COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title	Code
Gaming culture	

Academic staff	Core academic unit(s)
Coordinating: Lect. Benita Kaselytė	Faculty of Communication Saulėtekio ave. 9, building I, Vilnius

Study cycle	Type of the course unit
First	Optional

Mode of delivery	Semester or period when it is delivered	Language of instruction
Face-to-face	Spring, 4th semester	English

Requisites	
Prerequisites: -	**Co-requisites (if relevant): -**

Number of ECTS credits allocated	Student's workload (total)	Contact hours	Individual work
5	130	32	98

Purpose of the course unit		
This course aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the gaming industry's social, cultural, and economic dimensions while equipping them with analytical and practical skills for communication and entrepreneurship in the evolving gaming sector.		
Learning outcomes of the course unit	**Teaching and learning methods**	**Assessment methods**
1. Students will understand the historical and cultural evolution of video games.	Combination of lectures, seminars, and class participation	Game Communication Experiment (Individual) Social Media Campaign (Group Project) Final Exam
2. Students will be able to analyze the social dynamics and community structures within gaming, including online platforms and multiplayer environments		

3. Students will be able to critically examine the economic models and business strategies of the gaming industry, while also engaging with the social, ethical, and psychological implications of gaming culture (e.g., representation and identity).		
4. Students will be able to develop creative solutions for innovative gaming-related communication strategies or entrepreneurial ventures.		
5. Students will be able to complete interactive assignments that encourage active learning, creativity, and critical analysis of the gaming world		

Content	**Contact hours**							**Individual work: time and assignments**	
	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Workshops	Laboratory work	Internship	**Contact hours, total**	**Individual work**	**Tasks for individual work**
Lecture 1: Introduction to Gaming Culture Introduction to the scope and significance of gaming as a cultural and communication phenomenon. Brief overview of the development of video games from early arcade systems to contemporary digital ecosystems, focusing on key cultural and technological shifts. The role of gaming in shaping communication, identity, and entertainment, with attention to how players interact with games, each other, and broader communities.	2		2				**4**	**10**	**Interactive Assignment**: **Discussion Forum**: Students will engage in an online discussion about their personal experiences with gaming and how games have influenced their understanding of communication and culture. They will share one example of a game that impacted their view of society or identity and analyze why it had such an effect. **Readings**: **Wilde, P.** – Chapter 1: *Introduction* (from *Posthuman Gaming*) **Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., Heide Smith, J., Tosca, S. P.** – *Understanding Video Games* *The Essential Introduction*
Lecture 2: Communication in Gaming Culture Examination of gaming culture as a distinct communicative and industrial ecosystem. Overview of the structure of the gaming industry, including different sectors (AAA, indie, mobile) and their communication practices. Discussion of player types, motivations, and forms of participation, highlighting the diversity of gaming audiences and their role in shaping communication. Analysis of the key features that distinguish gaming communication from other cultural and media forms, including interactivity, player agency, and the continuous feedback loop between	2		2				**4**	**15**	**Cross-Industry Comparison**: Students will work in small groups to explore the specific characteristics of gaming culture and communication by comparing it with other cultural and media industries. They will reinterpret a non-gaming product as if it were part of the gaming industry and, conversely, a gaming product as if it belonged to another sector, reflecting on differences in communication, audience engagement, and cultural logic. The activity will conclude with short presentations and a guided discussion.

