



Title: Writing Games for Social Change: English 9 and Game Design

Length of Course: Full Year (2 semesters; 3 trimesters; 4 quarters)

Subject Area – Discipline: English (“b”)

UC Honors designation: No

CTE Sector: Information and Communication Technologies

CTE Pathway: Games and Simulation

Grade Level(s): 9

Overview:

Writing Games for Social Change: English 9 and Game Design is a college preparatory grade 9 English course integrated with the games and simulation pathway standards of the information and communication technology sector, which allows students to see where the skills of English intersect with the elements of game design. Students conduct research, closely read and analyze complex texts, evaluate game designers’ audience and purpose, and create a digital portfolio where they synthesize their knowledge to design a game that addresses a social issue. At the same time, students are provided a rigorous pathway for students to learn relevant technical knowledge and skills that prepare them for further education and career opportunities in the field of Information and Communication Technologies.

Course Content:

Unit 1: What is a Game?

In this unit, students define what a game is and learn about the fundamental elements and distinguishing features within various types of games. Through reflective reading and close examination of informational texts such as *The Game Designers Reader*, “Ten Things Every Game Needs” and “The Rhetoric of GamePlay”, students develop a deeper understanding of these elements. Drawing on knowledge gained from their readings, students write a 1-2 page informational essay that includes appropriate citation formats, in which they evaluate the complex interaction between games and players (in terms of player engagement, skill development and audience) across various genres of games, such as video games, board games, puzzle games, card games and sports. Students conduct research on the history of gaming. Beginning with the ancient world and culminating to the present day, students examine the role of game play in human culture and their psychological impact on individuals and groups, and write a 3-4 page research position paper on the topic. In groups of 3-5, students synthesize

their informational and research essays into a 3-5 minute multimedia presentation that illustrates the trends within a selected game genre and its gamers' experience, over time. Students then create a digital portfolio (or wiki) that will serve as the location to house selected assignments created throughout the course.

Unit 1: Key Assignments

1. **Wiki/Webpage/Digital Portfolio:** To use the tools and software commonly used in game/simulation development, students create a wiki or website that serves as a digital portfolio to store key assignments that students add to and update throughout the year-long course. Suggested applications include: WordPress, wikispaces.com, edutopia.org, etc.)

2. **Informational Essay: The Genres of Games:** 1) To launch the yearlong study, students respond to the question of what is a game? 2) Students begin their study by learning about different gaming genres and systems by conducting research from *The Game Designers Reader* and credible online sources such as the Critical Gaming Project at the University of Washington, or boardgamegeek.com. 3) Students write a 1-2 page informational essay that examines the distinguishing features of games including types of systems, engagement of players, specific skill development, or audience. 4) This understanding of game genre and features serves as the foundation for rhetorical analysis of games as complex texts.

3. **Research Essay: The Development of the Gaming Industry:** To deepen their understanding of what is a game, students examine the historical development of games from simple non-electronic forms to a technologically driven multibillion dollar industry (ex. Grand Theft Auto 5). In a 3-4 page research essay, students describe the development of gaming as an industry and its most common business models and career opportunities and stakeholders with relevant information and supporting evidence from credible sources such as "Video Game Revolution" from PBS, the Institute of Play and the Critical Gaming Project from University of Washington.

4. **Multimedia Presentation: What Is A Game** In small groups, students synthesize the information from their individual informational and research essays from this unit to create a 3-5 minute multimedia presentation. This presentation responds to the question, what is a game, and illustrates the evolution of the significance of gameplay, genres, and the development of the gaming industry using information from the Topic Essays from *The Game Designers Reader*. This may be completed using: Keynote, PowerPoint, Google Presentation, or Prezi.

Unit 2: The Gaming Experience

Building upon the knowledge on the history of games acquired in unit 1, students then examine how modern information and communication technologies have redefined the culture of play. Students read the book *Ender's Game* as well as several industry-related selections from the *Game Designers Reader*, *What Games Have to Teach Us About*

Learning and Literacy and view on-line resources such as TED Talks about the gaming experience to understand and analyze the ways in which gameplay has evolved. To recognize this influence, students write a 1-2 page explanatory essay which compares and contrasts traditional games with their digital equivalents. Students create and conduct a survey to examine how video games influence and impact the lives of their peers, and then present their findings in a 2-3 minute oral presentation. Next, during their reading of *Ender's Game*, students create storyboards to track theme development in the novel. After gathering textual evidence, students write a 2-3 page literary analysis essay on the purposeful design of the game and resulting psychological effects on the characters in the novel.

Unit 2: Key Assignments

- 1. Compare and Contrast: High Tech v. Lo Tech** - Students write a 2-3 page compare/contrast essay that analyzes a game that exists in both electronic and nonelectronic form such as scrabble or monopoly. By examining these two forms closely, students analyze technology's influence on gameplay and how it affects the individuals and groups that play such games. Students focus on relevant details on the user's experience to illustrate the similarities and differences between the high tech/lo tech forms.
- 2. Survey: Your Gaming Experience** - Students conduct research by creating a survey that elicits information from game players regarding their experiences playing electronic games. The student-generated survey asks participants about their purpose for playing, the extent to which they substitute game play for other activities, and how these games provide experiences that traditional, non-electronic games cannot provide. The results of this survey will be used as part of their supporting evidence for claims they will make in the subsequent presentation. Students craft questions that are appropriate to their purpose and audience and publish their survey using on-line tools such as surveymonkey.com and/or Google forms.
- 3. Multimedia Presentation: Why Play?-** In addition to the survey results, students conduct research on game theory from the *Game Designers Reader* and other sources that further elucidates why people play games and what we can learn about the impact of gaming on their lives. Students prepare a 2-3 minute oral presentation using evidence from their research to answer the question, "why do people play games, and what do we know about their impact?" Students present their thesis, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically. This assignment provides students with a real-world context for understanding the psychological impact of games on individuals and groups which will be further addressed in the reading of the novel *Ender's Game*. Students use professional-quality media, images, documents, audio, and video clips for their presentation.
- 4. Storyboard for a Game based on Ender's Game:** From the game designer's perspective, students closely read a full length novel that lends itself to be turned into a game. Novels may be contemporary texts, such as *Ender's Game*, *For The Win*, *Ready*

Player One, or older novels such as *Clockwork Orange* or *The Odyssey* to analyze the interaction between characters, plot, setting, and theme. Students then create a storyboard for a game that is based on the novel that includes: essential elements, plot, flow, and functions of the game/simulation within the novel. Students use online resources such as ComicLife, OmniGraffle, SketchUp.

5. Character Analysis: Ender's Game - To build upon the students' analysis of a novel from the perspective of a game designer, students turn their attention to an examination of the novel from a literary perspective. Students use information from the research that was conducted for the multi-media presentation to inform conclusions drawn about the the psychological impact that the game has on the characters. In this 2-4 page essay, students cite strong textual evidence from their research and the novel to determine how the psychological impact of the game changes the character throughout the course of the story. This prepares students for Unit Three's focus on the role of games and simulations as texts with specific purposes that influence their designs.

Unit 3: Games as texts: designer, audience, and purpose.

Building upon their understanding of the intention, experience and impact of gaming, students now read about the various aspects of game design (with an emphasis on structure, process, audience, and purpose) as they develop a game, write supporting documents and build a physical prototype. Using professional models of game scripts, excerpts from the *Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games*, and observations of actual gameplay, students learn to read games as texts with specific and/or multiple purposes, focusing on the design elements that help a game to achieve its purpose. To direct this focus students write three 1-page rhetorical analyses of their games' purpose and how it drives the content and style of the game. Students also learn the game design and development life cycle. Applying the general principles of storytelling in the context of games, students create a storyboard narrating the development of a central idea in a game and how the designer's choices create specific effects and determine purpose. Students also create a 2-3 page game treatment guiding the design of a prototype. Through a revision process, students use professional templates and excerpts from *Character Development and Storytelling for Games* as a guide to write a 4-page (or more) game design document.

Unit 3: Key Assignments

1. Game Analysis: 3 Games & 3 Genres By regarding games as complex texts, students choose three different games (such as WOW, Farmville, Flappy Bird, Candy Crush, Words with Friends) and write three 1 page analysis of each game's rhetorical context. Using their notes about the game's essential elements, plot, flow, and functions from texts such *How to Do Things With Video Games*, students assess how point of view and purpose shape the content and style of the game and how the creators of the game utilize the features of the genre to impact the end user experience. At least one of the

games that students choose must follow a narrative design, describe the complex interaction between games and players, and the role it plays in the game.

2. Storyboard of an Existing Game: Building on their rhetorical understanding of games, students choose one of the games from the Game Analysis assignment. Students create a storyboard or flowchart describing the elements of plot, flow, and basic game mechanics. Students demonstrate an understanding of how game narratives follow a non-linear progression, how a particular story structure impacts gameplay, how the players interact with the game world, and how the players interact with one another.

