

Introduction to Transformative Game Design

Course material is also available in the form of an online course on the EDGE website

<https://erasmusedge.eu/>

If you notice any mistakes in the course materials, please let us know by reaching out to Sarah Lynne Bowman sarah.bowman@speldesign.uu.se

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Course Information

Welcome! Start Here For Important Information From Your Instructors



Dear Game Design Students,

Welcome to Introduction to Transformative Game Design! We are delighted that you are joining us on this journey into exploring the use of role-playing games as vehicles for personal and social change. This course explores foundational concepts and practices to consider when designing for transformative games.

Required Materials

All readings, videos, podcasts, and other materials are embedded in the course. You can find links under the relevant Units and specific Assignments.

The entire course, including Units 1-10 is contained under the heading [Modules, which is linked here](#).

Assignment Overview

This course is taught mostly **asynchronously**, meaning that your course materials and the majority of your interactions will take place here online. These assignments are **Discussions, Journals, Peer Reviews, and Major Assignments**. Rather than attending a scheduled lecture at a regular time, you will instead **complete the assignments required of you by 11:59pm** on the due date they are assigned. Note that you will use your own time zone, meaning that others may be posting at different times.

Course Schedule

Assignments are due on **Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays**. Make sure to review the [linked Course Calendar under Modules](#) and plan your time accordingly.

Discussion Posts

Essential to your work each week are your discussion posts, including (and especially) your responses to your peers. As this course is distance learning, active engagement with your peers in the discussion forum is the lifeblood in this course. Since we are all in different time zones, please post your initial discussions the night before the class day. Then, engage in the discussion forum by responding to two 2) of your peers in **Ask a Question, Answer a Question** format. See the **Discussion Forum Instructions** in Unit 1 for more information.

Video Conference Playtests

The exception is your Playtest and Feedback sessions, which you will need to schedule as a video conference with your peers based on your available schedule. Make sure that you sign up for a group based on your preferred schedule for these meetings under **People --> Groups**. You will need to attend **a minimum of two (2) synchronous meetings with your group** in order to take part in the necessary activities of the course, as playtesting and giving feedback to each of your group members are essential to Research Through Design. You can find more information about joining your group under "Sign up for Your Playtest and Feedback Group."

Game Design

In addition to your discussions and journals, you will also be **playing at least one (1) nanogame** with your group from the #Feminism anthology and then **designing one (1) nanogame** on a subject of your choice with a transformative goal in mind. A nanogame

is a short role-playing game with condensed instructions that can be played in a short amount of time, in this case one that can be played over video conferencing. Your game should not exceed 45 minutes to play, with an additional 15 minutes for feedback, for a total of **1 hour maximum per playtest**. It is hugely important that you keep track of time in order to be respectful of the needs of your peers. Groups cannot exceed 4 members, so your nanogame should be designed to be played by **2-4 people** (including yourself if appropriate).

Writing Assignments

Based on your design, playtests and feedback sessions, you will complete **two Major Assignments in the form of academic papers**. You will also compose and revise a **Game Design Document and Playtest Plan**.

Deliverables

- **Discussion Boards Assignments:** You are expected to participate in all discussion assignments in the Units, including your initial posts and posts to the required number of peers throughout the week in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.
- **Reflection Journal Assignments:** You are also expected to complete Reflection Journals at the end of each Unit. Note that only your instructors and you can see your journals.
- **Major Assignment 1 -- Transformative Game Design Proposal:** You will write a short paper about your transformative game design project.
- **Game Design Document and Playtest Plan:** These documents should contain all the instructions for your nanogame that facilitators and participants need to play, as well as your plans for playtesting and receiving feedback.
- **Major Assignment 2 -- Transformative Game Design:** You will compose an academic article using Research Through Design as a method based upon your process of designing, playtesting, and analyzing the results of your nanogame. You will submit a complete first draft for peer feedback, then revise your assignment based upon these comments for your final submission at the end of the course.
- **Peer Feedback -- Transformative Game Design:** You will read the first complete draft of Major Assignment 2 for one to three (1-3) of your peers in your group and respond to the required feedback questions to help them improve their work. Peer review is essential to the examination process in academic work.
 - For consideration for a grade of **Pass** on your own Major Assignment 2, you must complete one (1) peer review for a member of your group.

- For consideration for a grade of **Pass with Distinction** on your own Major Assignment 2, you may complete peer reviews for *all* members of your group (2 reviews for a group of 3 including yourself; 3 reviews for a group of 4).

Forms of Teaching

Teaching is comprised of:

- Video lectures by the instructors, guest lecturers, and other sources
- Articles and other resources

Technical Requirements

- You will need a computer, word processor software (such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs), video conferencing software (such as Zoom) and consistent Internet access

Writing Assistance

Uppsala University offers writing support through the [linked Language Workshop](#). We encourage you to make an appointment if you need additional writing support. You will have time in this course set aside for visits, but please schedule early to avoid delays at the end of the course period.

Disabilities

If you have disabilities and need accommodations, please contact the [Disabilities office linked here](#).

Plagiarism

The use of AI is strictly prohibited in this class and is considered plagiarism. You must write your and assignments posts in your own words based on your reflection on the course materials. You should use the Chicago Author-Date citations provided in the course materials whenever possible. You should not need to include additional sources, but if you do, you must construct your citations yourself rather than relying on machine technology.

Before taking your Orientation Quiz, please watch this important video on plagiarism, which can have serious consequences at Uppsala University:

<https://youtu.be/7bmpVGkwyKQ?si=-PJTWWZFXf9WQ2Wr>

Contacting Your Instructors

Be sure to email Sarah at sarah.bowman@speldesign.uu.se and Josephine Baird at josephine.baird@speldesign.uu.se if you are experiencing any difficulties or have questions. Please use your student email account.

Orientation Quiz

The course is divided into ten (10) Units, which you will find listed under Course Content. Please review the Schedule and familiarize yourself with the Units. Then, take your Orientation Quiz.

[Click here to take your Orientation Quiz.](#)

Design Credits

This course was designed by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Josefin Westborg, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Josephine Baird. Curricular materials have been added by members of the Erasmus+ EDGE Cooperation Partnership. It has been revised with feedback from Kaya Toft Thejls.

Graphic design by Liliia Chorna.

Course Content is found in the [modules](#).

Course Calendar

Introduction to Transformative Game Design: Course Calendar

- For detailed requirements for assignments, see the [Schedule & Instructions link](#).
- **All assignments are due the end class on the day assigned, i.e. Mondays at 11:59pm in your time zone.** When possible, please post the night before to make sure your peers have time to comment upon your posts.
- Discussions and Journals marked as **Optional for Pass** are recommended to skip if you want to go for a **Pass** instead of a **Pass with Distinction**. You will still be required to examine the homework materials leading up to those assignments.

Unit	Requirements
Week 1	
Unit 1	Monday: Introducing Yourself and Connecting with Your Peers Activities: • Complete Orientation Quiz by 11:59pm in your time zone. • Choose a playtest group based on times available under Groups. ◦ Post an introduction to your small group. ◦ Organize a playtest session with your group. • Complete Discussion 1: Introduction by 11:59pm in your time zone.

	○ This post is your introduction to the entire class. ○ Reply to the initial posts of at least two of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format for every discussion forum. Homework: • Read Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to Role-playing Games and Cousin Activities" in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. • Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman's "Introduction to Tabletop Role-playing Games" and "Introduction to Larp."
Unit 1	Wednesday: Introduction to Role-playing Games Activities: • Complete Discussion 2: Introduction to Role-playing Games by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Read Sections 2.1-2.6 until the end of "Populations Overview" of Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features" in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. • Optional: Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman's "Introduction to Transformative Role-playing Games."
Unit 1	Friday: This Course and You Activities: • Complete Reflection Journal 1: This Course and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Review the selections from <i>#Feminism</i>. • Choose one (1) scenario to playtest with your group. • Watch "Safety in Role-playing Games I: Introduction" and "Safety in Role playing Games Part III: During the Game" by Sarah Lynne Bowman. • Play the game with your group with these safety strategies in mind. Select at least one (1) safety mechanic to use during the game.
Week 2	
Unit 1 and 2	Monday: Introduction to Transformative Game Design Activities: • Complete Discussion 3: Introduction to Transformative Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Read Jonaya Kemper's "Wyrding the Self." • Read Section 2.7 "Our Model of Transformative Game Design" of Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games:

	Types, Purposes, and Features” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. • Optional: Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman’s “Transformative Game Design: A Theoretical Framework.”
Unit 2	Wednesday: #Feminism playtest Activities: • Complete Playtest 1: #Feminism by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Read sections 3.1-3.5 until the end of “Mechanisms of Transformation” of Diakolambrianou et al.’s “Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>.
Unit 2 and 3	Friday: Transformative Leisure Games Activities: • Complete Discussion 4: Transformative Leisure Games by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Watch “New World Magischola - Short Documentary” and “Yes-and video.” • Review the instructions for Major Assignment 1. • Start work on Major Assignment 1: Transformative Game Design Proposal.
Week 3	
Unit 3	Monday: Transformative Game Design Brainstorming and Feedback Activities: • Optional for Pass: Complete Discussion 5: Transformative Game Design Brainstorming and Feedback by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Read Section 3.7-3.8 until the end of “Theories of Interaction” in “Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. • Watch Mometrix Academy’s “Counselor: Basic Skills of a Counselor.” • Optional: Watch Elektra Diakolambrianou’s “Psychotherapeutic Applications of Role-playing.” • Continue work on Major Assignment 1: Transformative Game Design Proposal.
Unit 3 and 4	Wednesday: Therapeutic Role-playing Games Activities: • Complete Discussion 6: Therapeutic Role-playing Games by 11:59pm in your time zones.

	<u>Homework:</u> Continue work on Major Assignment 1: Transformative Game Design Proposal.
Unit 4	Friday: Transformative Game Design Proposal <u>Activities:</u> - Submit Major Assignment 1: Transformative Game Design Proposal by 11:59pm in your time zone. - Review the instructions for Game Design Document and Playtest Plan. - Schedule Playtest 2: Your Transformative Game Design with your group. <u>Homework:</u> - Read Section 3.9 "Educational Theories" in Diakolambrianou et al.'s "Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials" in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. - Watch Josefin Westborg's "Introduction to Learning Theories," "Role-playing Games for Education," and "Learning in Praxis." - Choose one (1) video from Westborg's series on Learning Theories under Recommended Materials to watch. - Start work on Game Design Document and Playtest Plan.
Week 4	
Unit 4 and 5	Monday: Educational Theories <u>Activities:</u> - Complete by Discussion 7: Educational Theories 11:59pm in your time zone. <u>Homework:</u> - Read "7.4a: Research Through Design" from Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 7: Research in Transformative Game Design" in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. - Choose one (1) item from the Research Through Design Method list to examine. - Watch Josefin Westborg's "Playtesting" and "How to Be a Good Playtester."
Unit 5	Wednesday: Research Through Design <u>Activities:</u> - Complete Discussion 8: Research Through Design by 11:59pm in your time zone. <u>Homework:</u> - Read all sections until the end of "4.3: Design Tools" in Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 4: Practice: Transformative Role-playing Game Design and Research" in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. - Watch Josefin Westborg's "Basic Design."

