

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

TRENT UNIVERSITY

ANTH-3745H COIS-3745H – Virtual Worlds

2010 FA

Peterborough

Professor Paul Manning

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Office: CC E.1.3

Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30-3:30

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Course Description: The course will focus on virtual worlds, massively multiple online games (MMOGs), and social networking sites. 'Virtual' sociality is now an increasingly taken for granted aspect of everyday sociality. This course develops tools and theories for investigating these online communities and their increasingly fundamental impact on human relations.

Specific topics may vary from year to year. In 2010 this course will focus exclusively on the ethnography of MMOGs in order that the students will be able to engage in a parallel online ethnography and learn ethnographic methods.

Course Format:

Lecture/Seminar	Wednesdays	1600-1850	G 108
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Course Evaluation:

Minimum course requirements:

Completion of all assignments and attendance	60%
Preparation (Weekly)	10%
Blog (biweekly)	10%
Paper (individual)	10%
Group Ethnographic Project	10%

Due dates of papers are listed below in the syllabus.

Minimum course requirements. In order to pass the course and receive a passing grade of C- (60), students must complete **all** required work of the course in passing form. Required work of the course includes both papers and preparation/attendance components. Each student must turn in both papers/projects (individual and group) of the course in a form that receives at least a grade of P (Pass). Papers (individual and group) that do not receive a passing grade but are turned in on time may be rewritten as per the professor's instructions until they receive a passing grade. Participation is based on attendance. Students must attend lecture/seminar on time and prepared 10 out of 12 classes (or 9 out of 11 classes in case only 11 class meetings are scheduled) in order to receive a passing grade on preparation and attendance. Preparation is defined as turning in short reading notes or a *précis* of each of the required readings for that class. These preparation assignments must be turned in in class on the day in which those readings are assigned. Seminar assignments are based on materials in class and must be turned in class. The one free excused absence below satisfies all requirements for assignments for that class. Minimum Blog participation is defined as submitting four approved entries.

Partial Credit. Partial grades are not awarded if all the assignments have not been completed, with one exception. In order to satisfy university requirements, students who are not passing the course will be informed of this by the official withdrawal deadline without penalty, and students who are passing the course at that time will receive 17 points of the 65 points (25% of the minimum participation grade) plus whatever other points for papers they have earned up to that point.

One free absence: Students are given one free absence which counts towards the fulfillment of the preparation and attendance and does not require any make-up work. No accounting for this absence is needed: it is awarded automatically. In the extremely rare event that excused absences beyond this first absence are granted, it is required that all missing work be made up by assignments that are at the discretion of the professor in consultation with the student. Students who have missed more than four classes per semester will be advised to withdraw from the course.

Preparation: Exemplary preparation, attendance and participation above and beyond the minimum can earn the student up to 10 additional points. Students gain preparedness marks by turning in a full *précis*, following one of the accepted formats posted on webct, of each of the readings assigned for the week. These can only be turned in the week those readings are discussed in class. Each weekly *précis* can receive a 0 (no credit, must be redone for credit), a pass (accepted for fulfillment of minimum course requirements) or a HP (the assignment counts towards gaining additional points, up to a maximum of 10). The specific requirements for preparation assignment will be given in detail on webct.

Seminar. There will be a weekly seminar for the course. Seminar attendance is required, students must attend 8 out of 10 seminars to pass the course. Seminars do not begin until Week

2. Seminars are used to discuss specific topics given by the instructor or those that arise spontaneously and also to plan collaborative research.

Blog. There is a course blog. 10% of your course grade will be based on your contributions to the blog (beginning Week 2), in the form of clippings, comments and ethnographic observations. You must contribute to the blog during at least four (4) different weeks of the semester to receive full credit (more or less every other week). All blog entries are moderated by the instructor, all members may select a pseudonym and avatar for their participation in the blog and the final component.

Human Research. As part of your participation grade, you *must* complete the [online tutorial on Human Research](#). Upon completion of the tutorial, a congratulations message will appear indicating that you have completed the tutorial **as a visitor**. You should print this for verification of tutorial completion and turn it in to the instructor. You should do this by the **second week of the course**. Without completing the online tutorial, you cannot participate in the final research project, and thus cannot pass this class.

Final Research Project: Online Ethnography

This is not a normal lecture course: your active and engaged participation is required.

The main assignment for this class is participation in creating an online exhibition regarding issues of culture in virtual worlds, specifically MMOGs. Students will select one or more virtual worlds, MMOGs, and conduct small group research regarding some topic or topics of interest to the group within that world. The precise topic for the research is deliberately left open, so that each group can find a topic of interest in consultation with the instructor. It may be that a group wishes to engage several related topics and delegate sub topics to individual members. It may be that groups wish to compare some specific topic (i.e. sociability, conversation, avatar embodiment, machinima, etc) across multiple virtual worlds, or focus their attention to different aspects of a single MMOG. However, all projects must engage with some subset of concepts set forth in course readings and course discussion.

In order to do research on online worlds, students must have easy access to online environments, which include both websites, blogs and materials about a given online world as well as the online world itself, which generally must be accessed through a client. Each student must have both these capabilities, but a group may divide their research labor up in such a way that some members with more problematic online access (or graphically challenged computers) can focus more on more easily accessible materials. However, all students must do some direct online ethnography in at least 1 online world they were not familiar with before. Students may NOT use their existing game subscriptions or accounts to do online ethnography without permission, all groups should plan to do their ethnography using trial introductory periods or worlds that are free.