3. Game Treatment: Utilizing their understanding of game design, students begin the process of designing their own game. In a 2-3 page game treatment, students create a flowchart for their proposed game, including descriptions of core gameplay, controls, rules, modes of play and other features specific to their game. Students also summarize the character design and story background in a 2-3 paragraph sub-section of the document.

4. Prototype: Students create a working prototype of their game or simulation, and playtest the functionality of the game's mechanics using a diagram map to visualize each process or procedure of the game. As if they were pitching their game to a group of potential investors, students prepare for and deliver a 3 minute oral multi-media presentation of their game treatment and a physical presentation of their game prototype that includes sound recordings and visual texts that serve as inspiration for the game's look and feel (Keynote, PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Presentation, Prezi). During the presentation, students justify their choices based on their purpose and impact on the user experience.

5. Game Design Document: Students review professional models of game design specification documents as mentor text to write a 3-4 page game design specification document that reflects the feedback that they received on their prototype. In this culminating assignment, students clearly and succinctly explain their game's intended purpose, audience and describe the user's game experience. Students narrate the story of the game and use valid reasoning and sufficient evidence to defend their interface and delivery choices, rules of play, navigation functionality, scoring, media choices, start and end of play, and special features.

Unit 4: Society and Games

In this unit students build upon their learning about game design, broadening their focus to the impact that games and simulations have on society. Students expand their literary analysis skills by reading a novel (i.e. *Animal Farm*, *Fahrenheit 451*, or another novel that deals with a social issue) and researching a social issue in the text that a game or application could help address. Students add their research findings to their digital portfolio in the form of a 2-3 page literary analysis essay. As they analyze the social issues in their novel and imagine possible technology-based solutions, students

continue to learn about the complexity of storytelling in the context of games from selections from *The Game Designer's Reader*. From this understanding, students reflect on their personal life story and write a 2-3 page personal narrative about a specific experience or social issue they faced or observed. Students now research that issue in a larger context and publish their findings on a discussion forum. Using this forum, students stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas with mentors and peers. Next, students write a 2-3 page game critique in terms of its impact on society. Finally, students engage in a formal debate drawing on their individual and collaborative research throughout the unit.

Unit 4: Key Assignments

1. Literary Analysis Essay : Students write a 2-3 page response to literature essay analyzing and tracing the development of a social issue in a chosen text such as: *Animal Farm*, *Brave New World*, or *Fahrenheit 451*. Focus is on how the stylistic choices the author makes impacts the text's purpose. Students evaluate the general principles of storytelling in a text and understand that the modern world is an international community and requires an expanded global view. Students also use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing.

2. Blog/Podcast Personal Narrative: Students write a 2-3 page personal narrative about a specific experience of an injustice or social issue they faced/observed and how this story can be translated into a game. Students should consider: What happened? How did you react? How can your story be written as a game or application that addresses this type of injustice? Students provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative. Students understand the general principles of storytelling, learn how social issues influence and shape them as individuals and how those elements can shape a game. Additionally students are challenged to view the human experience, including cultural values and beliefs, from alternative perspectives. Students post the story as a comic, blog, or podcast and comment on other narratives.

3. Online Research Site/Forum: Connecting the previous learning of social issues, technology, purpose/intent of gaming, and societal impacts from units 1-3, students use knowledge gained from activities and assignments to inform their choice of a social issue of personal significance to research that has (or could possibly be) addressed via games or applications. Students gather and analyze information about their issue responding thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding to make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning. Students then publish their findings for a collective audience to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas and explore issues of global significance affecting the games and simulation pathway.

4. Game Critique: Using classroom generated online research site(s) students write a 2-3 page analysis critiquing the impact of an existing digital game or mobile application on

society (such as: WOW, Farmville, Flappy Bird, Candy Crush, Words with Friends). Students should show understanding of both the positive and negative role of their chosen game/app in human culture including the impact on individuals and groups such as social, cultural, economic, and psychological effects. The critique should be developed with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. Students should review and respond to each other's post.

5. Formal Debate: Finally, in a formal debate students argue the larger issues of the positive and negative effects of technology and/or games on society. They should review and analyze current research, tech publications, and/or literature texts (*1984*, *Brave New World*, *Jurassic*, *Ender's Game*, "The Lottery") to critically think about the interaction of technology and games in human culture and society. Through this students research and write about controversial topics and defend their claims interpreting information and drawing conclusions, based on the best analysis, to make informed decisions. Students must come prepared, having read and researched material under study and explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas. Through this students use a logical and structured approach to isolate and identify the source of problems and to resolve problems.

