# The Anthropology of Games and Play
## SCAN10079
### Semester 2, Year 3

## Key Information

| **Course Organiser** | Dr Tom Boylston  
Email: [Tom.Boylston@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Tom.Boylston@ed.ac.uk)  
Room 5.03  
Chrystal Macmillan Building, 15A George Square  
Guidance & Feedback Hours: Tuesdays 13.00 – 15.00 |
| **Location** | Room 1.204, 7 Bristo Square  
Thursdays 14.10-16.00 |
| **Course Secretary** | Ewen Miller  
Email: [Ewen.Miller@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Ewen.Miller@ed.ac.uk)  
Undergraduate Teaching Office |
| **Assessment Deadlines** | • Short essay: tbd  
• Long essay: tbd |

## Aims and Objectives

The course argues for the central importance of play for understanding human society. Students will gain a deep understanding of a range of theoretical approaches to play, and a wide knowledge of ethnographic examples.

**PLEASE NOTE THIS HANDBOOK IS STILL SUBJECT TO FURTHER UPDATES**
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Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate extensive, detailed knowledge of the cross-cultural variety of forms of play and games.
2. Show critical understanding of the work of theorists of games and play, and evaluate their arguments.
3. Critically analyse particular games or game genres in terms of their design, cultural context, and social significance.
4. Present their experiences of participation in games to advanced and professional audiences, with strong theoretical context.

Present their ideas on games and play in a clear, original manner, in written or oral form.

Teaching Methods

Teaching will be done through lectures and seminars, with students encouraged to bring their own experiences of games and play into class discussion. We will experiment with some game-like teaching methods. There will be a (non-mandatory) board game jam during Independent Learning Week, on Tuesday Feb 21. Details tbc.

The ‘small group’ support teaching will normally be concerned with one or more readings that illustrate, underpin or extend issues raised in the main sessions. Students should note that participation in the small group support teaching sessions is compulsory and attendance will be recorded.

You are also offered a selection of ‘light readings’, usually in the form of blog posts, that discuss issues relevant to the course. These are not a substitute for course readings, and while you may draw on their ideas, your written essays should not depend too heavily on them. They are there to provide extra discussion material for class and to help us understand public debates around games and play.

Assessment

Students will be assessed by:

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<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Submission date</th>
<th>Return of feedback</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book/Game Review</td>
<td>1500-words max (excluding bibliography)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>3500 words max (excluding bibliography)</td>
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Note: All coursework is submitted electronically through ELMA. Please read the School Policies and Coursework Submission Procedures which you will find here.
Short Essay: Book/Game Review
Details forthcoming

Assessment Criteria
Tbd

Attendance
Attendance and participation in the lectures and discussion are essential for developing an understanding of the topics.

Communications and Feedback
You are strongly encouraged to use email for routine communication with lecturers. We shall also use email to communicate with you, e.g., to assign readings for the second hour of each class. All students are provided with email addresses on the university system, if you are not sure of your address, which is based on your matric number, check your EUCLID database entry using the Student Portal.

This is the ONLY email address we shall use to communicate with you. Please note that we will NOT use ‘private’ email addresses such as yahoo or hotmail; it is therefore essential that you check your university email regularly, preferably each day.

Readings and Resource List
All students should read TWO Essential Readings for every week. These Readings are necessary to create a thorough understanding of the topic. Further readings listed for each topic are intended to allow students to explore and consolidate their knowledge of particular themes, especially for use in essays. I have given extensive references in order to help students explore the wider literature if they so wish; I would not expect any student to read all the references for all of these weeks. However, if you are intending to write an essay on a particular topic, you must demonstrate that you have read many, if not all, the different readings suggested for that topic.

Essential Readings can be obtained electronically via LEARN or the links in the main library catalogue. If you have any difficulty getting hold of any of the readings, contact the course organiser.
## Lecture Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>19 January</td>
<td>What Counts as Play?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>26 January</td>
<td>Frames and Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2 February</td>
<td>Playing Culture: Childhood, Pretend Play, and the Big Wide World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9 February</td>
<td>Toys and Dolls</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>16 February</td>
<td>Play, Games, and Ritual</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20-24 February: Festival of Creative Learning (no lectures/seminars)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2 March</td>
<td>Roll the Bones: Gambling, Divination, and Fate</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>Virtual and Imaginary Worlds</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>16 March</td>
<td>The Critique of Gaming: Gender, Class, Race, and the Whole Mess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>23 March</td>
<td>Design and Power: Game Design, Gamification, and Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>March Sports and the State</td>
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Course Lectures and Readings

General Light Reading You Might Find Interesting

- Koster, Raph: *A Theory of Fun for Game Design*
- Salen, Katie, and Eric Zimmerman: *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*
- McGonigal, Jane. Reality is Broken: *Why Games Make us Better and How they can Change the World*

Week 1: What Counts as Play?

Essential Readings


Light Reading


Further Readings


Week 2: Frames and Rules

Essential Readings


Light Readings
• http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/so-you-think-you-know-why-animals-play/
• Film: Class Wargames presents Guy Debord’s Game of War
  http://www.classwargames.net/?page_id=149#

Further Readings


Week 3: Playing Culture: Childhood, Pretend Play, and the Big Wide World

Essential Readings

• Schwartzman, Helen. 1978. Transformations: The Anthropology of Children’s Play. Springer. Reading Chapter tbc, if in doubt read Intro/Chapter 1

Light Reading


Further Readings


Week 4: Toys and Dolls

Essential Readings


**Light Reading**


**Further Readings**


**Week 5: Play, Games, and Ritual**

**Essential Readings**


**Further Readings**


**Week 6: Roll the Bones: Gambling, Divination, and Fate**

**Essential Readings**

**Light Readings**

Let’s read about African spider divination

- [http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Divination/Spider/index.html](http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Divination/Spider/index.html)
- [http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Divination/Court/index.html](http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Divination/Court/index.html)

**Further Readings**


**Week 7: Virtual and Imaginary Worlds**

**Essential Readings**


**Light Reading**

- Bogost, Ian. “Videogames Are a Mess”

**Further Readings**

Week 8: The Critique of Gaming: Gender, Class, Race, and the Whole Mess

Essential Readings


Light Reading

- Ge Jin. “Chinese Gold Farmers in the Game World” [http://csrn.camden.rutgers.edu/newsletters/7-2/jin.htm](http://csrn.camden.rutgers.edu/newsletters/7-2/jin.htm)

Further Readings


Week 9: Design and Power: Game Design, Gamification, and Governance

Essential Readings

• Golub, Alex and Kate Lingley. 2008. ““Just Like the Qing Empire”: Internet Addiction, MMOGs, and Moral Crisis in Contemporary China.” Games and Culture 3: 1.

Light Reading

• Koster, Raph. “AR is an MMO” http://www.raphkoster.com/2016/07/11/ar-is-an-mmo/
• Bogost, Ian. “Gamification is Bullshit” http://bogost.com/writing/blog/gamification_is_bullshit/
• Dibbell, Julian. “A Rape in Cyberspace”

Further Readings

• Fizek, Sonia. “Gamification.” Critical Keywords for the Digital Humanities.

Week 10: Sports and the State

• James, C.L.R. 1963. Beyond a Boundary

Light Reading

Film: Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDql5LhHBRe

Further Readings

• Ortega y Gasset, Jose. The Sportive Origin of the State
• Calabro, Domenica G. 2016. “Once Were Warriors, Now Are Rugby Players? Control and Agency in the Historical Trajectory of the Māori Formulations of Masculinity in Rugby.” Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology 17: 3-4
• Harvey, Lincoln. 2014. A Brief Theology of Sport. SCM Press.
Appendix 1: General Information

Students with Disabilities
The School welcomes disabled students with disabilities (including those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia) and is working to make all its courses as accessible as possible. If you have a disability special needs which means that you may require adjustments to be made to ensure access to lectures, tutorials or exams, or any other aspect of your studies, you can discuss these with your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor who will advise on the appropriate procedures.

You can also contact the Student Disability Service, based on the University of Edinburgh, Third Floor, Main Library, You can find their details as well as information on all of the support they can offer at: http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service

Learning Resources for Undergraduates
The Study Development Team at the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) provides resources and workshops aimed at helping all students to enhance their learning skills and develop effective study techniques. Resources and workshops cover a range of topics, such as managing your own learning, reading, note-making, essay and report writing, exam preparation and exam techniques.

The study development resources are housed on ‘LearnBetter’ (undergraduate), part of Learn, the University’s virtual learning environment. Follow the link from the IAD Study Development web page to enrol: www.ed.ac.uk/iad/undergraduates

Workshops are interactive: they will give you the chance to take part in activities, have discussions, exchange strategies, share ideas and ask questions. They are 90 minutes long and held on Wednesday afternoons at 1.30pm or 3.30pm. The schedule is available from the IAD Undergraduate web page (see above).

Workshops are open to all undergraduates but you need to book in advance, using the MyEd booking system. Each workshop opens for booking two weeks before the date of the workshop itself. If you book and then cannot attend, please cancel in advance through MyEd so that another student can have your place. (To be fair to all students, anyone who persistently books on workshops and fails to attend may be barred from signing up for future events).

Study Development Advisors are also available for an individual consultation if you have specific questions about your own approach to studying, working more effectively, strategies for improving your learning and your academic work. Please note, however, that Study Development Advisors are not subject specialists so they cannot comment on the content of your work. They also do not check or proof read students' work.

To make an appointment with a Study Development Advisor, email iad.study@ed.ac.uk

(For support with English Language, you should contact the English Language Teaching Centre).

Discussing Sensitive Topics
The discipline of Social Anthropology addresses a number of topics that some might find sensitive or, in some cases, distressing. You should read this Course Guide
carefully and if there are any topics that you may feel distressed by you should seek advice from the course convenor and/or your Personal Tutor.

For more general issues you may consider seeking the advice of the Student Counselling Service, [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling)

**Guide to Using LEARN for Online Tutorial Sign-Up**

The following is a guide to using LEARN to sign up for your tutorial. If you have any problems using the LEARN sign up, please contact the course secretary by email (Ewen.Miller@ed.ac.uk).

Tutorial sign up will open on Monday 16 January 2017 and will close on Friday 20 January 2017.

*Step 1 – Accessing LEARN course pages*
Access to LEARN is through the MyEd Portal. You will be given a log-in and password during Freshers’ Week. Once you are logged into MyEd, you should see a tab called ‘Courses’ which will list the active LEARN pages for your courses under ‘myLEARN’.

*Step 2 – Welcome to LEARN*
Once you have clicked on the relevant course from the list, you will see the Course Content page. There will be icons for the different resources available, including one called ‘Tutorial Sign Up’. Please take note of any instructions there.

*Step 3 – Signing up for your Tutorial*
Clicking on Tutorial Sign Up will take you to the sign up page where all the available tutorial groups are listed along with the running time and location.

Once you have selected the group you would like to attend, click on the ‘Sign up’ button. A confirmation screen will display.

**IMPORTANT:** If you change your mind after having chosen a tutorial you cannot go back and change it and you will need to email the course secretary. Reassignments once tutorials are full or after the sign-up period has closed will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

Tutorials have restricted numbers and it is important to sign up as soon as possible. The tutorial sign up will only be available until Monday 28 September 2015 so that everyone is registered to a group ahead of tutorials commencing in Week 2. If you have not yet signed up for a tutorial by this time you will be automatically assigned to a group which you will be expected to attend.

**External Examiner**
The External Examiner for the Social Anthropology Honours programme is: Dr Paolo Fortis, University of Durham.
Appendix 2: Course Work Submission and Penalties

Penalties that can be applied to your work and how to avoid them.

There are three types of penalties that can be applied to your course work and these are listed below. Students must read the full description on each of these at: http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/current_students/teaching_and_learning/assessment_and_regulations/coursework_penalties

Make sure you are aware of each of these penalties and know how to avoid them. Students are responsible for taking the time to read guidance and for ensuring their coursework submissions comply with guidance.

- Incorrect submission Penalty
  When a piece of coursework is submitted to our Electronic Submission System (ELMA) that does not comply with our submission guidance (wrong format, incorrect document, no cover sheet etc.) a penalty of 5 marks will be applied to students work.

- Lateness Penalty
  If you miss the submission deadline for any piece of assessed work 5 marks will be deducted for each calendar day that work is late, up to a maximum of seven calendar days (35 marks). Thereafter, a mark of zero will be recorded. There is no grace period for lateness and penalties begin to apply immediately following the deadline.

- Word Count Penalty
  The penalty for excessive word length in coursework is one mark deducted for each additional 20 words over the limit. If the limit is 1500 words then anything between 1501 and 1520 words will lose one point, and so on.

  Word limits vary across subject areas and submissions, so check your course handbook. Make sure you know what is and what is not included in the word count. Again, check the course handbook for this information.

  You will not be penalised for submitting work below the word limit. However, you should note that shorter essays are unlikely to achieve the required depth and that this will be reflected in your mark.

ELMA: Submission and Return of Coursework

Coursework is submitted online using our electronic submission system, ELMA. You will not be required to submit a paper copy of your work.