Unit 5	Friday: Writing Workshop Activities: • Optional: Visit the Language Workshop for academic writing assistance when appointments are available (if needed). Homework: • Read Martin Nielsen and Martin Andresen's "The Mixing Desk of Larp." • Continue work on Game Design Document and Playtest Plan.
Week 5	
Unit 5	Monday: Game Design Document and Playtest Plan Activities: • Submit Game Design Document and Playtest Plan by 11:59pm in your time zone. • Read Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design instructions. Homework: • Watch Josefin Westborg's "Design Restrictions" and "Transformative Game Design: Worked Example." • Begin work on the first part of Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design, informed by Major Assignment 1 and your Game Design Document.
Unit 5	Wednesday: Role-Playing Game Design and You Activities: • Complete Reflection Journal 2: Role-Playing Game Design and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Continue work on Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design.
Unit 5 and 6	Friday: Playtest 2: Your Transformative Game Design Activities: • Complete Playtest 2: Your Transformative Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Read Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 7: Research in Transformative Game Design" in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. • Watch Jessica Liu's "Develop a Theoretical Framework in 3 Steps Scribbr." • Read Laurel Nesbitt's "The Toulmin Method." • Continue work on Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design.

Week 6	
Unit 6	Monday: Academic Writing Activities: - Complete Discussion 9: Academic Writing -- Argument by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Read sections 6.1-6.4 until the end of “Symbolism” in “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. - Read Whitney Beltrán's "Yearning for the Hero Within: Live Action Role-Playing as Engagement with Mythical Archetypes." - Continue work on Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design.
Unit 6	Wednesday: Ritual, Myth, and Symbolism Activities: - Complete Discussion 10: Ritual, Myth, and Symbolism by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Continue work on Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design.
Unit 7	Friday: Writing Day Activities: - Work on Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design. Homework: - Continue work on Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design.
Week 7	
Unit 7	Monday: Academic Writing in Practice Activities: - Submit First Complete Draft of Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone. - Send your First Complete Draft over email to your playtest group for peer review. - Read the Peer Review Instructions for Major Assignment 2. Homework: - Read Section 6.6 “Culture in RPGs and Communities” in Bowman et al.'s “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. - Watch Alexandra Schreiber's "Games and Play for Intercultural Learning" (10 min).

	Work on Peer Reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it is ready.
Unit 7	Wednesday: Culture and RPGs Activities: - Complete Discussion 11: Culture and RPGS by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: Choose one (1) of the following resources to examine: Leonard, Janjetovic, and Usman's "Playing to Experience Marginalization: Benefits and Drawbacks of 'Dark Tourism' in Larp" (reading) or Leonard's "Playing for Pain: Benefits, Pitfalls, & Strategies for RPing Marginalized Characters" (video).
Unit 7 and 8	Friday: Work on Peer Reviews Activities: - Work on Peer Reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it is ready. Homework: - Read Section 6.7 "Conflict in RPGs and Communities" in Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design" of <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. - Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Week 8	
Unit 7 and 8	Monday: Conflict and RPGs Activities: - Complete Discussion 12: Conflict and RPGs by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Read 5.1-5.5 until the end of "Core Components of Safety" in Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 5: Safety and Community Container Setting" of <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. - Work on Peer Reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it is ready. - Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Unit 8	Wednesday: Work on Peer Reviews Homework: - Read the rest of Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 5: Safety and Community Container Setting" of <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. - Read Section 6.5 "Narrative and Postmodern Magic" in Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for

	Transformative Role-playing Game Design” of <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. • Work on Peer Reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it is ready. • Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Unit 8	Friday: Safety in RPGs Activities: • Complete Reflection Journal 3: Safety in RPGs by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Choose one (1) of the following to examine: Josephine Baird's “Role-playing the Self: Trans Self-Expression, Exploration, and Embodiment in (Live Action) Role-playing Games” (reading) or Baird's “Designing for Trans & Nonbinary Experiences & Exploration in Larps.” • Work on Peer Reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it is ready. • Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Week 9	
Unit 8	Monday: Complete Peer Reviews Activities: • Submit one to three (1-3) Peer Reviews by 11:59pm in your time zone. See instructions for more details. • Send your peer review(s) to your group members over email. • Schedule an appointment with Uppsala University’s Language Workshop for academic writing assistance (if needed). Homework: • Read Section 3.6 on “Identity Theories” in Diakolambrianou et al.'s “Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. • Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Unit 8 and 9	Wednesday: Role-playing, Identity, and You Activities: • Complete Reflection Journal 4: Role-playing, Identity, and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Watch the first 28 minutes of Taisto Suominen's "Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs -- Taisto Suominen" until the end of the section on augmented reality.

	Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Unit 9	Friday: Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs Activities: Optional for Pass: Complete Discussion 13: Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Week 10	
Unit 10	Monday: Transformative Game Design and You Activities: - Complete Reflection Journal 5: Transformative Game Design and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Unit 10	Wednesday: Writing Workshop Activities: - Visit the Language Workshop for academic writing assistance when appointments are available (if needed). Homework: - Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Unit 10	Friday: Transformative Game Design and You Activities: Submit Final Draft of Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone.

Course schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor(s). Please note that schedule changes may occur during the semester.

Assessments & Deliverables

Note: You may not use AI tools in this class. We would much rather read a post with imperfect spelling and grammar or structure than a post that was constructed largely by a computer. An exception is spelling/grammar checker in Google Docs or Word.

Keep in mind also that the majority of your sources already cited in Chicago Author-Date format in each unit, so you should not need a tool for that either.

Deliverables:

- **Discussion Boards Assignments:** You are expected to participate in each discussion assignment, including your initial posts and posts to the required number of peers throughout the week in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.
- **Reflection Journal Assignments:** You are also expected to complete Reflection Journals at the end of each Unit. Note that only your instructors and you can see your journals.
- **Major Assignment 1 -- Transformative Game Design Proposal:** You will write a short paper for your transformative game design project. You will cite three (3) concepts from three different sources within the course in Chicago Author-Date format or another citation style of your choice. Note that citations must be consistent and correct according to the style guide. Please read the linked instructions for [Major Assignment 1](#) for more details.
- **Game Design Document and Playtest Plan:** These documents should contain all the instructions for your nano-game that facilitators and participants need to play, as well as your plans for playtesting and receiving feedback. Please read the linked instructions for [Game Design Document and Playtest Plan](#) for more details.
- **Major Assignment 2 -- Transformative Game Design:** Building upon Major Assignment 1, you will compose an academic article using Research Through Design as a method based upon your process of designing, playtesting, and analyzing the results of your nanogame. You will submit a complete first draft for peer and instructor feedback, then revise your assignment based upon these comments for your final submission at the end of the course. Your revised Game Design Document should be included as an Appendix at the end of the paper. Please read the linked instructions for [Major Assignment 2](#) for more details.
 - Your assignment should cite at least **one (1) source on Research Through Design** as a method, as well as **at least three (3) additional sources from the course** in [Chicago Author-Date format](#) or another citation style of your choice. Note that citations must be consistent and correct according to the style guide.
- **Peer Feedback -- Transformative Game Design:** You will read the first complete draft of Major Assignment 2 for one to three (1-3) of your peers in your group and respond to the required feedback questions to help them improve their work. Peer review is essential to the examination process in academic work.

- For consideration for a grade of **Pass** on your own Major Assignment 2, you must complete one (1) peer review for a member of your group.
- For consideration for a grade of **Pass with Distinction** on your own Major Assignment 2, you may complete peer reviews for *all* members of your group (2 reviews for a group of 3 including yourself; 3 reviews for a group of 4).

Assessment: Deliverables will be graded based on completion of the required components on a Fail (U)/Pass (G)/Pass with Distinction basis.

Please review the [Schedule & Instructions](#) link for details about grading.

Policy on Generative AI

Introduction – No use of generative AI (GAI) is permitted in this course. The use of GAI is considered a breach of academic honesty with the same penalties as plagiarism.

Rationale – Engaging with this course is primarily about your intellectual, emotional, and creative growth. Work generated by AI does not reflect your growth, nor does it prepare you for the critical thinking and communication skills required in the working world or as an engaged community member.

Your job as a student is to engage with course materials, develop your critical thinking skills, create games from your own imagination, personally reflect on the content from your unique perspective, and articulate your own thoughts through writing and presentation skills, cite credible scholarly sources where appropriate.

My job is to assess how well you have performed these tasks. I am interested and enthusiastic about hearing your unique perspective, not the “right answer.” The answers GAI provides are often highly inaccurate and shallow. Furthermore, they can contain ethically problematic statements that run counter to meeting our learning objectives and cultivating a supportive atmosphere in the classroom.

- **Penalties** – Using generative AI in any assignment may result in a failing grade and/or report to the university for academic dishonesty. Issues with grammar and structure are unlikely to lead to a failing grade on an assignment, but the use of GAI likely will. This is not an English course; do not worry too much about grammar or writing a “perfect” paper.
- **Prohibited** –
 - Students are not permitted to submit assignments created using generative AI for their written work or presentations.

- Students can use the built in grammar/spelling checkers in web browsers, Google Docs, or Microsoft Word. However, students may not use built-in AI tools such as Google Gemini or Microsoft Co-pilot, nor may they use any other AI tool to generate text or alter spelling/grammar. Grammarly is no longer a permitted resource for this reason.
- Students may not use generative AI for research. GAI is not considered a credible source, as it often “hallucinates” falsehoods as truth, does not cite where it finds them, or invents citations that do not exist. Instead, students must consult original sources and cite them, such as sources from Google Scholar and the Uppsala Library.
- Note that you will **likely not need to include any external sources** outside of the ones cited for you and included in the Overviews for each Unit. You may use those citations, as well as links to the sources we cite, e.g., (Montola 2010, in Diakolambrianou et al. 2024).

Schedule & Instructions

Course Activities

All activities and homework assignments are **listed in the Course Calendar in sequential, chronological order. Modules** are also organized in sequential order. To find a specific assignment or due date scroll down or use CTRL-F and search.

All activities are compulsory unless marked **Optional** in the Course Calendar. You will need to **plan 20 hours a week for all activities**, e.g., the equivalent of a 50% job, so please plan your schedule accordingly. We have done our best to weigh the time it will take to complete your homework each week, including the relative complexity of the materials. Some days you will have more videos, whereas others you will have more readings.

- Submit all deliverables in the **corresponding links in the Units under Modules**.
- You must **complete all requirements of assignments**, including replies to your peers, for full credit.
- **Optional assignments will be marked accordingly** in the Course Calendar. They enable you to achieve a Pass with Distinction instead of a Pass so you can make decisions about your workload.
- **All assignments are due the end class on the day assigned, i.e. Mondays at 11:59pm in your time zone.** When possible, please post the night before to make sure your peers have time to read your posts.

- If your country has a holiday on a due date, complete your work on the next work day.
- All discussion posts require **replies to two peers**, which should be in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format, as described in the Unit instructions.
- Plagiarism and the use of generative AI for writing tasks is not permitted in any courses in the Transformative Game Design Master's and may result in disciplinary measures.

Rules for Absence & Compulsory Elements:

The course requires consistent engagement on **Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays**, especially in forum discussions. In order to pass this course, **you must achieve a Pass or Pass with Distinction** on the majority of your assignments (see below). Instructors have the right to require specific assignments be completed to pass the course, e.g., Major Assignments. If you need to be absent, please notify your instructor(s) over email immediately to help you create a plan for your success.

Video meetings with your peers can take place at your convenience. If you are having trouble with scheduling sessions, please message us. All games must be playtested and feedback must be gathered and addressed for full credit.

Assignments, Deadlines and Attempts:

Each Assignment in this course has a re-exam offered 45 days after the original due date. Re-exams requires that you apply to be made part of the assessment. Contact your instructor over email for approval to turn in any late work.

If you fall behind in Transformative Game Design courses, you are permitted to turn in work late, but you may incur a grade penalty. If you must prioritize assignments, please focus on the time sensitive assignments that involve your peers, i.e. playtests, peer reviews, and discussion forums. Make sure to email your instructor(s) for guidance on getting back on track in the course.

