**Values and Video Games**

**Philosophy 3140 (CRN 15317)**

**Asynchronous Online**

**Spring 2023**

**Course Description:** AnyPHIL 3140 course is intended to providea philosophical examination of principles and values underlying contemporary social issues. This type of course can focus on specific issues such as environmental concerns, animal rights, abortion, privacy, censorship, world hunger, economic justice, business ethics, violence, war, peace, and utopian ideals. For this particular course, we will be focusing on video games and the many ethical values, dilemmas, and philosophical puzzles they provide. Over the past five decades, video games have increasingly become a central feature of modern-day life. Given the rapid growth of this form of entertainment, several controversial questions regarding it have developed. Is there anything morally objectionable to the violence which is predominate in many video games? Should we be concerned about the growing phenomenon of micro-transactions, loot boxes, and other addictive mechanisms being built into video games? Should video games be considered a kind of genuine art, and if so, what sort of art is it? And are Esports, the competitive playing of video games between players and teams, actually a kind of sport? In this course, we will explore these questions, and perhaps explore a few others, and try to tackle their philosophical implications and underpinnings. This is a philosophy course, meaning we will use critical thinking and analysis to help each of you form your own beliefs and thoughts on all of these issues.

**Instructor:** Ms. Grecia Sánchez (she/her/hers)

grecia.sanchezblanco@wmich.edu

Virtual Student Hours by Appointment, on Zoom:

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/6162431289?pwd=TzJWV0xGRVJOM1pyVDc1WGU0d201UT09>

**Policy for Contacting Me:** The best way to get a hold of me is through email. Please use your wmich.edu email address when emailing me. If you email me, I will get back to you within 48 business hours. If it has been over 48 business hours and I have not responded, please email me again. If it is an URGENT message, please put URGENT in the subject of the email, and I will get back with you as soon as possible.

**Class Website:** We will be using Elearning throughout the semester. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with Elearning. I will insert all grades in this system. Therefore, I recommend checking Elearning often. To access the Elearning page, visit http://elearning.wmich.edu/ and log in with your Bronco NetID and password. From there, click on the PHIL 3140 link.

**Required Texts:** All required texts will be made available on E-learning.

**Electronic Policy:** Since this is an asynchronous class, you are expected to use computers, tablets, phones, etc. to keep up with the course. All readings that we are using for the class are online, so you may use your electronics to access the reading.

**Essential Studies Level, Category, And Student Learning Objectives:** PHIL 3140 is a 3-credit course that satisfies WMU Essential Studies Level 2: Exploration and Discovery – Societies and Cultures Category.

The Learning Objectives for this course are:

1) Build a solid background in ethics and aesthetics and understand how to apply these areas of study to other areas of your life.

2)Become knowledgeable of current philosophical problems regarding video games.

3) Gain an appreciation for what constitutes video games as a medium of art.

**Attendance:** This class will be asynchronous. You’re free to complete the coursework on your own time just as long as you do it within the deadlines for each of your assignments. Keep in mind that the way I’ll give lectures this semester will be through videos each month, which will be posted on the last Friday of each month. Your participation during class will be graded based on the Quote Documents that you submit on a weekly basis during the semester.

**Language Diversity Statement:** Diverse languages and dialects are welcome in this classroom. As we communicate with one another, keep in mind that the reader/listener should work as hard as the writer/speaker in the communication process. This means that we will listen patiently, work to understand one another, seek out clarification when necessary and avoid finishing each other's sentences or correcting grammatical errors unless invited to do so.