Unit 5: Game Time

Using all their expository reading and writing skills from previous units, students use their knowledge of game design to create a game, simulation or mobile app development group that addresses a societal issue of their choosing. Students start by writing a 2-3 page research paper describing the business model used in the gaming industry. In their project teams students then develop a 2-3 minute multimedia pitch for their idea to the class. After receiving informal and formal feedback on their pitch, students create a digital storyboard for their game design. Next students synthesize their understanding of the games and simulation pathway by completing a capstone project proposal. This includes a 1-page cover letter to panel members, a formal 3-4 page written proposal, a 1-2 minute multimedia artifact (commercial, animation or video) and a 3-5 minute presentation for an audience consisting of peers and industry professionals.

Unit 5: Key Assignments

1. Research Paper - Students write a 2 to 3 page research paper describing the business model and the core tasks of teams in the game development industry. Students examine and categorize the significant processes in the production of interactive games (such as World of Warcraft, Grand Theft Auto). Students synthesize, summarize, compare and contrast multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

2. Multimedia Pre-Production Presentation - In game development groups (including various business roles such as Marketing, Game Designer, Project Manager, Game/App Developer, etc) students identify a social issue and make a 2-3 minute multimedia presentation about a new game or application that could address the chosen social issue. Students demonstrate an understanding of the vocabulary for discussing games and play by describing the general procedure and requirements of game and simulation design. The multimedia presentation should engage and orient the audience by addressing a social problem establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing characters to create a smooth progression of experiences or events. This may be completed using Photoshop, Illustrator, Pixeler, Skitch, Aviary, InDesign, PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Presentation, Google Drive, Quip, etc. Students make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

3. Design/Develop a Digital Storyboard (Storyboard should include 6-10 scenes) - Utilizing their game concept, students develop and write a digital storyboard describing the essential elements, plot, flow, and functions of the game/simulation/app. Students show they understand the general principles of storytelling in game design including determining a central social purpose/theme, and its development over the course of the game. Additionally, the storyboard may include how complex characters develop, interact with other characters, and advance the plot. Students must employ multimedia components (e.g., graphic artwork, animation, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information applicable to the environmental design of the game/simulation/app. Students may use: Photoshop, Illustrator, Pixeler, Skitch, Aviary, Evernote, Prezi, StoryBoard Composer from Apple, Crank, or Storyboard.

4. Proposal Report - As a final project student groups write a 3-4 page proposal in preparation for a final presentation. Students interpret information and draw conclusions, based on the best analysis, to make logical conclusions for their proposal. Proposals might include a: business plan, (SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats analysis), project timeline, game design document (GDD), bidding proposal, and/or a budget. Student produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. Students write a proposal with arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics using valid reasoning, relevant and sufficient evidence. Students may use: Google Drive, Quip, or a Wiki for their proposal report.

5. Multimedia Visual - To accompany the proposal report, student groups create a 1-2 minute visual such as a video, commercial, animation, or documentary about their game/simulation/app and social issue. Students will communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences while integrating music, sound, art, and animation. The video must apply high-quality techniques and/or capture professional-quality media, images, documents, audio, and video clips. Multiple images must be produced by the students to demonstrate their artistic composition skills, but it

may be used along with borrowed images. All borrowed images are properly cited using appropriate conventions. Students may use Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere, AfterEffects, Final Cut Pro, or iMovie.

6. Cover letter - (added to digital portfolio blog post, wiki, website, or digital portfolio) - In a 1 page cover letter to the multimedia proposal presentation panel students reflect on their group experiences in this course. They identify the characteristics of successful teams, including leadership, cooperation, collaboration, and effective decision-making skills. Students establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

7. Multimedia Proposal Presentation - Groups present their multimedia proposal as a capstone in a 3-5 minute presentation to a group of potential investors or venture capitalist. Students present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically (using appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation). Essential skills include the ability to work well and communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats. Students may use resources such as Photoshop, Illustrator, Keynote, Google Presentation, Prezi, or PowerPoint.

Textbooks:

Title: *A Game Designers Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*

Edition: 1st Edition

Publication Date: 2006, Publisher: Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Author: Katie Salen, Eric Zimmerman. Editors.