Rules for Group Work:

Students are expected to join a group under People in the first week, communicate regularly with their group, and engage in all playtests by the required due dates. Refer to the Course Calendar to take note of these dates.

Group work is your responsibility to arrange. If for some reason playtesting is not possible with the group, please contact the instructor immediately to see if you can find a solution. We recommend joining the student-run course Discord to work out solutions before contacting the instructor. Abandoning group members without making other arrangements is not acceptable.

If the group experiences issues destructive for the learning environment, please contact the Course Responsible. Failing to be a functional part of a group may lead to removal from the group and failing the group assignment, if grading criteria pertain to performing within a group context.

Grading Criteria and Weighting:

For the grade **Pass**, students are required to achieve the grade Pass on the two Major Assignments. Please review the assignment instructions and Grading Rubric for details. Students may revise each paper twice.

- Students must also receive an overall average grade of Pass or Complete for all other assignments (Discussions, Journals, and Game Design Document). **In this course, an overall grade of Pass on these assignments is 70% in the Assignments Weighted Total.**
- Students must also take part in all playtests and provide one (1) peer review for a member of their playtest group, provided that member submits their assignment by the deadline.

For the grade **Pass with Distinction**, students are required to achieve the grade Pass with Distinction on the two Major Assignments. Please review the assignment instructions and Grading Rubric for details. Students may revise each paper twice.

- Students must also receive an overall average grade of Pass with Distinction or Complete for all other assignments (Discussions and Journals), including assignments marked as optional in the Course Calendar. **In this course, an overall grade of Pass with Distinction on these assignments is 85% in the Assignments Weighted Total.** A grade of Complete is also needed for the Game Design Document.
- Students must also take part in all playtests and provide peer reviews for all members of their playtest group, provided the members submit on time. (2 reviews in groups of 3 total including the reviewer; 3 reviews in groups of 4 total).

In exceptional circumstances, based on conduct within the online classroom or toward teachers, the instructor reserves the right to lower a student's grade as the course is progressing.

Supervision and Tutoring:

For help with course content, please email the instructor. For help with writing, please contact the online linked [Language Workshop](#). Note you should contact the [Language Workshop](#) earlier rather than later to be able to get help during peak periods.

Expected Entry Skills:

You are expected to be able to read, write, and communicate in English. Knowledge of games and design will be helpful, but not necessary.

Feedback:

In this course, you will receive brief feedback on discussion posts and journals. You will receive feedback on your Major Assignments, which generally be a paragraph of comments in addition to how you were assessed in relation to each of the grading criteria based upon an attached rubric.

Technical Requirements:

You are expected to have a functional computer running either MacOS or Windows (not tablets), for the duration of the course. You must have reliable internet access throughout the week and enough bandwidth to watch videos and run the Zoom video conferencing software in a quiet location.

Rules for generative AI:

This course does not allow the use of generative AI in developing any written work, including essays, discussion posts, journals, and game design documents. For example, you may use the built-in non-generative AI features of Microsoft Word, Google Docs, or your browser for spelling/grammar check, but not built-in AI tools like Copilot.

Changes since last year:

- Some assignments marked as optional to give students more control over their workload
- An extra playtest removed to help with time management
- Several short design brainstorms integrated into discussions and journals
- Assignment instructions adjusted to only permit concepts from the textbook

Learning Objectives and Success Criteria

On successful completion of Introduction to Transformative Game Design, the student should be able to:

- **Show Knowledge of the Field:** Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
- **Use Game Play, Design, and Playtesting:** Design, play, iterate, and critique transformative analog games that have specific growth-related goals.

- **Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:** Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.

Please see below for specific Learning Objectives and Success Criteria for each type of assignment:

- **Discussion Boards Assignments:** You are expected to participate in each discussion assignment, including your initial posts and posts to the required number of peers throughout the week in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.
 - *Learning Objective 1 -- Show Knowledge of the Field:* Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
 - *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your initial posts answering all questions thoroughly. Reply to at least two (2) initial posts of your peers throughout the week in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.
- **Reflection Journal Assignments:** You are also expected to complete Reflection Journals at the end of each Unit. Note that only your instructors and you can see your journals.
 - *Learning Objective 1 -- Show Knowledge of the Field:* Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
 - *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your journals answering all questions thoroughly.
- **Major Assignment 1 -- Transformative Game Design Proposal:** You will write a **paper** for your transformative game design project, due at the end of Unit 3. You

will cite **three (3) concepts from three different sources** within the course in [Chicago Author-Date format](#) or another citation style of your choice. Note that citations must be consistent and correct according to the style guide.

- *Learning Objective 1 -- Show Knowledge of the Field:* Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
 - *Learning Objective 2 -- Use Game Play, Design, and Playtesting:* Design, play, iterate, and critique transformative analog games that have specific growth-related goals.
 - *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your proposal in the required format with the minimum number of sources included and cited properly.
- **Game Design Document and Playtest Plan:** These documents should contain all the instructions for your nano-game that facilitators and participants need to play, as well as your plans for playtesting and receiving feedback.
 - *Learning Objective 2 -- Use Game Play, Design, and Playtesting:* Design, play, iterate, and critique transformative analog games that have specific growth-related goals.
 - *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your Game Design Document and Playtest Plan in the required format.
- **Major Assignment 2 -- Transformative Game Design:** You will compose an academic article using Research Through Design as a method based upon your process of designing, playtesting, and analyzing the results of your nanogame. You will submit a complete first draft for peer feedback, then revise your assignment based upon these comments for your final submission at the end of the course. Your assignment should cite at least **one (1) source on Research Through Design** as a method, as well as **at least three (3) additional sources**

from the course in [Chicago Author-Date format](#) or another citation style of your choice. Note that citations must be consistent and correct according to the style guide.

- *Learning Objective 1 -- Show Knowledge of the Field:* Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
 - *Learning Objective 2 -- Use Game Play, Design, and Playtesting:* Design, play, iterate, and critique transformative analog games that have specific growth-related goals.
 - *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your paper in the required format with each section. Include the minimum number of sources included and cited properly.
-
- **Peer Feedback -- Transformative Game Design:** You will read the first complete draft of Major Assignment 3 for one to three (1-3) of your peers and respond to the required feedback questions to help them improve their work.
 - *Learning Objective 1 -- Show Knowledge of the Field:* Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
 - *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete responses to each required question on the prompt in response to the drafts of each member of your group.

Course Materials

All course materials are embedded as files in the course or linked. Make sure to review the Overviews for each Unit, as well as the linked materials in the instructions of each assignment.

[A complete list of Course Materials is linked here](#), including required materials, additional materials on these topics (not required), and further reading in the field.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Video version of FAQ here:

https://youtu.be/DMvRFRQC7_k

Note: Toggle the CC button for captions in English.

Important: The FAQ has been modified since the video was filmed. For the most up-to-date information, read below.

* * *

We realize that online learning in this discussion format may be new to many of you. We have put together a Frequently Asked Questions that hopefully will help you. We have included the questions below for your convenience.

Note that the above video may not reflect the current FAQ. When in doubt, follow the written version.

Where do I find all the course information I need to do my homework?

Click [Course Calendar](#), which gives you your daily assignments due and homework, as well as [Modules](#), which gives you the sequence in which to do them. Make sure to thoroughly read the information under each Unit and watch the orientation videos provided for each Unit, which sometimes also serve as mini lecture introductions.

What are the textbooks for the programme?

Currently, we have one primary textbook for the Master's programme, *The Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (Bowman, Diakolambrianou, and Brind, eds).

We also are developing a *Implementing Transformative Role-playing Games* textbook to companion it (to be completed June 2026). For now, we will rely on other key resources, including *Larp Design* (Koljonen et al. eds. 2019), *The Routledge Handbook of Role-playing Game Studies* (Zagal and Deterding eds. 2024), the *International Journal of Role-playing*, *Analog Game Studies*, the *Wyrd Con Companion Books*, and other sources.

Curricular materials to augment the course are being developed by the Erasmus+ EDGE consortium (see below).

How long should posts and responses to peers be?

Please write **one (1) paragraph of 4-6 sentences** of length for each numbered prompt in the initial discussion forum. Most discussions have 3 clusters of questions, each of which you should answer. In that case, you will have 3 paragraphs.

For replies, please **compose five (5) substantive sentences** including at least one question to prompt discussion from your peers.

Many of you may want to post more than this requirement, **but please try to be brief and adhere to the sentence limits**. We absolutely love that you get excited about the content and sharing with one another! But keep in mind many of your peers may have jobs, kids, other studies, and health issues that may prevent them from extensive engagement in the forums.

Remember that you also have your **reflection journals**, which you can use as spaces to expand upon your thoughts from the Unit. You are welcome to exceed the sentence limits there.

How many posts are required for each discussion?

The minimum is three (3): one (1) for your initial post, and then two (2) responses to the posts of your peers. Note that replies to your own posts do not count toward this minimum. Of course, we recommend continuing the conversation past the initial replies -- hence the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format -- but we realize not everyone has the time to communicate all week.

Is it rude to abruptly end a conversation?

Not in an online course. We all have schedules to maintain and some of us have more free time than others. Get what you can from the discussions, but also make sure you are moving on to complete the next required activities for the course.

Can I turn in late work?

Yes -- but, you will be missing the most important component of this course, which is the active participation in the discussion forum. **The discussion forum is the lifeblood of the online classroom**. Please try to respect your peers by responding to their posts on time as much as possible. Similarly, please prioritize your time-sensitive Playtest Sessions and Peer Reviews above other assignments if necessary, as they are necessary for composing your papers and for providing crucial feedback for your peers.

My Group is too small/my peers are not responding/I need to change groups. What should I do?

Please contact us immediately over email and we can help you figure out a solution. You can also brainstorm solutions with other classmates on the student-run Discord. We

have a forum in this Module for this purpose, but students will not likely check it, so Discord is preferred.

The reading/videos/other materials are difficult! How should I manage my time?

This is always an ongoing question in academic courses. In our case, we have some texts that are popular and intended for a general audience and some that are academic. Either way, **the important thing is for you to get something meaningful from the texts that can help inform your work.** Do not worry about understanding every word or memorizing facts. Later in the course, we will be learning the [Toulmin Method](#), which I have found helpful in narrowing down the main thesis of a paper, its reasoning, and its evidence.

When in doubt, **skim the materials and focus on your designing and writing**, as that is a major component of your grade and our learning objectives for this class. Especially skim if we tell you to "familiarize yourself" rather than "read." You can always return to these materials later.

Also, Sarah uses the **Read Aloud function**, which she finds very helpful for listening to texts rather than reading them. This is great for when she has chores or other activities to do, which she can do while listening. Adobe Acrobat and most web browsers have this functionality. The best one she has found so far is the web browser Microsoft Edge, which allows you to choose which accent you would like to hear and has a great natural flow. Some sources, such as videos on YouTube, also let you play at a faster speed.

If you have documented accessibility needs, you may be able to request more sophisticated software from the university.

Where will the instructors engage with my work?

We give brief feedback on each discussion post, but the journals and your Major Assignments are where we will give you individualized comments based on the content you provide. Of course, we cannot respond to everything you write, but we are reading and are present. For Major Assignments, we will grade using a Rubric, which you can see attached to the assignment.

Where can I find more sources on X or Y topic?

For the purposes of these courses, we ask that you focus on the resources we include whenever possible. However, we have developed [a linked Archive with several bibliographies](#) on various topics relevant to Transformative Game Design that you may use in future research, including for your thesis at the end of the programme.

How do I cite concepts in this course?