developers and communities. Comparison with traditional media and other cultural industries, focusing on differences in content creation, audience engagement, and community involvement.									**Readings**: **Zackariasson, P., Wilson, T.** – The *Video Game Industry: Formation, Present State, and Future*
Lecture 3: Gaming Communities and Social Networks Examination of gaming communities as central spaces where communication, culture, and social interaction are formed and negotiated. Overview of key platforms (such as Discord, Twitch, Reddit, and TikTok) and their role in shaping different types of engagement, content creation, and community dynamics. Discussion of user-generated content, participatory practices, and the circulation of memes as forms of communication within gaming culture. Consideration of community-related challenges, including toxicity, moderation, and the boundaries between players, creators, and developers.	2		2				**4**	**10**	**Case Study**: Students will select a specific online gaming community (e.g., Fortnite, League of Legends, Minecraft) and analyze its culture, communication strategies, and social dynamics. They will present their findings in a short video or report. **Readings**: **Emmerich, K.** – Chapter 3: *Designing Player Interdependence to Enhance Players' Social Experience in Multiplayer Games* (from *The Digital Gaming Handbook*) **Hristova, D., Jovicic, S., Goebl, B., & Slunecko, T.** – Chapter 6: *The Social Media Game? How Gamification Shapes Our Social Media Engagement* (from *The Digital Gaming Handbook*)
Lecture 4: Gender, Identity, and Representation in Gaming Examination of how identities and cultural meanings are constructed, represented, and negotiated within gaming environments. Discussion of player identity, including the role of avatars, customization, and self-representation, as well as the relationship between player agency and narrative structures. Analysis of the representation of gender, race, and diversity in games, with attention to both dominant patterns and emerging shifts in the industry. Consideration of how gaming communities engage with and respond to these representations, including debates, controversies, and broader cultural discourses.	2		2				**4**	**14**	**Interactive Debate**: Students will engage in a structured online debate about the representation of women and minorities in gaming. They will argue for or against the notion that gaming needs to become more inclusive, citing specific games or examples. **Readings**: **Cole, A.** – Chapter 21: *Diversity in Games: How and Why?* (from *The Digital Gaming Handbook*) **Wilde, P.** – Chapter 3: *Who am 'I'? Troubling the Self* (from *Posthuman Gaming*)
Lecture 5: Strategic Communication in Gaming Culture Examination of strategic communication within gaming culture, focusing on how different actors shape attention, engagement, and meaning around games. Analysis of how communication is intentionally structured across different stages of a game's lifecycle, including anticipation, release, and ongoing interaction, with particular attention to the role of hype, community expectations, and continuous updates. Discussion of the role of content creators, streamers, and community figures in amplifying and transforming communication, as well as the dynamics between developers and player	2	2	2				**6**	**19**	**Strategic Communication Analysis:** Students will work in small groups to analyze how communication is strategically shaped around a selected game, update, or event. They will reflect on how attention is created, how audiences are engaged, and how different actors contribute to the spread and interpretation of content. The activity will conclude with short presentations and a guided discussion. **Readings**: **Deshbandhu, A.** – Chapter 7: *New Heights and Challenges: Video Games in a Pandemic* (from *The 21st Century in 100 Games*)

communities. Consideration of how strategic communication in gaming differs from other cultural contexts due to high levels of participation, rapid feedback, and the active role of audiences in shaping narratives.									**Schreier, J.** – *Press Reset: Ruin and Recovery in the Video Game Industry*
Lecture 6: Monetization, Player Psychology, and Engagement in Gaming Culture Examination of how monetization systems and design choices shape player behavior, experience, and participation within gaming culture. Discussion of virtual economies and different monetization models (such as microtransactions, subscriptions, and in-game rewards) as integral parts of how games are structured and experienced. Analysis of key psychological mechanisms, including reward systems, progression loops, and emotional engagement, and how these influence player motivation and long-term involvement. Consideration of the cultural implications of these practices, including debates around fairness, manipulation, and the boundaries between engagement and exploitation.	2		2				**4**	**15**	**System Analysis:** Students will work in small groups to analyze a selected game, focusing on how its systems shape player behavior and engagement. They will reflect on how progression, rewards, and monetization influence player decisions and experiences, and how these elements are perceived within gaming communities. The activity will conclude with short presentations and a guided discussion. **Readings**: **Deshbandhu, A.** – Chapter 5: *New Ways of Monetization: The Service Turn in Games* (from *The 21st Century in 100 Games*) **Goethe, O.** – Chapter 5: *Gamification for Good: Addressing Dark Patterns in Gamified UX Design* (from *The Digital Gaming Handbook*)
Lecture 7: Crisis, Ethics, and Controversy in Gaming Culture Examination of key ethical issues and controversies within gaming culture, focusing on how conflicts emerge and are communicated across games, communities, and platforms. Analysis of different types of crises, including problematic game launches, monetization backlash, and community conflicts, with attention to how these situations are shaped by the specific dynamics of gaming culture. Discussion of ethical questions related to player treatment, fairness, data use, and design practices, as well as the role of communities in responding to and amplifying controversies. Consideration of how communication unfolds in moments of tension, highlighting the relationships between developers, players, and wider audiences.	2	2	2				**6**	**15**	**Crisis Communication Timeline Analysis**: Students will be presented with a real case of controversy or crisis in gaming culture, introduced through a structured timeline of events. Working in small groups, they will respond to key moments in the case by proposing how they would address the situation, taking into account communication choices, audience expectations, and potential outcomes. Their responses will then be compared with the actions taken in the actual case, followed by a brief discussion. **Readings**: **Zendle, D., Cairns, P.** – *Loot boxes are again linked to problem gambling: Results of a replication study* **Wardle, H., & Zendle, D.** – *Loot boxes, gambling, and problem gambling among young people*
Total	**14**	**4**	**14**				**32**	**98**	