Title: *Enders Game*

Publication Date: 2013, Publisher: Boekeriij

Author(s): Orson Card and Alan Smithee

Primary Text, Read in entirety or near entirety

Title: *Animal Farm*

Edition: 50th Anniversary edition

Publication Date: April 1, 1996, Publisher: Signet Classics

Author(s): George Orwell

Primary Text, Read in entirety or near entirety

Title: *Fahrenheit 451*

Publication Date: January 10, 2012, Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Author(s): Ray Bradbury

Primary Text, Read in entirety or near entirety

Supplemental Instructional Materials:

Title: ***Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games***

Publication Date: 2008, Publisher: CRC Press

Author(s): Tracy Fullerton

Title: ***How to Do Things with Video Games***

Publication Date: 2011, Publisher: University of Minnesota Press

Author: Ian Bogost

Title: ***What Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy***

Publication Date: 2007

Author: James Paul Gee

Title: ***Character Development and Storytelling for Games***

Publication Date: 2004, Publisher: Course Technology

Author(s): Lee Sheldon

Title: ***Neuromancer***

Publication Date: 1984, Publisher: The Berkley Publishing Group

Author(s): William Gibson

Title: ***Snow Crash***

Edition: Bantam trade reissue

Publication Date: May 2000, Publisher: Bantam Books

Author(s): Neal Stephenson

Title: ***The Flickering Mind***

Publication Date: 2003, Publisher: Random House

Author(s): Todd Oppenheimer

Title: ***1984***

Publication Date: 1961, Publisher: Signet Classic

Author(s): George Orwell

Title: ***Night***

Publication Date: January 16, 2006, Publisher: Hill and Wang

Author(s): Elie Wiesel

Title: ***Of Mice and Men***

Edition: Reissue edition

Publication Date: September 1, 1993, Publisher: Penguin Books

Author(s): John Steinbeck

Title: ***Brave New World***

Edition: Reprint Edition

Publication Date: October 17, 2006_Publisher: Harper Perennial Modern Classics

Author(s): Aldous Huxley

Title: ***Grapes of Wrath***

Edition: 75 Anv edition

Publication Date: April 10, 2014, Publisher: Viking Adult

Author(s): John Steinbeck

Title: ***The Killer Angels***

Publication Date: August 12, 1987, Publisher: Ballantine Books

Author(s): Michael Shaara

Title: ***House on Mango Street***

Edition: 25th Anniversary Edition

Publication Date: April 3, 1991, Publisher: Vintage

Author(s): Sandra Cisneros

Title: ***Jurassic Park***

Publication Date: 1990, Publisher: Knopf

Author(s): Michael Crichton

Title: ***For The Win***

Publication Date: 2010, Publisher: Tom Doherty Associates

Author(s): Cory Doctorow

Title: ***Ready Player One***

Publication Date: 2011, Publisher: Dark All Day

Author: Ernest Cline

Title: ***A Clockwork Orange***

Edition: 3rd

Publication Date: 2012 (originally 1963), Publisher: Estate of Anthony Burgess

Author: Anthony Burgess

Title: ***The Lottery***

Author: Shirley Jackson

http://sites.middlebury.edu/individualandthesociety/files/2010/09/jackson_lottery.pdf

Title: ***Twitch TV***

URL Resource(s): <http://www.twitch.tv/brozarro>

Title: ***Jane McGonigal: Gaming Can Make a Better World***

https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world

Title: ***Fellows Friday with Kellee Santiago***

URL Resource(s): <http://blog.ted.com/2010/10/08/fellows-friday-with-kellee-santiago/>

Title: ***Narrative Design Explorer: A publication about interactive storytelling***

URL Resource(s): <http://narrativedesign.org>

Title: ***Dieter Rams' 10 Principles of Good Design***

URL Resource(s): <http://www.vitsoe.com/us/about/good-design>

Title: ***Timmy, Johnny, & Spike: Game Player psychographics that relate to achieving a design purpose***

<http://www.wizards.com/magic/magazine/article.aspx?x=mtgcom/daily/mr11b>

Title: ***Board Game Genres***

URL Resource(s): www.boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/Game_Genres

Title: ***History of Games and Learning***

Publisher: Institute of Play

URL Resource(s): <http://www.instituteofplay.org>

Title: ***Video Games History Timeline***

Publisher: International Center for the History of Electronic Games

URL Resource(s): <http://www.icheg.org/icheg-game-history/timeline>

Title: ***Teaching History.org: National History Education Clearinghouse***

URL Resource(s): <http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/ask-a-historian/25764>

Title: ***Video Game Genres***

Author(s): Jason Frits

URL Resource(s): http://cs.slu.edu/~fritts/csci142/schedule/csci142_game_genres.pdf