**Assignments and Required Course Work:** Your courseload will consist of the following

1. **Readings**: Short readings will be given throughout the semester. You are responsible for completing the required reading. This will prepare you to actively engage in the quote documents and discussion forum. You will have at least one article per week (maximum of two certain weeks).
2. **Quote Documents**: You will submit a quote document per each of the assigned readings (if you have two assigned readings that week, you need to submit two quote documents). In this document, you will need to put down at least one quote for every 1-2 pages of the assigned reading(s) along with your reason for selecting that quote—perhaps you selected the quote because you need help working through what it means, maybe you have some ideas about how that line can apply to other interesting concepts, or you could just want to share why you really like that particular passage. Remember to include the title/author of the work and to put the page number next to each quote. Your deadline to submit your quote docs is **on Thursdays by 11:59 PM.** These are worth 5 points each and you have a total of 5 quote docs throughout the semester.
3. **Discussion Forum Posts**: If you don’t have a quote doc deadline by the end of the week, that means you have a post due by the end of the week on the class’ discussion forum on Elearning. Forums are sites where the entire group meets for conversations on topics related to our readings. Read the instructions and prompt for each forum discussion before posting your reflection. This original posting must indicate (through informal referral of the article you read for the week) the sources of the information that supports your perspective. After posting a reflection in **at least 300 words**, students will reply to two peer's text (preferably they will not answer to previous replies so we can distribute the conversation) **in at least 200 words**. Students must submit their original text before reading their peers’ assignments. Opening the forum before posting your first entry will result in the cancellation of your grade. Do not duplicate texts you submitted to fulfill your quote doc requirement. “Good point” or “I agree” type answers will not earn points. All answers must integrate the knowledge acquired through our readings. Make sure you follow our discussions protocols: they are basically a request to respect all opinions, use academic language, and keep in mind that ours is a scholarly forum, distant from Facebook, Twitter and other media in scope and purpose. Your deadline for you to submit both your post and response to your peers is on **Thursdays by 11:59 PM.** This component of your grade is worth 5 points each.
4. **Midterm Quiz**: There will be a midterm quiz half-way through the course (made visible to you during the week of **Feb. 27 – March 3**). You will find it on Elearning under Quizzes. This quiz will be worth 25 points.
5. **Outline for Final Paper**: A major emphasis of the course will be the preparation of a final paper for this class. For this, you will need to submit an outline that tells me about the argument you’re planning to talk about in your final paper. You will be expected to have done previous research on the topic you want to explore (the outline includes an annotated bibliography of 3-5 sources related to your topic) and submission the assignment according to the instructions with which you will be provided. The outline is due on **April 6th at 11:59 PM**. This outline will be worth 25 points.
6. **Final Paper**: Your final paper should be 5 to 7 pages long. This paper is due on **April 27th by 11:59 PM** and is worth 25 points. It will include, at minimum, the following:
   1. A brief introduction that provides any necessary context for your argument and a modest but direct thesis statement.
   2. Several distinct sections that all work together to support your thesis statement.
   3. Several quotations from the recent work of multiple (at least three) scholars, whom you will be in conversation with throughout your paper.
   4. A counterargument one might pose to your thesis and your response to that counterargument.
   5. A satisfying conclusion that answers the question: Why does it matter that your thesis is right?
7. **Quizzes/Extra Credit**: There will be 3-question surprise quizzes for students to get up to three free points from time to time throughout the semester. These points can count toward the midterm grades, presentation, or any other assignment that the student wishes to use their points on. If a student fails a quiz, it won’t count against them (the quizzes are meant to only benefit students).

**Grading and Grading Scale:**

Quote Documents: 12 points

Discussion Forum Posts: 13 points

Midterm Quiz: 25 points

Outline for Final Paper: 25 points

Final Paper: 25 points

This course uses a standard scale:

92% and up A

85%-91% BA

78%-84% B

71%-77% CB

64%-70% C

57%-63% DC

50%-56% D

Below 50% E

**Late Work:** I believe in self-advocacy. If you are ill, have an emergency, or are otherwise unable to submit an assignment by its deadline, please let me know before that deadline. If something prevents you from talking to me beforehand, let me know as soon as you possibly can afterward, and we’ll see how we can work something out.

**Intellectual Property Of Course Content:** Course materials prepared by the instructors including lectures, study guides, and other written and oral presentations are the property of the instructor. These may not be recorded by video or tape without specific permission from Grecia Sánchez. Electronic devices must be turned off during class time (including phones). You may not sell lecture notes or profit from them in any other way.

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the University policies and procedures that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity, and computer misuse. The academic policies addressing Student Rights and Responsibilities are in the Undergraduate Catalog at http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=882

If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s) and if you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Violations of academic honesty include, but are not limited to the following:

1. **Cheating**: intentionally using unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise.

2. **Fabrication**: Intentional invention and unauthorized alteration of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

3. **Multiple Submission**: submitting the same work for credit more than once without permission.

4. **Plagiarism**: intentionally or carelessly presenting the work of another as your own work. This includes the work of your colleagues.

**Disability Services:** Any student with a documented disability who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact Disability Services for Students at (269) 387-2116 or on its website. After the appropriate documentation is submitted to the office of Disability Services for Students, you should schedule a meeting with me to discuss these accommodations.

**Bronco Study Zone:** If you would like to get some study help, try the Bronco Study Zone. Peer tutors are available to help you.

**Religious Observances Policy**: The following is WMU’s policy regarding its commitment to recognizing and accommodating the diverse student populace with respect to their religious observances: “The University is a diverse, multicultural enterprise and—as a community—we jointly embrace both individual responsibility and dignified respect for our differences. It is our general policy to permit students to fulfill obligations set aside by their faith. It is our intent that students who must be absent from scheduled classes to fulfill religious obligations or observe practices associated with their faith not be disadvantaged. However, it is the student’s responsibility to make arrangements with his or her instructors in advance.

It is in the student’s best interests to approach each instructor expeditiously and with sufficient notice that the rights and responsibilities of the instructor are not disrupted. Instructors should make it known to classes early in the term what they consider reasonable notice for anticipated absences. Without specifying a fixed notification time, we acknowledge in this policy joint responsibility—instructors will inform students of their requirements and students will make every effort to cause no disruption in the instructors’ plans and duties. Instructors should assume that a claim of religious observance has veracity, especially when advance notice is provided by the student. Students likewise must recognize that it is their responsibility to meet all their course obligations. Instructors are not obligated to provide materials to students unless these materials would have normally been distributed to the entire class. For example, if an instructor does not normally post notes a student cannot expect notes to be provided for lectures missed.”

**Sexual Harassment, Assault, Contact, Exploitation:** Students and instructors are responsible for making themselves aware of and abiding by the “Western Michigan University Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, and Stalking Policy and Procedures” related to prohibited sexual misconduct under Title IX, the Clery Act and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Under this policy, responsible employees (including instructors) are required to report claims of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator or designee (located in the Office of Institutional Equity). For more information, see www.wmich.edu/sexualmisconduct.

Many victims/survivors prefer to seek confidential support and services. The YWCA offers 24/7, free support, which will inform and empower you to decide what options to pursue—emotional support, evidence collection (rape kit), pregnancy and STI tests, emergency contraception, counseling, filing a police report, seeking a protection order, initiating criminal prosecution, and/or reporting to WMU. The YWCA crisis line, available 24 hours, is (269) 385-3587.

If you’ve experienced sexual or gender-based violence, and wish to have WMU investigate and take action, you may contact the Office of Institutional Equity directly at (269) 387-6316 or ask someone (preferably someone you trust) to report on your behalf.

**Workload:** While I do not expect you to understand everything that you have read, please note that some of the assigned readings can be challenging. As such, please make sure you are allowing for enough time to work through the materials. I recognize that you will have obligations outside of this class that may sometimes conflict with this class. I strive to introduce you to a variety of philosophical questions and within this field of philosophy and help you develop important philosophical skills necessary for this course, while also making sure you balance your obligations outside of this class.

**Disclaimer:** I reserve the right to make any changes to the course (content, grading, etc.). Further, I reserve the right to establish fair procedures for grading for students in exceptional cases. All and any modifications to this syllabus will be in accordance with WMU policies and will be posted and distributed in a timely manner.

**Course Schedule:**

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| Week | Date | Topic | Readings, Due Dates, & Information |
| Week 1 | Jan. 9-13 | Intro to PHIL 3140 | **READ:** Syllabus and The Pink Guide to Philosophy <https://sites.google.com/a/wellesley.edu/pinkguidetophilosophy/> |
| Week 2 | Jan. 16-20 | Violence in Video Games | **READ:** McCormick, “Is it wrong to play violent video games?”  **WATCH:** IntroVideo Lecture (available on Tuesday Jan. 17th on Elearning)  **DUE:** Quote Doc #1 |
| Week 3 | Jan. 23-27 | **READ:** Waddington, “Locating the wrongness in ultra-violent video games”  **DUE:** Discussion Forum Post #1 |
| Week 4 | Jan. 30-Feb. 3 | **READ:** Schulzke, “Defending the Morality of Violent Video Games”  **WATCH:** Video Lecture  **DUE:** Quote Doc #2 |
| Week 6 | Feb. 13-17 | Pornography and Video Games | **READ:**  Patridge, “Pornography, ethics, and video games”  **DUE:** Discussion Forum Post #2 |
| Week 7 | Feb. 20-24 | Gamer’s Dilemma | **READ:**  Luck, “The Gamer’s Dilemma”  **DUE:** Quote Doc #3 |
| Week 8 | Feb. 27-March 3 **(Midterm Week)** | **READ:**  Bartell, “Resolving the Gamer’s Dilemma”  **WATCH:** Video Lecture  **DUE:** Discussion Forum Post #3 **AND** Midterm Quiz |
| Week 9 | March 6-10  **(Spring Break)** | Rest! | **WATCH:**  Herman Narula’s TedTalk on the transformative power of video games <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzrcRcEBrmA> |
| Week 10 | March 13-17 | Gambling in Video Games | **READ:**  Yani-De-Soriano et al, “Can an Industry be Socially Responsible if its Products Harm Consumers? The Case of Online Gambling”  **DUE:** Discussion Forum Post #4 |
| Week 11 | March 20-24 | **READ:** Zendle et al, “Adolescents and loot boxes: links with problem gambling and motivations for purchase”  **DUE:**  Quote Doc #4 |
| Week 12 | March 27-31 | Racism and Video Games | **READ:** Case #3 in 2022 Ethics Bowl Cases “Dungeons and Racists”  **DUE:** Discussion Forum Post #5  **WATCH:** Video Lecture |
| Week 13 | April 3-7 | Video Games and Drugs | **READ:**  Holden et al, “Virtue(al) games–real drugs”  **DUE:** Outline for Final Paper |
| Week 14 | April 10-14 | Video Games as Art | **READ:**  Cova and Garcia, “The Puzzle of Multiple Endings” **AND** Smuts, “Are Video Games Art?”  **DUE:** Quote Doc #5 |
| Week 15 | April 17-21 | Interactivity | **READ:**  Smuts, “What is Interactivity?” **AND** Partridge, “Video Games and Imaginative Identification”  ­**DUE:**  Discussion Forum Post #6  **WATCH:** Video Lecture |
| Week 16 | April 24-28 **(Finals Week)** | Finals Week | **DUE:** Focus on your Final Paper only! |