- **Cite the specific chapter from the textbook**, not the full book, which is an edited volume. The authors are different in each chapter. If you cite only the editors, you are erasing the contributions of other authors.
 - In Chicago Author-Date, chapters with **more than three authors** are cited with the first author, followed by et al. In our case, we will apply this principle only for in-text citations, as we want to acknowledge the authors in our field in the citations.
 - Therefore, for textbook chapters, you will cite in-text as either (Bowman et al. 2024) or (Diakolambrianou et al. 2024) and include the page number where you found the information.
 - In your References page, **include all authors** to give credit where credit is due.
- In general, in all academic work, you should read the original sources to make sure the concept is being conveyed accurately. You can then cite both sources, for example:
 - (Kemper 2020; Bowman et al. 2024).
- If you do not read the original source, you must indicate in the text where you found the information in one of the following ways:
 - If the source is **cited** in the text but not quoted, i.e., summarized or paraphrased, you will write "as cited in" for example:
 - (Kemper 2020, as cited in Bowman et al. 2024).
 - If you integrate a quote included in the textbook, you will write "qtd. in" for example:
 - (Kemper 2020, qtd. in Bowman et al. 2024).

What is EDGE and how does it relate to this programme?

EDGE is a joint Erasmus+ Higher Education Cooperation Partnership project between Uppsala University, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Dragons' Nest, Chaos League, and Avalon Larp Studio. The project is intended to augment the existing curriculum for this programme, including:

- **Curriculum Development:** New videos, modules, a Bachelor's elective course, complete versions of the 4 core Transformative Game Courses, and an archive including extensive bibliographies on many relevant topics.

- **Textbooks:** The [linked Transformative Role-playing Game Design](#) and *Implementing Transformative Role-playing Games* textbooks (to be completed June 2026).
 - The textbook writers include: Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Josefin Westborg, Angie Bandhosingh, Josephine Baird, Simon Brind, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Alessandro Giovannucci, Guus von Tilborg, Felipe García-Soriano, Halfdan Keller Justesen, Taisto Suominen, Sagalinn Tangen, and Josephine Rydberg.
- **Tech Toolkit:** Guidelines for integrating various types of technology into the analog role-playing experience, including pros, cons, and best practices. Link to the [Tech Toolkit here](#). The Toolkit also includes a larp scenario called *Meet Me Halfway* that experiments with different technologies, and a Larp in Tech workshop. Some of these guidelines will be sourced with permission from previous workshop attendees.
- **Transformative Game to Teach Design:** A two-day larp teaching principles in transformative game design through embodied play for metareflection. This larp will be run in September 2025 in Italy as part of the project and made available for others to localize and run June 2026.

[Click here for more information about EDGE.](#)

* * *

There will likely be more questions in the future, so we will let you know if more answers emerge.

We hope you find this information helpful!

-- Sarah and Josephine --

Looking For Group Discussion Forum

If you are having trouble finding a group or your group is not responsive, you can post here with your availability and potentially find other group members. Keep in mind it might be more helpful to ask on the student-run Discord.

Hope this helps!

-- Sarah --

Unit 1: Introduction to Transformative Game Design

Overview: Introduction to Transformative Game Design



Welcome to our unit Introduction to Transformative Game Design! This course explores foundational concepts and practices to consider when designing for transformative impacts. In addition to lectures, discussions, and journals, you will also be playing at least one game and designing a game.

Most class activities are asynchronous, meaning that you will submit your work on specific due dates, but there are no assigned class times where you must log in. These activities are typically discussion boards, journals, peer reviews, and major assignments.

Discussion forum engagement is the lifeblood of the course. Since we are all in different time zones, please post your initial discussions the night before the class day. Then, engage in the discussion forum by responding to **two (2) of your peers** in **Ask a Question, Answer a Question** format. See the **Discussion Forum Instructions** in the Unit for more information.

Reflection journals are viewable only by your instructors. In Reflection journals, you will consider the work you have read, watched, and discussed all week and tie it to your personal thoughts and experiences.

Playtesting and feedback sessions will take place over video conferencing within your peer group. We recommend Zoom, as Uppsala provides this software [for free linked here](#). We will give you options for groups, but you will schedule meeting times within your group. Please try to be as flexible as possible with one another, as we are logging in from various parts of the world and have different schedules of availability.

- You must playtest and receive feedback from your peers on your game twice during this course.
- Each group member's playtest should be a maximum of 1 hour -- maximum of 45 min for game play and 15 min total for feedback.
- You will also have another session where you will play a nano-game together, so plan for a minimum of three (3) sessions total.

Major Assignments are papers you will write for the class. Major Assignments 1 and 2 are key benchmarks for advancing to the next course, Transformative Game Design 1.

Your **Game Design Document** will help you practice writing facilitation instructions for your games in the future.

Please familiarize yourself with the contents of the course including the syllabus, the calendar, and the units, then take your Orientation Quiz, which is linked in this Unit.

Resources in Each Unit

Each Unit Overview will feature several important sources, so make sure you read the Overview first. These materials will be organized as follows:

- **Required materials:** These are materials you need to examine to complete your assignments in the Unit.
- **Recommended materials:** These are lists of materials from which you can choose a specified number of sources to examine for your assignments, e.g., choosing two sources from a linked bibliography. You are not required to read all of them.
- **Choose one (1) of the following to examine:** In these cases, you have a choice between different forms of media from the same author with similar content, usually a video or a reading.
- **Optional materials on similar content:** These resources feature similar content as your required materials, e.g., a video containing similar content as your textbook chapter. As some student learn better by watching, listening, or reading, for example, these materials may be supportive of different modes of learning.
- **Additional materials on these topics (not required):** These are assigned materials on these topics from previous versions of the course in case you want to dive deeper into the content.
- **Further readings in the field as whole:** This list features several longer books on topics related to role-playing game studies overall for future reference.

Unit 1 will provide basic information on role-playing games, including tabletop, larp, and freeform. We will also introduce transformative role-playing game design.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Orientation Quiz
- Introduction to Tabletop Role-playing Games

- Introduction to Live Action Role-playing Games (larp)
- Transformative Game Design
- Safety in role-playing games

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We have linked resources that are open access. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Videos:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2021. "Introduction to Tabletop Role-playing Games -- Sarah Lynne Bowman." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, December 31.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2021. "Introduction to Live Action Role-playing Games (Larp) -- Sarah Lynne Bowman." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, December 5.
- Bowman, Sarah Bowman. 2022. "Safety in Role-playing Games I: Introduction -- Sarah Lynne Bowman." Transformative Play Initiative, February 4.
- Bowman, Sarah Bowman. 2022. "Safety in Role playing Games Part III: During the Game -- Sarah Lynne Bowman." Transformative Play Initiative, February 4.

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind. 2024. "Preface." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design.*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 14-18. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Angie Bandhoesingh, Alessandro Giovannucci, and Taisto Suominen. 2024. "Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to Role-playing Games and Cousin Activities." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design.*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 19-47. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, and Josefin Westborg. 2024. "Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design.*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 49-79. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

#Feminism Scenarios:

Review the following introductory readings:

- Bushyager, Misha, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling. 2017. "Front Matter." In #Feminism: A Nano-Game Anthology, edited by Misha Bushyager, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling. Pelgrane Press, Ltd.
- Bushyager, Misha, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling. 2017. "How to Play." In #Feminism: A Nano-Game Anthology, edited by Misha Bushyager, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling. Pelgrane Press, Ltd.

Choose one (1) scenario to play with your group:

- Boss, Emily Care. 2017. "Ma, Can I Help You With That." In #Feminism: A Nano-Game Anthology, edited by Misha Bushyager, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling, 61-62. Pelgrane Press, Ltd.
- Beltrán, Strix. 2017. "Möbius." In #Feminism: A Nano-Game Anthology, edited by Misha Bushyager, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling, 15-16. Pelgrane Press, Ltd.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2017. "Curtain Call." In #Feminism: A Nano-Game Anthology, edited by Misha Bushyager, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling, 71-72. Pelgrane Press, Ltd.
- Kemper, Jonaya. "Slumber Party." In #Feminism: A Nano-Game Anthology, edited by Misha Bushyager, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling, 19-20. Pelgrane Press, Ltd.
- Wei, Eva. 2017. "How to Be Ava White." In #Feminism: A Nano-Game Anthology, edited by Misha Bushyager, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling, 52-53. Pelgrane Press, Ltd.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.

- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Sign up for Your Playtest and Feedback Group

For this class, you will join a group of 3-4 students based on your preferred schedule for video conference meetings. This group will be your Playtest and Feedback group for the course. Together, you will:

- 1) **Play one (1) of the five (5) recommended nanogames from #Feminism.** [You can find the scenarios linked here under Playtest 1.](#)
- 2) **Playtest the games designed by each group member and give them feedback twice.** In other words, you will be iterating upon your game design based upon their feedback 2 times, so you will need 2 sessions for each game. We recommend booking several playtests in the same session if possible. Game play should not exceed 45 minutes and feedback should not exceed 15 minutes, for a total of one (1) hour maximum per game. Time yourselves.
- 3) **Provide feedback on Major Assignment 2 for one to three (1-3) of your group members (see instructions for Peer Review).**

To sign up for your playtest group:

- a) **Click on People.**
- b) **Join a group under the Groups tab:** Flexible; Weekday Daytime CET (Central European Time); Weekday Evenings CET (Central European Time); Weekend Daytime CET (Central European Time); or Weekend Evenings CET (Central European Time).

-- Please join a group that is close to being full when possible, as a full group will make playtesting and feedback sessions more fruitful.

-- To figure out your time in CET, use the linked [International Meeting Planner](#). Keep in mind that the differences between time zones may shift throughout the semester based upon Summer Time vs. Winter Time.

-- If your schedule is quite flexible, choose a slot in a Flexible group. If necessary, we may ask you to join a group with a more limited schedule. Some students have much more spare time than others to meet, so your flexibility might be of great assistance to them.

- c) **After joining a group, click Groups on the left-hand side below the Courses button and find your group.** Post immediately in your group a short introduction and your available times. Use CET to make it easier for everyone to plan.
- d) **Schedule your first meeting, which will be a playtest of one of the available #Feminism nanogames.** You can discuss in the group any scenarios you definitely want to play, as well as share ones you do want to play, but please agree on one of the games.

-- [Uppsala University supports the linked software Zoom](#), which we recommend for all students.

Please email us if you have questions or concerns.

Orientation Quiz

After reviewing the course schedule, deliverables, assessment policies, learning objectives, and success criteria, answer the following questions:

1. I can turn in my assignments any day of the week I choose.

TRUE / FALSE

2. I must respond to the required number of peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format throughout the week in the Discussion Boards.

TRUE / FALSE

3. I am required to meet over video conferencing with my group three (3) times for playtesting and feedback at a time of our choosing

TRUE / FALSE

4. This course is synchronous, meaning the class meets at assigned times for video conference lectures.

TRUE / FALSE

5. I will have assignments due by 11:59pm in my time zone on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

TRUE / FALSE

6. I am required to submit two (2) Major Assignments for this course, in addition to Discussions, Journals, and a Game Design Document.

TRUE / FALSE

7. Our group can choose any game to playtest.

TRUE / FALSE

8. I can playtest with anyone to fulfill the requirement, including people outside of this class.

TRUE / FALSE

9. If I have questions or concerns, I should email the instructor(s) immediately

TRUE / FALSE

10. I am required to peer review the paper of at least one of the members of my playtest group

TRUE / FALSE

Discussion 1: Introduce Yourself and Connect!

Let's get to know each other!

