does not require the student to retake any portion of the class.

If all of the above four criteria are not met, the student should be graded according to the work completed for the class, even if this means recording a failing grade.
Students and instructors should be mindful that making up work can be extremely difficult given the workload of a new semester.

Incomplete grades should NOT be assigned:

- To students who do not make a direct request to the instructor
- As a substitute for a failing grade
- Where the student's performance to date clearly indicates an inability to complete the class as defined in the original syllabus
- If the student did not attend or stopped attending
- As a means of allowing a student to raise their grade by completing additional work not assigned to other students 3
- If re-enrollment is required for successful completion of the class

Timeline for Incomplete Grades

The maximum allowable time for the completion of work related to an Incomplete is:
- Fall and Winter: convert to failing grades in April of the following Spring semester – dates and deadlines to be communicated by the Registrar's office
- Spring and Summer: convert to failing grades in November of the following Fall semester – dates and deadlines to be communicated by the Registrar's office

Dates and deadlines will be listed on the Academic Calendar and communicated by the Registrar's Office.

Instructors may require that work be completed in advance of the deadline.

Questions about incomplete grades should be addressed to the instructor. If an incomplete grade is agreed upon, the instructor is responsible for entering the incomplete grade in the grade roster during final grading, as well as changing the grade to a final grade by the incomplete grade deadline. See Guidelines for Instructors for more information on entering and changing grades. If an instructor is no longer available, the chair of the department or dean of the school/college, in which the class was offered, is authorized to supervise completion of the work and to submit the appropriate grade change request.

Any grade of I existing after the stated deadline shall be automatically changed to E or U according to whether or not the student is enrolled for A–E or S/U grading. Except for extenuating circumstances approved by the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, these converted grades may not be later changed.

(NOTE: Students receiving financial assistance through state awards should refer to Academic Criteria for State Awards in the expenses and financial aid section of this bulletin before requesting grades of I.)

Important: Incompletes will not be given to students who have not fulfilled their classwork obligations, and who, at the end of the semester, are looking to avoid failing the course. This is asking for special treatment.

Academic Integrity: It is every student's responsibility to become familiar with the standards of academic integrity at the University. Claims of ignorance, of unintentional error, or of academic

or personal pressures are not sufficient reasons for violations of academic integrity. See
http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html

Course work and examinations are considered individual exercises. Copying the work of others is a violation of university rules on academic integrity. Individual course work is also key to your being prepared and performing well on tests and exams. Forming study groups and discussing assignments and techniques in general terms is encouraged, but the final work must be your own work. For example, two or more people may not create an assignment together and submit it for credit. If you have specific questions about this or any other policy, please ask.

The following is a list of the types of behaviors that are defined as examples of academic dishonesty and are therefore unacceptable. Attempts to commit such acts also fall under the term academic dishonesty and are subject to penalty. No set of guidelines can, of course, define all possible types or degrees of academic dishonesty; thus, the following descriptions should be understood as examples of infractions rather than an exhaustive list.

  ➢ Plagiarism
  ➢ Allowing other students to see or copy your assignments or exams
  ➢ Examining or copying another student's assignments or exams
  ➢ Lying to the professor about issues of academic integrity
  ➢ Submitting the same work for multiple assignments/classes without prior consent from the instructor(s)
  ➢ Getting answers or help from people, or other sources (e.g. research papers, web sites) without acknowledging them.
  ➢ Forgery
  ➢ Sabotage
  ➢ Unauthorized Collaboration (just check first!)
  ➢ Falsification
  ➢ Bribery
  ➢ Theft, Damage, or Misuse of Library or Computer Resources

Any incident of academic dishonesty in this course, no matter how "minor" will result in
  ➢ No credit for the affected assignment.
  ➢ A written report will be sent to the appropriate University authorities (e.g. the Dean of Undergraduate Studies)
  ➢ One of –
      o A final mark reduction by at least one-half letter grade (e.g. B $\rightarrow$ B-, C- $\rightarrow$ D+),
      o A Failing mark (E) in the course, and referral of the matter to the University Judicial System for disposition.
      o

All course material and documents developed by the instructor are copyrighted and may not be reproduced or distributed without express written permission.

Responsible Use of Information Technology:
https://wiki.albany.edu/display/public/askit/Responsible+Use+of+Information+Technology+Policy

Style Manual and Guidelines: Written assignments should be word-processed and double-spaced. Students are required to cite sources, if any are used in their written work, according to the American Psychological Association (APA).

American Psychological Association. 2020. Publication manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th Edition. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Style manuals are available in the reference sections of many mainstream bookstores and reference sections of all 3 of the University Libraries. (BF 76.7 P83 2020)

Purdue OWL provides guidance on the construction of citations in APA style. It is based on the 7th edition of the Publication manual of the American Psychological Association. Individuals in the social science disciplines primarily use this style guide. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/reference_list_books.html

Absence Due to Religious Observance
New York State Education Law (Section 224-a) - Campuses are required to excuse, without penalty, individual students absent because of religious beliefs, and to provide equivalent opportunities for make-up examinations, study, or work requirements missed because of such absences. Faculty should work directly with students to accommodate religious observances. Students should notify the instructor of record in a timely manner.

Time Management: For every credit hour that a course meets, students should expect to work 2 additional hours outside of class every week (3 x 2= 6). For a three-credit course you should expect to work 6 hours outside of class every week. Manage your time effectively to complete readings, assignments, and projects.

Note carefully the intermittent nature of the workload in this course. You will be expected to complete an entire sections' reading before the first class, when you will be tested both individually and as a team on it. Outside assignments will then be relatively light until the next section begins. Each section also culminates with an individual assignment which draws together the material from that section. This assignment is due before the next section begins. Thus, after the first section, you will have both reading for the new section AND an assignment for the prior section due on the same day—the first class in the new section.

Instructor Availability: The instructor will be available for student consultation during office hours, by appointment, and online in Brightspace. Students are expected to check Brightspace messages (internal) at least once every day to see whether the instructor is trying to reach them. Students should not assume that the instructor is online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to answer your questions immediately (even though the instructor will try to do so as much as possible).

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Courtesy In class and online discussions, the instructor and students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior. This means cooperating and interacting in a courteous, supportive, and tactful manner based on mutual respect for each other's ideas.

Students and professor should be professional at all times. Faculty should be addressed as Prof. Lauser or Prof. Sarah Lauser. Emails should be addressed "Dear…" and end with a "Thank you." *Disrespect in any form in any CEHC class will not be tolerated.*

Respect for Diversity: It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.[1]

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[1] Respect for Diversity statement from https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/statements