Marked coursework, grades and feedback will be returned to you via ELMA. You will not receive a paper copy of your marked course work or feedback.

For details of how to submit your course work to ELMA, please see our webpages here. Remember, there is a 5 mark incorrect submission penalty, so read the guidance carefully and follow it to avoid receiving this.

Extensions: New policy-applicable for years 1 - 4
From September 2016, there will be a new extensions policy that applies to all courses in the school from years one to four.

If you have good reason for not meeting a coursework deadline, you may request an extension. Before you request an extension, make sure you have read all the guidance on our webpages and take note of the key points below. You will also be able to access the online extension request form through our webpages.

- Extensions are granted for 7 calendar days.
- Extension requests must be submitted no later than 24 hours before the coursework deadline.
- If you miss the deadline for requesting an extension for a valid reason, you should submit your coursework as soon as you are able, and apply for Special Circumstances to disregard penalties for late submission. You should also contact your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor and make them aware of your situation.
- If you have a valid reason and require an extension of more than 7 calendar days, you should submit your coursework as soon as you are able, and apply for Special Circumstances to disregard penalties for late submission. You should also contact your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor and make them aware of your situation.
- If you have a Learning Profile from the Disability Service allowing you potential for flexibility over deadlines, you must still make an extension request for this to be taken into account.

Plagiarism Guidance for Students: Avoiding Plagiarism

Material you submit for assessment, such as your essays, must be your own work. You can, and should, draw upon published work, ideas from lectures and class discussions, and (if appropriate) even upon discussions with other students, but you must always make clear that you are doing so. Passing off anyone else's work (including another student’s work or material from the Web or a published author) as your own is plagiarism and will be punished severely.

When you upload your work to ELMA you will be asked to check a box to confirm the work is your own. All submissions will be run through ‘Turnitin’, our plagiarism detection software. Turnitin compares every essay against a constantly-updated database, which highlights all plagiarised work. Assessed work that contains plagiarised material will be awarded a mark of zero, and serious cases of plagiarism will also be reported to the College Academic Misconduct officer. In either case, the actions taken will be noted permanently on the student's record. For further details on plagiarism see the Academic Services’ website:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/conduct/academic-misconduct/what-is-academic-misconduct

Data Protection Guidance for Students

In most circumstances, students are responsible for ensuring that their work with information about living, identifiable individuals complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The document, Personal Data Processed by Students, provides an explanation of why this is the case. It can be found, with advice on data protection compliance and ethical best practice in the handling of information about living, identifiable individuals, on the Records Management section of the University website at: 
http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/records-management-section/data-protection/guidance-policies/dpforstudents
Video games get a lot of bad press at times, but it appears gaming can alter the brain for the good. But it might come at a cost. Video games have been both demonized and praised in the media over the years. They tend to be one of the first things blamed for any acts of teenage violence, for example. But these kinds of accusations don’t seem to hold up to rigid scientific examination. James Gee, an education professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison says this kind of accusation is not helpful for finding the underlying issue: “You get a group of teenage boys who shoot up a school—of course they’ve played video games,” Gee says. “Everyone does. It’s like blaming food because we have Games People Play. The psychology of human relationships. Table of contents. Pastimes and games are substitutes for the real living of real intimacy. Because of this they may be regarded as preliminary engagements rather than as unions, which is why they are characterized as poignant forms of play. Intimacy begins when individual (usually instinctual) programming becomes more intense, and both social patterning and ulterior restrictions and motives begin to give way. More recently, a few anthropologists have sought to examine games and play without falling prey to either the materialist or the representationalist monism. For the most part, these works have criticized the work/play distinction or abandoned it entirely and have concentrated instead on situating the cultural form of games in specific cultural historical moments. (In this, they resemble those anthropologists throughout the twentieth century who examined the cultural form of ritual anthropology and play without subjecting it in every case to a litmus test of whether it brought about t Indeed, anthropological work on games and play, respectively, has greatly helped to refine understandings of games. For example, Roger Caillois, one of the twentieth century’s best-known theorists of games and play, emphasised the role of games as playful activities largely outside the sphere of economic productivity. Indeed, some of the most insightful discussions of games within anthropology emerge when particular games are described in contradistinction to related themes. For example, Arjun Appadurai has examined the enduring popularity of cricket in postcolonial India as an example of decolonization being a “dialogue with the colonial” rather than a “dismantling of colonial habits and modes of life” (Appadurai 1995).