Please read the syllabus and review the course schedule. Then, answer the following questions in complete sentences and paragraph form:

1. What is your name and what pronouns should we use for you, e.g. they/them, she/hers, he/his, etc.?
2. Where in the world are you located currently? Feel free to include any other aspects of your cultural background you would like to share.
3. What is your educational background?
4. What is your career and current professional affiliations (if relevant)?
5. Why did you choose to take this course? How do you think you might use the content of this course?

* * *

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to **at least two (2) of your peers** using the **Ask a Question, Answer a Question** format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 2: Introduction to Role-playing Games

Read Bowman et al's "Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to Role-playing Games and Cousin Activities" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman's linked "[Introduction to Tabletop Role-playing Games](#)" (47 min) and "[Introduction to Live Action Role-playing Games \(Larp\)](#)" (33 min).

* * *

Then, answer the following questions (guidelines 1 paragraph per question. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences):

1. Have you ever experienced tabletop role-playing games, as a player, designer, and/or facilitator?
 - A. If so, consider a game or experience that stands out for you. Why was it significant?
 - B. If not, what aspects of the video did you find intriguing or surprising?
2. Have you ever experienced live action role-playing games (larps), as a player, designer, and/or facilitator?

- A. If so, consider a game or experience that stands out for you. Why was it significant?
 - B. If not, what aspects of the video did you find intriguing or surprising?
- 3. Have you ever experienced activities “adjacent” to analog role-playing games, such as simulation, immersive theatre, interactive fiction, video game RPGs, drama therapy, role-playing in education, etc?
 - A. If so, please describe any experiences that stood out to you. How do these experiences connect or depart from the activities described in the videos? Be specific.
 - B. If not, are there adjacent activities that you might want to explore? Be specific.
- 4. Based on the videos and/or your own experiences, what factors would you say make analog role-playing games unique or special? Be specific.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Reflection Journal 1: This Course and You

The reflection journal is a place for you to explore your thoughts in more depth. Only your instructors can read your journals.

Please respond to the following questions:

- 1. Who or what inspired you to join this class?
- 2. What are you most hoping to gain from it?
- 3. What content are you most excited to explore?
- 4. What content from this week do you think will be most beneficial for you in your life? Is any content less relevant?
- 5. Do you have any concerns or anxieties about taking this online class?
- 6. This course runs at 50% time, which equals 20 hours a week. How do you plan to manage your time this semester? Do you have more time to study on weekdays or weekends? Be specific.

Discussion 3: Introduction to Transformative Game Design

Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman's "[Safety in Role-playing Games I: Introduction -- Sarah Lynne Bowman](#)" and "[Safety in Role playing Games Part III: During the Game -- Sarah Lynne Bowman](#)."

Read Sections 2.1-2.5 until the end of "Populations Overview" of Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Optional: Watch the linked video, Sarah Lynne Bowman's "[Introduction to Transformative Game Design](#)" (59 min).

* * *

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Describe the definitions of "transformation" as discussed in the materials. Do these definitions resonate with you? If so, why? If not, what alternative definition(s) would you suggest or prefer?
2. Describe three (3) concepts from the materials that distinguish transformative game design from other forms of game design. What are your thoughts on these concepts? Can you think of other concepts that should be also included? If so, be specific.
3. Which category best fits the work you currently do or plan to do: leisure, educational, or therapeutic? Why? If none of these categories fit, what category would you use to describe your work?

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 2: Transformative Leisure Role-playing Games

Overview: Transformative Leisure Role-playing Games



Welcome to our unit on Transformative Leisure Role-playing Games! These types of games were not necessarily designed for an educational or therapeutic purpose, but that players might find them transformative in a variety of different ways.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Transformative leisure role-playing games
- Transformative game design theoretical framework
- Role-playing games designed to explore topics related to feminism: the #Feminism anthology

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We have linked resources that are open access. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, and Josefin Westborg. 2024. "Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 49-79. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.
- Diakolambrianou, Elektra, Sarah Lynne Bowman, Simon Brind, Josefin Westborg, and Kjell Hedgard Hugaas. 2024. "Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 80-139. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.
- Kemper, Jonaya. 2020. "Wyrding the Self." Nordiclarp.org, March 18.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Playtest 1: #Feminism

Organize a video meeting with your playtest group.

Choose one (1) of the five (5) scenarios from *#Feminism* and playtest it together with your group by the due date at 11:59 in your time zone.

Boss, Emily Care. 2017. "Ma, Can I Help You With That."

Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2017. "Curtain Call."

Beltrán, Strix. 2017. "Möbius."

Kemper, Jonaya. "Slumber Party."

Wei, Eva. 2017. "How to Be Ava White."

1. Watch [Safety Video 3](#) before the game. Select at least one (1) safety mechanic to integrate into the playtest. Try to use the other ideas and guidelines presented in the video in your playtest.
2. If your game only features 3 characters and your group has a different number, rotate characters or decide that one player facilitates and/or watches. When possible, give everyone a chance to play.

3. If your game has rules or guidance for touch or physical proximity, find an alternative technique that will be effective through video conferencing. Alternatively, you can verbalize, e.g. "I touch your shoulder. I move closer to you."
4. If the game requires you to use physical objects, either hold them up to the camera, or find a digital way to represent them, e.g., slips of paper can become a shared Google Doc.
5. For scenes requiring music, instead of playing through Zoom, which can be difficult sound-wise, we recommend everyone loading the songs on their own computer.
 - A. For key songs that frame scenes, have everyone mute or use headphones until the song is complete. When everyone is done listening, resume the scene.
 - B. For background songs, one option is to have one headphone speaker in one ear with the music on low for ambiance, then listen to co-players with the other.
 - C. If music is not possible for accessibility reasons, consider it optional. We recommend players listen to the songs at another time if possible to get a sense of the fully designed experience.

Note: We recommend using Gallery view in Zoom to make sure you can see all the players, especially if you plan on using in-game safety mechanics. You can also use Zoom's built-in features, such as the X button; thumbs up and down; and chat for off-game safety communication.

Discussion 4: Transformative Leisure Games

Read Jonaya Kemper's "Wyrding the Self."

Read the rest of "Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Read sections 3.1-3.5 until the end of "Mechanisms of Transformation" of "Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

* * *

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Summarize Kemper's concept of *wyrding the self* in 1-2 sentences in your own words. Describe one (1) practice Kemper recommends to help facilitate this process. Be specific.
2. Describe one (1) of your experiences with leisure games, whether role-playing or otherwise, that in your opinion hold transformative potential.
 - A. What do you think this potential might be?
 - B. Did you notice any transformative impacts in yourself or others? Be specific.
3. Based on one (1) practice discussed in the chapters, briefly describe how you would redesign one (1) or more aspects of the game to augment its transformative potential.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Instructions for Major Assignment 1: Transformative Game Design Proposal

For this assignment, you will write a proposal for your transformative game design project. Please read [Major Assignment 1: Transformative Game Design Proposal](#) for more details.

Unit 3: Therapeutic Role-playing Games

Overview: Therapeutic Role-playing Games



Welcome to our unit on therapeutic role-playing games! These types of games are designed for a therapeutic purpose or to help participants develop social skills under the direction of trained mental health professionals.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Psychology and role-playing games
- Therapeutic approaches to role-playing games
- Counselling skills and facilitation
- "Yes, and..." improv technique

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We have linked resources that are open access. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Readings:

- Diakolambrianou, Elektra, Sarah Lynne Bowman, Simon Brind, Josefin Westborg, and Kjell Hedgard Hugaas. 2024. "Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 80-139. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

Videos:

- Mometrix Academy. 2017. "Counselor: Basic Skills of a Counselor." YouTube, October 11.
- New World Magischola. 2016. "New World Magischola - Short Documentary." YouTube, July 27.
- Taylor, James. 2021. "Brainstorming Technique: The 'Yes, and' Technique." YouTube, March 19.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.

- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 5: Transformative Game Design Brainstorming and Feedback

Watch the linked "[New World Magischola - Short Documentary](#)" and James Taylor's "[Brainstorming Technique: The 'Yes, and' Technique](#)."

* * *

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Brainstorm 3 transformative role-playing nano-game ideas you would imagine yourself designing. By nano-game, we mean a game that can be played in 1 hour or less.
 - A. Discuss the transformative impact(s) that you would like to encourage through each design.
2. After posting your concept pitches and reviewing the "Yes-And" video, give constructive feedback to each pitch presented by at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question using the yes-and strategy. For example, "Yes, and you could add X to help them explore Y..."

Discussion 6: Therapeutic Role-playing Games

Read Section 3.7-3.8 until the end of "Theories of Interaction" in Diakolambrianou et al.'s "Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials" in Transformative Role-playing Game Design.

Watch Mometrix Academy's "Counselor: Basic Skills of a Counselor."

Optional: Watch Elektra Diakolambrianou's "Psychotherapeutic Applications of Role-playing" (29 min).

* * *

Then, answer the following questions:

1. After examining the material, what is your understanding of the difference between transformative leisure role-playing games and therapeutic role-playing games?
2. Watch the Mometrix Academy video. How do you think basic counseling skills might help in the process of designing and implementing transformative role-playing games? Use a specific example.
3. Please describe your personal experience with therapeutic role-playing, if any.
 - A. Alternatively, if you do not have a personal experience, what intrigues you about therapeutic role-playing, if anything? Be specific.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 4: Educational Role-playing Games

Overview: Educational Role-playing Games



Welcome to our unit on educational role-playing games! These types of games are designed for an educational purpose according to specific learning objectives, such as curricular materials or helping participants develop social skills under the direction of an educator.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Educational theories
- Educational role-playing games, including edu-larp

- Education and you

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We have linked resources that are open access. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Videos:

- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "Introduction to Learning Theories." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, June 30.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "Learning in Praxis." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 4.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "Role-playing Games for Education." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, June 30.

Readings:

- Diakolambrianou, Elektra, Sarah Lynne Bowman, Simon Brind, Josefin Westborg, and Kjell Hedgard Hugaas. 2024. "Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 80-139. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

Recommended materials:

Learning Theories:

- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "Learning Theory: Behaviourism." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 4.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "Learning Theory: Cognitivism." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 4.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "Learning Theory: Constructivism and Constructionism." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 4.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "Learning Theory: Social Constructivism." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, June 30.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Submission of Major Assignment 1: Transformative Game Design Proposal

Write a proposal for your transformative game design project. This project will be a **nano-game** that is playable by your playtest group in **less than an hour over video conferencing**. The nano-game should be designed for **2-3 players not including yourself**, and should have some flexibility in terms of number of players required for your playtest.

Your proposal should be between **700-1000 words**. Use Times New Roman font single-spaced.

This proposal should be written as an analytical academic paper rather than a set of game instructions. You will write instructions in your **Game Design Document**, which is intended for a general audience. Your proposal should include:

1. **Research question:** Include a research question for your project. What problem are you trying to solve or question do you hope to get answered through this design process?

