

# Humanities Seminars Program

## — A Brief History of Play —

Wednesdays | 10 AM - 12 PM | May 8-June 5

Ken McAllister | Professor of Public & Applied Humanities | [mesmer@email.arizona.edu](mailto:mesmer@email.arizona.edu)

### Readings

- Chris Crawford. *The Art of Computer Game Design*.
- Hargrave, Catherine Perry. *A History of Playing Cards* [excerpts].
- Harrison, Elizabeth. [“Toys and Their Place in the Education of the Child”](#).
- Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens*. [excerpts].
- Koster, Raph. *A Theory of Fun*.

### Films

- *Pi*
- *The Seventh Seal*
- *War Games*

### Games

- *Katamari Damacy*
- Mancala
- *Space Giraffe*
- Checkers
- Pokemon Go
- Geocaching
- Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes

### Tentative Schedule

Week 1 (May 8) | Play—Silly or Serious?

- Introduction to the Course
- What do we mean by “play”?
- Hands-On: Experiences of Play

Week 2 (May 15) | Toys: The Habitat of Play?

- Reading
  - Johan Huizinga
    - “Forward”
    - “Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Expression”
  - Elizabeth Harrison
    - [“Toys and Their Place in the Education of the Child”](#)
- Magic Circles and Quadrants of Play
- Where does play live?
- Hands-On: How to be a Toy Maker

Week 3 (May 22) | Cultures of Play—Who’s playing whom?

- Reading
  - Johan Huizinga
    - “The Play Concept as Expressed in Language”
    - “Play and Contest as Civilizing Functions”
- Gamers and Fans
- Hands-On: The Onlooker Sees...

Week 4 (May 29) | Play Gone Wrong—What makes play fail?

- Reading

- Chris Crawford
  - *The Art of Computer Game Design*
- Raph Koster
  - *A Theory of Fun*
- Bad Play and Bad Games
- Hands-On: Thanatoludism

Week 5 (June 5) | The Pervasiveness of Play—Where does play end?

- Reading
  - Catherine Perry Hargrave | *A History of Playing Cards*
    - “Introductory”
    - “Playing Cards in America”
    - Any other chapter of your choosing
- Ubiquitous Play
- Hands-On: Geocaching, Pokemon Go, and Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes