

## **Course Evaluation for 303: Digital Media Aesthetics**

I created a questionnaire for the course evaluation, the responses to which are attached. All of the 11 students taking the course responded. The topic of the course changes each term and this term we were focused on Games Studies, in particular Alternative approaches to computer games history

### **1. Value of the Course / Aspects the Students Particularly Valued**

The majority of the students found the subject matter of the course compelling, though one student commented that the course description could have cohered more directly to the description of the course in the catalog. I found that the students had more direct experience with games than some other topics and most contributed directly and extensively to course discussions. The majority of them would recommend the course to others.

### **2. Aspects of the Course that Could Use Improvement / Workload**

The majority of the students felt that the workload was appropriate. This term the course was scheduled for two-hour sessions, and I decided to try sticking to the shorter class format, while requiring students to attend more digital culture guest lectures outside of class (there were many events this term). The feedback from the students was that they would rather have three-hour class sessions, as they sometimes felt that discussions were cut short. Several also felt that we could use more time on the practical aspects (in some cases I think they meant the practical aspects of the assignments. In others I think they meant project-based pedagogy such as developing a game). We primarily discussed assignments in class. Several students reported that they would like more extensive instructions on the assignments in mitt.uib. In the future, I will post more of the assignments earlier with more extensively structured instructions. There was a three-week reading period scheduled in the course (two weeks around the normal break week). Several students thought that the course lost momentum as a result of the longer than normal break between units. I will try to keep the schedule more compressed in the future, as schedule allows.

### **3. Quality of the Instruction**

The majority of the students were satisfied with the quality of the instruction and felt engaged with the teaching. Several students again commented that the online component and instructions could have been better structured.

### **4. Most Useful Reading**

This question is probably not that useful for future versions of the course, as the topic generally changes each year, but *Transgressions in Games and Play* was the clear favorite of the four books we addressed. The balance between readings could have been improved. Several students felt that we spent too much time on *Transgressions* and not enough on the other books. In part this was because of when the authors / guest lecturers were available (and in one case, the book itself – *Handmade Pixels* was published in November). But I could

limit the books to three and be more aware of the balance. I think some of this sense was also due to the fact that the students did not work on the course as much during the break period, and felt more crammed and pressed for time on their return.

### **5. Guest Lecturers**

This term we were lucky to hear from four different guest lecturers, including the authors of three of the books we were studying. This was a universally popular aspect of the course. Everyone felt that this enhanced the course.

### **6. Preparation for the Master's Thesis**

More than half of the students felt that the course help prepare them for writing their master's thesis, in particular in relation to exposure to and discussion of a wide variety of research methods. Several commented however that they are not yet sure what they are writing about or that they plan to write on an unrelated topic. In general, I tried to steer discussions toward discussions of writing and research methods, as well as the content of the texts we were addressing. I think I will continue this approach.

### **7. Format of the Course**

I have focused on discussion-oriented courses at the Master's level – where students are expected to contribute to leading selected class discussions and where discussion of the readings flow in a discursive way. The format was generally appreciated by the students. Again, there were some comments that the two-hour sessions were too short. So we'll go back to three hours. Some students would have like a bit more lecturing or some small group work. I noted that while the majority of the students were active participants in the discussion, a few of the students tended to want to speak up more than the others, so this required some conscious balancing. During the next iteration I will try to integrate at least one project-based component that involves small group work.