2. **A brief overview of the concept for the nano-game (3-4 paragraphs. A paragraph should contain 4-6 sentences).** This overview should contain:
 - A. **The type of role-playing game:** Tabletop? Larp? Freeform?
 - B. **The target population:** For whom are you designing this game?
 - C. **The purpose:** What transformative impact are you hoping to achieve?
 - D. **The setting:** Where does this game take place in the fiction?
 - E. **The characters:** Who will the players role-play? How do the characters and/or groups relate? (Just provide a rough sketch here. You will focus on character design in more detail later).
 - F. **The scenario:** Why are these characters in this setting?
 - G. **The affordances:** What should the player-characters do in this scenario?
 - H. **The mechanics:** Are there specific mechanics or metatechniques you want to include?
 - I. **The length:** Note that your nano-game should not exceed 1 hr for the whole experience: 45 minutes maximum for the entire game including workshopping and debriefing, making sure you save 15 min for game design feedback from all participants.
 - J. **The safety design:** What before, during, or after safety strategies will you include?
3. **Describe and cite 3 separate concepts from the textbook chapters you have read so far and connect them with your design practice (1 paragraph each for a total of 3).**
 - A. **Focus on details rather than generalities:** Avoid choosing large concepts like "bleed." Instead focus on **three (3) specific** concepts within larger distinct theories or practices that you can define from your sources, for example choosing a specific category of bleed described in the textbook.
 - B. **Apply Concepts to Design Practice:** Discuss specific ways in which these concepts informed your game design practice. Be specific about how the concepts informed, for example, your chosen mechanics, workshop design, debrief questions, etc. This application of course materials to your practice is crucial to this assignment.
 - C. **Only use concepts from the textbook.** Explain each concept in detail, citing the relevant sources in Chicago Author-Date format. We

recommend using the citations we provide for you in the Module Overviews and textbook References, which mostly reflect Chicago Author-Date 6th edition.

- Do not include more than **three (3) concepts**.
- As our learning outcomes center on demonstrating comprehension of analog role-playing game studies, including concepts outside the course materials will result in an **automatic fail on the paper**. You will be able to research more generally in your thesis project.
- You will cite the chapters (not the whole book), and the page numbers where you found the information in the textbook.
- In academic writing, you should demonstrate knowledge of the lineage of a particular concept, not only the source where you first encountered it. The authors of the book did not invent most of the content, hence our citations. Therefore, you will also cite the **original sources we are citing**, which you can find embedded in our in-text citations and the References at the end.

Based on this proposal, you will create a Game Design Document with instructions for facilitation. You will then playtest, receive feedback, and analyze the feedback in a final paper, Major Assignment 2, which will be due at the end of the course. You may use Major Assignment 1 for the the beginning sections of Major Assignment 2.

Important notes

- **Upon completion, please share your Major Assignment 1 immediately with your Playtest group when complete.** Your peers should have the time and opportunity to opt-out as needed. Please contact your teachers if this happens.
- You must receive a passing grade on this assignment to proceed to Transformative Game Design 1. You may not use generative AI on this assignment or any others. We are interested in your own design thoughts, not a machine's.

Instructions for citations

- **Cite the specific chapter from the textbook**, not the full book, which is an edited volume. The authors are different in each chapter. If you cite only the editors, you are erasing the contributions of other authors.
 - In Chicago Author-Date, chapters with **more than three authors** are cited with the first author, followed by et al. In our case, we will apply this

principle only for in-text citations, as we want to acknowledge the authors in our field in the citations.

- Therefore, for textbook chapters, you will cite in-text as either (Bowman et al. 2024) or (Diakolambrianou et al. 2024) and include the page number where you found the information.
- In your References page, **include all authors** to give credit where credit is due.
- In general, in all academic work, you should read the original sources to make sure the concept is being conveyed accurately. You can then cite both sources, for example:
 - (Kemper 2020; Bowman et al. 2024).
- If you do not read the original source, you must indicate in the text where you found the information in one of the following ways:
 - If the source is **cited** in the text but not quoted, i.e., summarized or paraphrased, you will write "as cited in" for example:
 - (Kemper 2020, as cited in Bowman et al. 2024).
 - If you integrate a quote included in the textbook, you will write "qtd. in" for example:
 - (Kemper 2020, qtd. in Bowman et al. 2024).

Instructions for Game Design Document and Playtest Plan

For this assignment, you will submit your Game Design Document and Playtest Plan for your nano-game. Please read the [Major Assignment 2: Game Design Document and Playtest Plan](#) for more details.

Schedule Playtest 2: Your Transformative Game Design

Schedule [Playtest 2: Your Transformative Game Design according to these linked instructions](#). Playtest 2 **should take place after** you submit your [Game Design Document and Playtest Plan](#). Check the Course Calendar for dates.

Important: Please do not playtest without completing your game design document, as you are testing that procedure specifically.

Your playtest should take no more than **one (1) hour per game** including workshop, game play, debriefing, and feedback. You may need multiple playtests depending on time constraints, so plan accordingly.

Discussion 7: Educational Theories

Read Section 3.9 “Educational Theories” in Diakolambrianou et al.'s “Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Watch Josefin Westborg’s “Introduction to Learning Theories,” “Role-playing Games for Education,” and “Learning in Praxis.”

Choose one (1) video from Westborg’s series on Learning Theories under Recommended Materials to watch.

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Have you ever experienced and/or facilitated educational role-playing games? Be specific.
2. Describe a transformational learning situation in which you had a major breakthrough or strong “a-ha” moment.
 1. What were the circumstances of the situation?
 2. How did this breakthrough impact you? Be specific.
3. Choose one (1) of the educational theories or another concept from this unit. Provide a brief design sketch of an educational role-playing game based on this concept. Remember to specify your transformational goal.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 5: Research Through Design

Overview: Research Through Design



Welcome to our unit on Research Through Design! We will discuss ways to design and iterate role-playing games, but also how to take that process a step further and engage in formalized analysis of the process through academic writing. Furthermore, you will focus on designing your game during this unit.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Basic Design
- Restrictions
- Playtesting
- Introduction to Research Through Design
- Game Design Documents and Playtest Plans

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We have linked resources that are open access. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Simon Brind, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Guus Quinten van Tilborg, Josephine Baird, and Alessandro Giovannucci. 2024. "Chapter 4: Practice: Transformative Role-playing Game Design and Research." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 111-146. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Josephine Baird, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Taisto Suominen. 2024. "Chapter 7: Research in Transformative Game Design." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 226-

253. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

Videos:

- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "[Basic Design](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 10.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "[Design Restrictions](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 10.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "[Game Design: Worked Example](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 10.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2023. "[How to Be a Good Playtester](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 6.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2023. "[Playtesting](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 6.

Readings:

- Nielsen, Martin, and Martin Andresen, et al. 2016. "The Mixing Desk of Larp." Larpwriter Summer School, July.

Choose one (1) resource from the Research Through Design Methods Bibliography:

Readings:

- Coulton, Paul, and Alan Hook. 2017. "Games Design Research through Game Design Practice." In *Game Research: Theory and Practice*, edited by Petri Lankowski and Jussi Holopainen, 97-116. Carnegie Mellon University: ETC Press.
- Kucic, Matt. 2005. "How to Prototype a Game in Under 7 Days." *Game Developer*, October 26.
- Zimmerman, John, and Jodi Forlizzi. 2014. "Research Through Design in HCI." In *Ways of Knowing HCI*, edited by Judith S. Olson and Wendy A. Kellogg, 167-189. Springer.

Audio:

- Gingold, Chaim, and Chris Hecker. "Advanced Prototyping." GDC Vault.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 8: Research Through Design

Read “7.4a: Research Through Design” from Bowman et al.’s “Chapter 7: Research in Transformative Game Design” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Choose **one (1) item from the Research Through Design Method list** to examine.

Watch Josefin Westborg’s “Playtesting” and “How to Be a Good Playtester.”

Then, answer the following questions:

1. After watching Westborg’s videos, what concepts do you think will be most important for your playtesting process? Be specific.
2. Have you engaged in Research Through Design before, either intuitively or deliberately?
 - A. If so, describe your process. Did you learn any new steps to the process? Be specific.
 - B. If not, what aspects might be rewarding when engaging in the process for this project? Be specific.

3. Consider your current game design.
 - A. What insights do you most want to discover through the Research Through Design process?
 - B. How will you structure your feedback questions for your participants to gain these insights?

Finally, respond to at least three (3) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Submission of Game Design Document and Playtest Plan

Submit your Game Design Document and Playtest Plan for your nano-game.

1. Your Game Design Document should contain all the instructions for your nano-game that facilitators and participants need to play. **These instructions should not exceed 1000 words in Times New Roman 12 point font.**
 - A. Briefly introduce the concept of the game and one (1) transformative goal you the scenario aims to cultivate in players.
 - B. Include any instructions for character creation or distribution, character relations, and any mechanics (if relevant).
 - C. Include at least one (1) safety practice.
 - D. Include any workshopping or debriefing you have planned. We will go into more depth about the design of workshops and debriefs in Transformative Game Design 1, but include what you have designed up until this point.
 - E. Include clear instructions for one (1) or more scenes.
2. Outline a Playtest Plan, including:
 - A. The timeframe for the structure of your playtest (see below).
 - B. How you plan to collect feedback at the end of the playtest, such as taking notes or recording (with permission).
 - A. Note that the debrief is a separate phase from feedback and should occur before feedback is solicited.
 - B. Do not send surveys or other forms of data gathering after leaving the video conference, as this practice may result in more "homework" for your players. Feedback should take place during the session itself.

C. The questions you plan to ask your peers after the playtest.

Remember that each playtest and feedback session should not exceed 1 hour: 45 minutes maximum for the entire game including workshopping and debriefing, making sure you save 15 min for game design feedback from all participants. Use a timer. Be respectful of your peers' time so that all games get playtested thoroughly.

Note: You will revise this Game Design Document after your playtests are complete and submit it as an Appendix in Major Assignment 2.

Instructions for Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design

In this assignment, you will analyze the game design process using Research Through Design and integrating concepts from the course. Please read [First Complete Draft of Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design](#) for more details.

Note: You will submit a First Complete Draft of this assignment and send it to your peers for review. Then, you will submit the final draft integrating peer and instructor feedback.

Reflection Journal 2: Role-Playing Game Design and You

Read Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 4: Practice: Transformative Role-playing Game Design and Research" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Read Martin Nielsen and Martin Andresen's "The Mixing Desk of Larp."

Watch Josefin Westborg's "[Basic Design](#)."

Answer the following questions:

1. What parts of the game design process have you found most challenging in the past? In this project?
2. After reviewing the *Mixing Desk of Larp*, which faders do you think are most relevant to your design? How will you approach these faders in your design? Be specific.
3. Choose another fader. How might the design of your game change significantly if you moved that fader to another position? How would the game concept or play experience change? Be specific.

Playtest 2: Your Transformative Game Design

Complete your second Playtest and Feedback Session of your nanogame with your group.

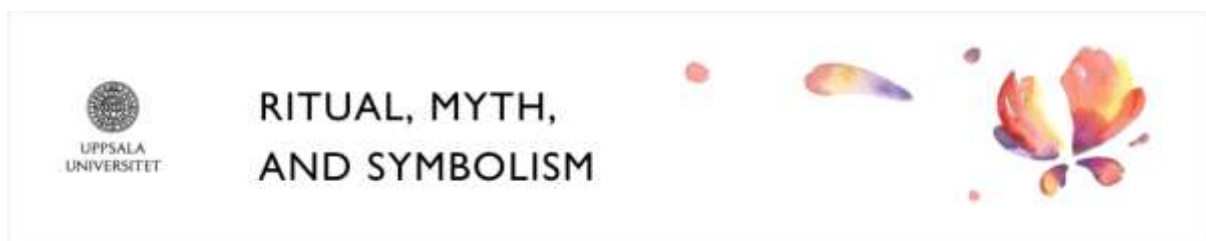
1. **Remember that each playtest and feedback session should not exceed 1 hour: 45 minutes maximum for the playtest making sure you save 15 min for feedback from all participants.**
2. Make sure that each student's game gets playtested. This may require more than one video call.
3. Come to your playtests prepared with your playtest plan and questions for feedback from your playtesters.
4. Remember to collect all feedback during the session itself, not after you leave the video conferencing session.

