University of Gdańsk

Subject card

Subject name and code	Historical Game Studies, PG_00216095		
Field of study	Historical Games and Digital Heritage		
Date of commencement of studies	October 2027	Academic year of realisation of subject	2027/2028
Education level	Master's studies	Subject group	Obligatory subject group in the field of study Subject group related to scientific research in the field of study
Mode of study	full-time studies	Mode of delivery	at the university
Year of study	1	Language of instruction	English
Semester of study	1	ECTS credits	4.0
Learning profile	academic	Assessment form	credit
Conducting unit			
Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)	Subject supervisor	dr Ewelina Gdaniec	
	Teachers		

Lesson types

Lesson type	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
Number of study hours	0.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	40

E-learning hours included: 0.0

Learning activity and number of study hours

Learning activity	Participation in didactic classes included in study plan	Participation in consultation hours	Self-study	SUM
Number of study hours	40	30.0	30.0	100

Subject objectives

The course develops an advanced understanding of the theoretical and methodological foundations of Historical Game Studies and the ways games represent, interpret and produce knowledge about the past. Students examine relationships between historical evidence, historiography, game mechanics, narrative and player agency. The course develops their ability to critically evaluate historical arguments embedded in game systems, distinguish evidence from design interpretation, and engage in scholarly debate about the epistemological status of interactive representations of history.

Learning outcomes

Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
[GHDCMU2_W02] Has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of concepts in historical and cultural game studies and their connections with historiography, particularly the relationships between game content, mechanics and technology, player agency and cultural context in the interpretation and representation of the past and the construction of historical knowledge.	Critically interprets how game mechanics, narrative, player agency and cultural assumptions construct historical meanings, using appropriate historical and cultural game studies concepts.	[SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion [SW5] implementation of a problem task
[GHDCMU2_K01] Is prepared to critically assess their own knowledge, beliefs and interpretations, as well as information received, in light of available evidence and feedback, and to recognise the importance of specialist knowledge and seek expert advice when facing difficulties in independently addressing cognitive and practical problems.	Critically reassesses their own interpretations of historical and cultural representations in games using available sources, arguments and feedback. Recognises limits to their knowledge and when to consult specialists, especially when analysing stereotypes, cultural appropriation and controversial representations of the past.	[SK1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SK5] implementation of a problem task
[GHDCMU2_U07] Uses English at a level of at least B2+ of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in spoken and written communication in academic and professional contexts, employing specialist terminology from history, game studies and digital heritage.	Uses English at a minimum of B2+ in oral and written communication, applying specialist terminology from history, game studies and digital heritage. Writes analyses, presents and justifies interpretations of historical games, participates in academic discussion and takes differing positions into account.	[SU5] implementation of a problem task [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work
[GHDCMU2_U06] Presents and substantiates positions on complex historical and design-related issues, using specialist terminology, adapting communication to different audiences, and engaging in debate while providing reasoned arguments in support of proposed solutions.	Formulates and substantiates positions on the interpretation of historical events in games, responding to criticism and adapting the argument to specialist and non-specialist audiences.	[SU5] implementation of a problem task [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work
[GHDCMU2_W05] Has knowledge and understanding of the legal, ethical, and social conditions governing the use of history and cultural heritage in research and creative activities, particularly issues related to copyright, the provenance and lawful use of resources, conflicts over historical memory, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence.	Identifies legal, ethical and social challenges in the representation of history, including in their own projects, and proposes revisions based on feedback and reliable evidence.	[SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion [SW5] implementation of a problem task

Subject contents

Who decides which history becomes playable, and whose perspective it represents? The boundaries between evidence, speculation, and creative interpretation; the epistemological status of games in relation to historiography. The translation of archival research and scholarly findings into interactive narratives and mechanics. The historian within a development team: negotiating interpretations, responsibilities, and production constraints. Research-based design as a form of experimenting with models of the past and producing knowledge. Causality, agency, power, and social change as historiographical theses embedded within digital and analog game systems. The ethics of representing difficult heritage, silences, and marginalized groups; social history and the history of everyday life; feminist, postcolonial, and decolonial perspectives; and the rights of Indigenous communities. Games as vessels for memory, nostalgia, national myths, and disputes over the past. Players, fandoms, and modders as co-creators of history.

Prerequisites and co-requisites

Assessment methods and criteria

Subject passing criteria	Passing threshold	Percentage of the final grade
The Expert Hearing	51.0%	30.0%
Historical Consultancy Challenge	51.0%	40.0%
Historical Game Audit	51.0%	30.0%

Recommended reading	Basic literature	Cook, K., Houghton, R. and Kempshall, C. (eds) (2027) The Routledge Companion to Video Games and History. Routledge Wright, E., Donald, I. and Webber, N. (eds) (2026) Writing Game Histories. Bloomsbury Publishing. Mochocki, M. and Gdaniec, E. (eds) (2027) The Living Handbook of Historical Game Studies. Uniwersytet Gdański. Chapman, Adam. 2016. *Digital Games as History: How Videogames Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice*. Routledge.
	Supplementary literature	Keogh, B., Butt, M.-A. and Carter, M. (2026) Game studies: A critical introduction to the field. Polity. Digital Culture & Society (2025) Digital Games through Muddled Pasts and Modded Histories, 11(1). Nyegaard, N., Nyvang, C., Koegeler-Abdi, M., Meier, M., & Vallgårda, K. (2026). Ethics in history: introducing conceptual tools for research practices. *Rethinking History*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2026.2728494 Wainwright, A. M. (2019). *Virtual History: How Videogames Portray the Past*. Routledge.
	eResources addresses	
Example issues/ example questions/ tasks being completed	How do games reproduce or challenge colonial perspectives? Conduct a cultural representation audit and formulate recommendations for historically informed, decolonial design.	
Work placement	Not applicable	

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