

technology + play

New Fall 2013 Course!

This course considers the social science of play and interactive media technology. The three central questions addressed in this course are: “What is play?”, “How does technology mediate play?”, and “What are the consequences of this mediation?” Over the semester, we’ll investigate the social scientific and humanities research on play, the structure of games, and the societal consequences of mediated play for both children and adults. A special focus will be “games for change” (a.k.a. “serious games”) that have an educational purpose. The term will be organized around competing theories of play (e.g., development, fate/chance, power, identity, fantasy, self-fulfillment, nonsense), and will be illustrated with examples from computer games.

This is a project-based course. Throughout the semester we will work toward producing two conceptual design projects for playful technologies. These are roughly equivalent to a midterm and a final, or a short and a long paper. As these are *conceptual* projects, technical skills are not required.

“games lubricate the mind.”
–Benjamin Franklin

“the opposite of play isn’t work, it’s depression.” –Brian Sutton-Smith

“I don’t know why a computer game can’t be an art form just as a puppet show or an opera” –Fred Saberhagen

“no human being is innocent, but there is a class of innocent human actions called games.” –W. H. Auden

“games are wonderful because they keep kids out of the house.” –Yogi Berra

“the creative mind plays with the objects it loves.” –Carl Jung

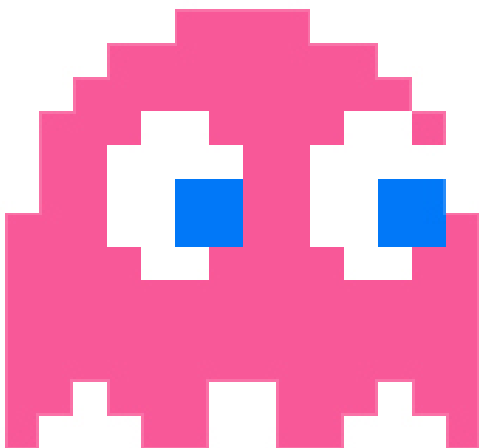
“tango down.” –‘Soap’ MacTavish

“you can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” –Plato

“the video games are now as important as the movie.” –John Cleese

“play is beyond all rationality and ethics.” –Friedrich Nietzsche

“Thank you Mario! But our princess is in another castle!” –Toad



Technology and Play

F13 M/W 4 - 5:30 p.m.

Undergraduate: COMM 408.001

Graduate: COMM 840.001

No prerequisites.

Instructor: Christian Sandvig

(csandvig@umich.edu)

Note that you must e-mail the instructor to enroll in the graduate section.