Important: Do not assign "homework" to the participants after the session, such as questionnaires or interviews. All feedback should be collected in the session itself.

Note: We recommend using Gallery view in Zoom to make sure you can see all the players, especially if you plan on using in-game safety mechanics. You can also use Zoom's built-in features, such as the X button; thumbs up and down; and chat for off-game safety communication.

Unit 6: Ritual, Myth and Symbolism

Overview: Ritual, Myth, and Symbolism



Welcome to our unit on ritual, myth, and symbolism. We can consider role-playing games ritual spaces, but rituals can also be embedded into role-playing games for deeper experiences. Symbolism is often a core component of art and can be especially potent in role-playing games due to enactment and embodiment, including culturally significant symbols, personally important symbols, and archetypes. Storytelling is an essential aspect of role-playing games and is a way that humans make sense of their reality and experiences, including mythology and allegory.

This unit will also provide a brief introduction to academic writing in game design. Research and game design are similar processes, especially when doing Research Through Design, the method we are employing in this class. Like a scientific experiment, you are designing the game, testing it, and adjusting/iterating the experiment according to the results. Academic research makes the hypothesis, theory, method, process, results, analysis (discussion), and conclusion more obvious. While you may engage in these components in a more intuitive manner, academic writing spells them out for the reader to follow regardless of whether they are familiar with your topic or not.

Academic work is unique because it indicates a thorough engagement with others in the discourse, or “scholarly conversation.” In role-playing games, this discourse also includes more informal or “popular” sources, such as magazines or social media threads, since our work is practice-based. Whether engaging with scholarly or popular sources, in this class, we will present our work in a formal academic manner.

As we will learn, academic writing is different from creative writing in that the information is highly structured up front for the reader with a strong degree of rigor. Part of this structure is the *argument*, which means a structured, focused claim that is supported with reasoning and evidence. In this unit, we will examine the ways in which claims are structured, which should help you integrate all the important components needed for a persuasive paper.

Uppsala University offers writing support through the [linked Language Workshop](#). We encourage you to make an appointment if you need additional writing support.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Academic Writing
- Ritual
- Symbolic Enactment
- Archetypes
- Myth

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We have linked resources that are open access. Do not distribute PDFs.

Required materials:

Videos:

- Liu, Jessica. 2020. "Develop a Theoretical Framework in 3 Steps | Scribbr." Scribbr. YouTube, August 20.

Readings:

- Beltrán, Whitney "Strix." 2012. "Yearning for the Hero Within: Live Action Role-Playing as Engagement with Mythical Archetypes." In *Wyrd Con Companion Book 2012*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman and Aaron Vanek, 89-96. Los Angeles, CA: Wyrd Con, 2012.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Simon Brind, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Guus Quinten van Tilborg, Josephine Baird, and Alessandro Giovannucci. 2024. "Chapter 6: Key Concepts and Techniques: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, Magic, Narrative, Culture, and Conflict." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 223-263. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Josephine Baird, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Taisto Suominen. 2024. "Chapter 7: Research in Transformative Game Design." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 264-293. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.
- Nesbitt, Laurel. 2022. "The Toulmin Method." The WAC Clearinghouse. Colorado State University.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.

- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 9: Academic Writing -- Argument

Read Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 7: Research in Transformative Game Design" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Read Laurel Nesbitt's "The Toulmin Method."

Watch Jessica Liu's "[Develop a Theoretical Framework in 3 Steps | Scribbr](#)." (3 min).

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Describe the major steps of the Toulmin Method in building a good argument. Provide a step-by-step example of how you might apply the Toulmin Method steps to try to build your argument based on your claim.
 - A. Propose a one-sentence hypothesis that you plan to explore in your research paper, i.e. your **claim**. Make it specific to your particular project, design process, and research goals, not generic like, "Role-playing games can be transformative."
 - B. Introduce **one (1) theory** and/or concept that you are using to support your **reasoning** for your design choices.
 - C. Your playtest feedback and iteration can be considered your **evidence**. Consider what evidence you hope to see from your playtests. How will you know if your claim has been supported?
 - A. **Note:** In research through design, discovering your claim is actually not supported by your playtest findings is a valid result. You would then propose a new hypothesis or plans for future research in your conclusion.
 - D. Address any counterarguments someone might make against your claim, design process, and/or your method, which in this case is Research Through Design for a small group of student peers.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Discussion 10: Ritual, Symbolism, and Myth

Read sections 6.1-6.4 until the end of “Symbolism” in Bowman et al.'s “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Read Whitney Beltrán’s “Yearning for the Hero Within: Live Action Role-Playing as Engagement with Mythical Archetypes.”

Then, answer the following questions:

1. In 2-3 sentences, describe why Beltrán thinks myth is important to experience through play in contemporary Western society. Can you think of an example of a role-playing game or another type of game that played with mythic elements?
 - A. If not, why do you think such elements might be powerful to experience for players hypothetically?
2. Have you ever experienced or designed a ritual in a game, whether a role-playing game or another type of game? If so, describe.
 - A. If not, describe a ritual you can imagine designing for transformative impacts in a role-playing game.
3. Consider one of the following rites of passage: birth, coming of age, partnership commitment, death. Provide a brief design sketch of a short role-playing game around this rite of passage. Feel free to be creative in terms of genre: fantasy, science fiction, post-apocalyptic, historical, etc.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 7: Culture and Conflict in RPGs

Overview: Culture and Conflict in RPGs



Welcome to our unit on Culture and Conflict in RPGs. We will return to these topics throughout our courses, so this unit is meant as a brief introduction. We will explore different types of culture in RPGs, including fictional and real cultures and subcultures portrayed in games; wider cultures and subcultures to which players belong; design cultures and styles; play cultures; and discourse cultures, such as leisure theory, art, academia, and journalism. We will also explore some of the benefits and risks of integrating culture in design, including cultural appropriation and stereotypes.

These topics will lead us to various forms of conflict related to RPGs, including conflicts embedded within RPG design and surrounding it. Many designers integrate conflicts as a central component of design. Examples of themes include politics and culture; race and ethnicity; and gender and sexuality. Such themes can lead to players experiencing perspective taking, awareness raising, and empathy, but exploring such sensitive topics can also carry risks. Thus, we will also discuss conflicts surrounding RPG Design, including areas where RPG Design can benefit conflicts within individuals or communities, but also areas in which design can intensify conflicts. We will briefly explore these points with regard to advocacy, activism, inclusion, and accessibility.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Types of cultures portrayed in RPGs
- Types of cultures surrounding RPGs
- Culture design
- Cultural appropriation and stereotypes
- Conflict in RPGs and Communities
- Conflicts embedded in RPG Design
- Conflicts surrounding RPG Design

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We have linked resources that are open access. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Simon Brind, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Guus Quinten van Tilborg, Josephine Baird, and Alessandro Giovannucci. 2024. "Chapter 6: Key Concepts and Techniques: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, Magic, Narrative, Culture, and Conflict." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 223-263. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

Videos:

- Schreiber, Alexandra. 2022. "Games and Play for Intercultural Learning." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, April 20.

Choose one (1) of the following resources to examine:

Readings:

- Leonard, Diana J., Jovo Janjetovic, and Maximilian Usman. 2021. "Playing to Experience Marginalization: Benefits and Drawbacks of 'Dark Tourism' in Larp." *International Journal of Role-Playing* 11: 25-47.

Videos:

- Leonard, Diana J. 2021. "Playing for Pain: Benefits, Pitfalls, & Strategies for RPin Marginalized Characters - Diana Leonard." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, September 24.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.

- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Submission of First Complete Draft of Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design

Please submit your first complete draft of Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design [here at this link](#). You will also send this draft to one or more of your peers in your group for review over email, Discord, or another preferred channel of communication. Then, you will integrate their feedback in your final draft. Please read [Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design](#) for more details.

Note: You will only include **Appendix II: List of Recommendations from Peer(s) and Instructors and Revisions** in your Final Draft submission. This Appendix will be based on recommendations related to the academic writing in this First Complete Draft, not earlier work, as you will discuss earlier feedback in the body of the paper.

Peer Review Instructions for Major Assignment 2

Please read the [Peer Review Instructions for Major Assignment 2 linked here](#).

Discussion 11: Culture and RPGs

Read Section 6.6 “Culture in RPGs and Communities” in “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” in Transformative Role-playing Game Design.

Watch Alexandra Schreiber's "[Games and Play for Intercultural Learning](#)" (10 min).

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Have you experienced or designed games for intercultural learning or exploring different worldviews/perceptions?
 - A. If so, please describe.
 - B. If not, imagine what a design for these purposes might look like from your perspective.
2. Review the concept of identity defense discussed in the Education Unit, in which learning does not occur due to a person's identity protecting itself.
 - A. Have you experienced or witnessed this reaction to content in a game? If so, be specific.
 - B. Why do you think people might have a resistance to transforming their perspective or worldview, both generally and in games?
3. Consider a practice within a culture or subculture to which you belong. Provide a design sketch of a short role-playing game based on this cultural practice. How would the characters engage with this practice or discuss it? In what social context? Be specific.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Discussion 12: Conflict and RPGs

Read Section 6.7 “Conflict in RPGs and Communities” in Bowman et al.'s “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” of Transformative Role-playing Game Design.

Choose one (1) of the following resources to examine: Leonard, Janjetovic, and Usman's “Playing to Experience Marginalization: Benefits and Drawbacks of ‘Dark Tourism’ in Larp” (reading) or Leonard's “[Playing for Pain: Benefits, Pitfalls, & Strategies for RPing Marginalized Characters - Diana Leonard](#)” (video)

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Based on the materials this week, what are some potential benefits of role-playing games and their respective communities with regard to conflict? Be specific.

2. What are some potential drawbacks of role-playing games and their respective communities with regard to conflict? Be specific.
3. How might this information help you improve as a designer? As a player? Be specific.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 8: Safety and Identity in RPGs

Overview: Safety and Identity in RPGs



Welcome to our unit on Safety and Identity in RPGs! In this unit, we will deepen into concepts related to safety design. Several issues that can arise with regard to psychological safety during games. Examples include schisms in role-playing communities; issues with online communication; issues arising from intimate and/or romantic relationships; creative agenda disputes, i.e. when players have different styles of play they most enjoy; power struggles between players and facilitators; and bleed-in and bleed-out that has not been processed effectively (see Chapter 2). Serious psychological safety issues can also arise related to issues of inclusion and accessibility; players experiencing crisis states; and sensitive content.

Such problems can lead to emotional flooding, when a participant is cognitively incapable of processing further information due to psychological overwhelm; dysregulation, when a participant's psychological well-being falls out of balance; activation and/or triggering, when a situation activates a survival response in a person, e.g. fight, flight, fleeing, or fawning; and harm, when a person or a situation inflicts psychological damage on another person, whether purposefully or accidentally. However, in some cases such problems can be avoided or addressed directly, leading players to re-establish psychological safety within the group more quickly. Therefore, we will explore different strategies for promoting and maintaining psychological safety before, during, and after role-playing games.

Related to the psychology of play is *identity*, or one's self-concept. Identity refers to both our psychological sense of self and the ways in which we are categorized and

integrated into society (or rejected by it). As we know, role-playing involved players enacting characters that are experienced as distinct from the self due to the fictional narrative. However, we will discuss some of the complexities connected to our notions of our identities, which are often not as stable or unified as we would like to think. Role-playing games can help players explore new facets of their identities, with a notable common example of players exploring alternative gender or sexualities. Personality aspects and archetypes can spillover to player's off-game identities in a phenomenon Whitney Beltrán's has termed *ego bleed*. Such experiences can help players transform their self-concept and/or social identity in everyday life should they wish to do so. With all of these components interacting, role-playing can be considered a sort of “magic” in terms of its transformational potency. We will return to these concepts throughout the courses in this programme.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Conflicts leading to safety issues
- Safety strategies before, during, and after games
- Identity (psychology)
- Identity (social psychology)
- Identity transformation
- Ego bleed
- Psychomagic

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We have linked resources that are open access. Do not distribute PDFs.