Assessment strategy	Weight %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
Game Communication Experiment (Individual)	30%	Weeks 3–4	**Description**: Students will select a video game and create a short communication piece that reflects how the game would be presented, discussed, or experienced within gaming culture. The task requires them to adopt a specific perspective (e.g., player, community member, content creator) and demonstrate how

			meaning around the game is constructed and communicated. The submission may take different forms, such as a short video, social media-style content, or a visual or written format, but it must clearly reflect the communication style and norms of gaming culture. Students are expected to accompany their work with a brief explanation of their choices, linking them to communication practices, audience engagement, and cultural context. **Objective**: This assignment develops students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge in a creative and contextually grounded way, demonstrating how communication operates within gaming culture. **Evaluation:** **Understanding of Gaming Communication** (3) The work demonstrates a clear understanding of communication practices in gaming culture, including appropriate tone, format, and audience. The submission reflects how content is typically created and interpreted within gaming communities. **Application of Course Concepts** (2.5) Relevant course concepts (e.g., participation, engagement, community dynamics, representation) are clearly and appropriately applied. The connection between theory and the chosen example is explicit. **Creativity and Contextual** Awareness (2) The submission effectively reflects the conventions of gaming culture (e.g., style, language, format) and shows awareness of how content circulates and gains attention within gaming environments. **Clarity and Coherence** (1.5) The idea is clearly presented, logically structured, and easy to follow. The main message is understandable without additional explanation. **Reflection** (1) The accompanying explanation clearly justifies the chosen format and approach, explaining how it relates to gaming communication and audience engagement.
Social Media Campaign (Group Project)	35%	Week 5–6	**Description**: Students will design and execute a social media communication campaign aimed at promoting a large-scale (AAA) video game. The campaign should reflect how communication operates within gaming culture, including platform-specific practices (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, X), content formats, and forms of community interaction. Students are expected to develop a coherent content strategy and demonstrate how communication can be structured to generate attention, maintain engagement, and encourage participation within gaming communities. **Objective**: This project allows students to apply communication and marketing skills to real-world gaming culture, exploring how brands and games build communities online. Evaluation: **Creativity and Innovation** (3) How original and engaging is the campaign concept? Is there evidence of creative thinking in the content, visuals, and messaging? Does the campaign stand out among others in the gaming or related sectors? **Target Audience Alignment** (2) Does the campaign effectively identify and cater to its intended audience (e.g., gamers, esports enthusiasts, casual players)? Are the content and tone appropriately tailored to appeal to the selected demographic? **Content Strategy and Execution** (2)

			Does the campaign include a clear and strategic approach for content creation (e.g., images, videos, hashtags, influencer partnerships)? Is there consistency in messaging across various social media platforms? How well are the campaign's goals (brand awareness, engagement, event promotion) reflected in the content? **Engagement and Interactivity** (1.5) Does the campaign encourage interaction and engagement from the target audience (e.g., likes, shares, comments, user-generated content)? Are there clear calls-to-action and methods for fostering online community participation? **Presentation and Professionalism** (1.5) Is the campaign well-organized and presented clearly? Are the campaign materials professional in appearance, and do they follow best practices for each social media platform (e.g., sizing, formatting, timing of posts)?
Final Exam	35%	During the exam session	The final exam will consist of open-ended questions based on real or simulated situations in gaming culture. Students will be asked to analyze specific scenarios, such as communication challenges, community dynamics, monetization practices, or crisis situations, and propose informed responses. The exam will assess students' ability to apply course concepts in context, interpret complex situations, and demonstrate an integrated understanding of gaming culture as a communicative system. **Assessment Criteria for Final Exam** **Application of Knowledge and Concepts (40%)** Demonstrates the ability to apply relevant course concepts to the analysis of given situations. Responses show a clear understanding of how communication operates within gaming culture. **Critical Thinking and Analysis (40%)** Provides well-reasoned and contextually grounded analysis of the situation. Identifies key issues, evaluates possible approaches, and justifies proposed solutions. **Clarity and Structure of Response (20%)** Answers are clearly structured, coherent, and precise. Ideas are communicated in a logical and concise manner.

Author (-s)	Publishing year	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication	Publishing house or web link
Required reading				
Wilde, P	2023	Posthuman Gaming. Avatars, Gamers, and Entangled Subjectivities		Routledge
Deshbandhu, A.	2024	The 21st Century in 100 Games		Routledge
Zackariasson, P., Wilson, T.	2012	The Video Game Industry: Formation, Present State, and Future		Routledge
Roberto, D. (editor)	2020 2025	The Digital Gaming Handbook		CRC Press Routledge
Schreier, J.	2021	Press Reset: Ruin and Recovery in the Video Game Industry		Grand Central Publishing
Recommended reading				

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., Heide Smith, J., Tosca, S. P	2024	Understanding Video Games The Essential Introduction		Routledge
Zendle, D., Cairns, P.	2019	Loot Boxes Are Again Linked to Problem Gambling: Results of a Replication Study		https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0213194
Wardle, H., Zendle, D.	2021	Loot Boxes, Gambling, and Problem Gambling Among Young People		https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1089/cyber.2020.0299
Cole, A., Zammit, J.	2020	Cooperative Gaming Diversity in the Games Industry and How to Cultivate Inclusion		CRC Press