Required materials:

- Diakolambrianou, Elektra, Sarah Lynne Bowman, Simon Brind, Josefin Westborg, and Kjell Hedgard Hugaas. 2024. "Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 80-139. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Josephine Baird, Angie Bandhosingh, and Josefin Westborg. 2024. "Chapter 5: Safety and Community Container Setting." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 180-222.

Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Simon Brind, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Guus Quinten van Tilborg, Josephine Baird, and Alessandro Giovannucci. 2024. "Chapter 6: Key Concepts and Techniques: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, Magic, Narrative, Culture, and Conflict." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 223-263. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

Choose one (1) of the following to examine:

Reading:

- Baird, Josephine. 2021. "Role-playing the Self: Trans Self-Expression, Exploration, and Embodiment in (Live Action) Role-playing Games." *International Journal of Role-Playing* 11: 94-113.

Video:

- Baird, Josephine. 2021. "Designing for Trans & Nonbinary Experiences & Exploration in Larps - Josephine Baird #knutepunkt2021." Nordic Larp, October 11.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.

- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Reflection Journal 3: Safety and RPGs

Read Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 5: Safety and Community Container Setting" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Answer the following questions:

1. Based on the chapter, in your own words, what is the relationship between safety, play, growth? Do you agree with this formulation? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever experienced or witnessed any of the psychological difficulties mentioned in chapter within a gaming community or related subculture? Please share only what you feel comfortable communicating with your teachers.
 - A. If not, why do you think that might be? Be specific.
3. Briefly describe your #Feminism playtest, including the dynamics between your group members, the use of safety tools, and any takeaways you have from the experience.
4. Consider a situation in which a player might experience one of these psychological difficulties during your nanogame. Then, choose one (1) safety strategy from the chapter you have not yet incorporated into play. How might such a strategy aid a player in this situation?

Reflection Journal 4: Role-playing, Identity, and You

Read Section 6.5 "Narrative and Postmodern Magic" in Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Read Section 3.5 on "Identity Theories" in Diakolambrianou et al.'s "Chapter 3: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Choose one (1) of the following to examine: Josephine Baird's "Role-playing the Self: Trans Self-Expression, Exploration, and Embodiment in (Live Action) Role-playing Games" (reading) or Baird's "[Designing for Trans & Nonbinary Experiences & Exploration in Larp](#)s."

Answer the following questions:

1. The materials in this class support the notion that people contain a multitude of identities within themselves, both psychologically and socially. What have your own role-playing characters represented for you?
 - A. If you are inexperienced in role-playing, you can discuss the characters you have played in the playtests in this course.
2. In 1-2 sentences, describe Baird's journey with identity exploration in performance activities. Have you ever explored another gender or sexual identity through performance?
 - A. If not, are you interested in exploring gender or sexual identity through role-playing? Why or why not?
3. Choose one (1) aspect of your own identity. Provide a brief design sketch of a role-playing game exploring this aspect of identity, whether in a direct or indirect way. Consider what you hope players would gain from such an experience.

Unit 9: Game Technologies and RPGs

Overview: Game Technologies and RPGs



Welcome to our unit on game technologies and RPGs. By its very name, analog role-playing emphasizes interactions between people unmediated by technology, but of course in reality, we often use technologies during play. Facilitators might include special lighting or sound to a tabletop experience to augment the experience. They might add special effects to a larp to intensify the immersion into environment. Analog role-playing games are often played online, just as we have been on Zoom, or on platforms like Roll20 or D&D Beyond. Complex games like *Dungeons & Dragons* are now played with technical tools that update character sheets and do the math for players.

But how will newer advanced technologies be integrated into analog role-playing games, such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), extended reality (ER), mixed reality (MR), and other methods of shifting visual and aural reality. How can 3D modeling and additive manufacturing help create impressive tangible, custom game pieces, costumes, and props? How will AI affect the writing process of games or the types of interactions we can have? What types of technologies can enhance the role-playing experience? What experiences detract from the spontaneous and improvisational co-creation of play? What are the ethical implications of the use of such technologies for designers, organizers, artists, and players? We will be exploring these questions throughout the programme.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Various technologies and tabletop RPGs
- Various technologies and larp
- Technologies to play tabletop
- Extended reality
- Augmented reality

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We have linked resources that are open access. Do not distribute PDFs.

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Required materials:

- Suominen, Taisto. 2024. "[Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs -- Taisto Suominen](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, May 14.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences based upon the content of their post. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.

- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer to generate further discussion. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 13: Game Technologies and RPGs

Watch the first 28 minutes of Taisto Suominen's "[Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs -- Taisto Suominen](#)" until the end of the section on augmented reality.

* * *

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Have you experienced technology in games or other types of narrative or immersive experiences?
 - A. If so, did the technology enhance or detract from the experience, or both? Please explain.
 - B. If not, you may comment on the playtests over Zoom. Please explain.
2. Consider one technology Suominen mentioned. How might you include this technology in your nanogame, or a scaled up version? Be specific.
3. How might inclusion of this technology affect the transformative potential of your game, whether positively or negatively or both?

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Submission of Major Assignment 2 Peer Reviews

In this class, you will be peer reviewing the work of **one to three (1-3) members** of your playtest group. Your peer review should focus on your peer's **academic writing in Major Assignment 2** rather than feedback on their game design, which you have already provided in the playtest.

For peer review, read the paper, answer the following questions, and send them to your peer.

1. What did you learn from this paper? Be specific.
2. What are three (3) strengths of this paper?
3. What did you find surprising or intriguing about the concepts presented? Be specific.
4. What areas were underexplored or left you wanting to know more?
5. Are there any required components missing? Be specific.
6. What are at least three (3) concrete, constructive suggestions that you have for your peer regarding their work?

* * *

Remember, for consideration for a grade of **Pass** on your own Major Assignment 2, you must complete one (1) peer review for a member of your group.

For consideration for a grade of **Pass with Distinction** on your own Major Assignment 2, you may complete peer reviews for *all* members of your group who submitted their assignment by the deadline (2 reviews for a group of 3 including yourself; 3 reviews for a group of 4).

If one or more peers did not submit their assignment by the deadline, please focus only on the draft(s) available.

Unit 10: Transformative Game Design and You

Overview: Transformative Game Design and You



Welcome to our last unit on your reflections and analysis of the transformative game design process. In this unit, you will reflect upon the course as a whole, as well as your design and playtest experiences. You will also submit your Final Draft of Major Assignment 2.

We also want to share some archives that feature academic and popular sources. These resources may be helpful to you in future research, including for your Master's thesis.

* * *

Further Materials in the Field:

Academic Videos:

- [GENeration Analog on Analog Game Studies' YouTube Channel](#) (2021-)
- [Role-playing and Simulation in Education Conference](#) on Living Games Conference's YouTube Channel (2016-2018)
- [Transformative Play Initiative YouTube Channel](#) (2021-)

Academic Readings:

- [Analog Game Studies](#) (2014-)
- [The International Journal of Role-playing](#) (2008-)
- Zagal, José P., and Sebastian Deterding, eds. 2018. *Role-Playing Game Studies: Transmedia Foundations*, New York: Routledge.

Both Academic and Popular Videos:

- [Fantasiforbundet YouTube Channel](#) (2013-)
- [Larpwriter Summer School YouTube Channel](#) (2016)
- [Living Games Conference YouTube Channel](#) (2016-2018)
- [Metatopia](#) on Double Exposure's YouTube Channel (2021)
- [NordicLarp.org and Knutepunkt/Solmukohta](#) on the Nordic Larp YouTube Channel (2014)
- [Nordic Larp Talks YouTube Channel](#) (2009-)

- *Both Academic and Popular Readings:*
- [The Wyrd Con Companion Book](#) (2010-2015)
- [The Knutepunkt Books](#) (1999-)
- [Nordiclarp.org](#) (2012-)

Reflection Journal 5: Transformative Game Design and You

Answer the following questions:

1. What has your experience in this class been like?
2. What were the most interesting aspects of this course for you, if any? Be specific.
3. What were the most challenging parts of this course for you, if any? Be specific.
4. How have you grown as a designer during this course, if at all? Be specific.
5. How have you grown as an academic during this course, if at all? Be specific.
6. What are you most hoping to learn from the other courses in the Master's?
7. Any other comments?

Submission of Final Draft of Major Assignment 2: Transformative Game Design

Major Assignment 2 is a culmination of all the work you have done in the course. Think of your previous assignments as stepping stones to this paper.

In **Major Assignment 1** and your **Game Design Document and Playtest Plan**, you created a nano-game based on a research question and theoretical concepts. Then, you tested this design in your playtest. **Major Assignment 2** describes this process, first including information from Major Assignment 1, then explaining how the experiment unfolded, analyzing your playtests, feedback, and subsequent iteration.

Word count: 1200-2000 words single-spaced in Times New Roman font (not including References and Appendices).

This paper will integrate the following sections:

1. **Introduction:** Include a brief summary of your original game concept and its transformative goal(s).

2. **Research Question:** Include a research question for your project. What problem are you trying to solve or question do you hope to get answered through this Research Through Design process?
3. **Theoretical framework:** Describe your **three (3) concepts** from your most recent instructor-approved version of Major Assignment 1 and how they informed your game design. Cite according to the instructions in **Major Assignment 1**.
4. **Method:** Describe your process of Research Through Design citing and engaging with one (1) or more of [these linked sources](#). This section will include a brief summary of your Playtest Plan and feedback gathering method(s).
5. **Results:** Describe how your game experiment unfolded and how you iterated accordingly after the playtest session.
6. **Discussion:** Analyze the game design process, returning back to your chosen concepts and any other relevant sources. Was your research question answered? Were your chosen concepts in Major Assignment 1 useful in understanding how the game was played and experienced? If not, explain why. Do not include new "better" concepts at this stage for brevity's sake.
7. **Conclusion:** Evaluate how you would proceed with future research, design, and playtesting of this concept should you choose to continue this work. Will your game concept change, and if so, how? This section can also include personal reflections, takeaways, and ideas for future research and design beyond this particular project.

In addition, include:

1. **References:** References should be organized in alphabetical order.
2. **Appendix I:** Revised Game Design Document and Playtest Plan
3. **Appendix II:** List of Recommendations from Peer(s) and Instructors and Revisions

Notes

- The Appendices and References do not count toward your word count.
- You may not use generative AI on this assignment or any others. We are interested in your own design thoughts, not a machine's.
- Cite in Chicago Author-Date format. We recommend using the citations we provide for you in the Module Overviews and textbook References, which mostly reflect Chicago Author-Date 6th edition.

- You may use materials from **Major Assignment 1** and your **Game Design Document**, but make sure to compose your text in an academic analytic tone rather than as game instructions.
- While your paper will focus on testing the **original nano-game**, you will also submit a revised version of your **Game Design Document** as Appendix I. The revised version should reflect any changes you made as a result of feedback from your peers or instructor.
- In Appendix II, you will also include a point-for-point list indicating how and where in the text you addressed each point of feedback on your **First Complete Draft of Major Assignment 2** you received from your peer reviewer(s) and your instructor. If you decided not to integrate one or more recommendations, please provide a persuasive reason why **for each separate point**. In this way, you are iterating not only on your game design, but on your academic work.