Students will work in groups of 4-5 on a research project. The groups will be assigned, so that there is a mixture of skills and backgrounds. Each group will be responsible for conducting research, collecting images or video suitable for posting on the blog website, and writing a 3,500-4,500 word paper (approximately 12-15 pages at a 12-point font, double-spaced) about the virtual world, MMOG, they chose to investigate. (NOTE: length will be calculated based on word count.) The group paper must cite and engage with at least four course readings (we will discuss how to cite course readings effectively and correctly). All ethnographic material used in the blog or the final project must first be submitted to the course instructor and follow certain protocols (for example, the assignment pseudonyms both to real world persons as well as avatars to protect anonymity of persons and avatars.) The paper can be written in individual sections by different contributing authors, but the group must work together to produce a final product that is integrated and polished.

Groups will plan their research during the assigned seminar period each week. The professor will be present during this period to give advice to each group. Members of each group will make a brief (10-15 minute) in-class presentation about their research during from Week 10 to Week 12 of the course.

Members of each group will also be responsible for documenting each individual student's contribution to this collaborative project. Each student will write, independently from other members of their group, a 1,500–1,800 word (approximately 5-6 pages in times new roman 12-point font, double-spaced) paper describing their contribution to the research and the insights they gained from the collaborative research project. (NOTE: length will be calculated based on word count. Images may be used but they do not count towards fulfilling page limits) The individual paper must cite and engage with at least four course readings, and at least two of these must be DIFFERENT from the readings used in the group course paper. Readings drawn from outside the course readings can also be used, there is a list.

In sum: each group will write a 3,500-4,500 word paper collaboratively, which will be posted on the course blog; the group will also make a brief in-class presentation about their research; and each individual student will write a 1,500–1,800 word paper on their contribution to the project. Both papers will be graded on quality of research, organization, clarity of argument, and use of sources. All work for the online exhibit (including the group paper) and the individual papers will be due on the date indicated on the syllabus. Documents must be in Word (.doc, .docx, .rtf) (not PDF or wordperfect).

In order to complete this project, all students are required to complete and pass the [online tutorial titled "Human Research Tutorial"](#) on the ethics of research involving human subjects. Read the instructions and questions carefully. It should only take about 20 minutes, but you **MUST** complete this tutorial in order to conduct any research for this class project.

University Policies

Academic Integrity:

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from a 0 grade on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's *Academic Integrity Policy*. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more: www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity.

Access to Instruction:

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109, 748-1281, disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

Please see the Trent University academic calendar for University Diary dates, Academic Information and Regulations, and University and departmental degree requirements.

Last date to withdraw from Fall term half courses without academic penalty in 2010-11 is November 12, 2010; last date to withdraw from Winter term half courses without academic penalty in 2010-11 is March 11, 2011; last date to withdraw from Fall/Winter full courses without academic penalty in 2010-11 is February 8, 2011.

Required Texts:

The core readings of the course are four recent representative ethnographies of different online worlds, *Second Life*, *World of Warcraft*, *URU/There/Second Life*, and *Everquest*. All books are available at *Titles* on George Street in Downtown Peterborough. Students are required to ensure they have access to these texts.

Boellstorff Boellstorff, Tom. *Coming of Age in Second Life*.

Nardi Nardi, Bonnie. *My Life as a Night Elf Priest*.

Pearce Pearce, Celia and Artemesia. *Communities of Play*.

Taylor Taylor, T.L. *Play Between Worlds*.

The remaining readings for the course are available either on WebCT or other sources on the web which are hyperlinked in the online version of the syllabus and on webct. Acquiring access to the readings is entirely the responsibility of the students and students must have access to the

assigned readings by the end of the first week. Should this not be possible, the student must inform the professor immediately.

Technical Expectations

This class has an obligatory and significant online component. Many assignments and readings (except for the books) will be accessed, handed in, and managed online; there is a course blog; and collaborative research will involve online culture. Because of this, students are expected to be able to anticipate and manage the myriad of emergencies associated with online environments. This means that you should have several ways to access the Internet; should one fail, you should be prepared to do work at your local library or even at a Kinko's or similar establishment. You should keep multiple backups of your work, and be able to provide a copy of any piece of your work until the final grades are posted. There will be no technical excuses accepted in this course. You may wish to download all readings early on.

Course outline:

Week 1 September 15 Introduction to Class

Week 2 September 22 Contexts

Boellstorff Chapters 1-2 (1-59)

Nardi Chapter 1 (1-26)

Pearce Chapter 1 (4-15)

Taylor Chapter 1 (1-19)

Human Research forms DUE

Course Books must have been acquired by NOW

Form and Meet Your Research Groups

Week 3 September 29 Online and Offline ethnography

Boellstorff Chapter 3 (60-86)

Nardi Chapter 2 (27-38)

Pearce Chapter 13 (195-259)

Week 4 October 6 Virtual worlds: ecosystems, emergence, worldness

- Boellstorff Chapter 4 (89-117)
 Pearce Chapters 2-4 (19-65)
 Taylor Chapter 2 (20-65)

Krzywinska Tanya. Blood Scythes, Festivals, Quests, and Backstories: World Creation and Rhetorics of Myth in World of Warcraft (*Games and Culture* October 2006 vol. 1 no. 4 383-396)

Week 5 October 13 Avatar embodiment

- T.L. Taylor [Living Digitally: Embodiment in Virtual Worlds](#) (Originally published in R. Schroeder (ed.), *The Social Life of Avatars: Presence and Interaction in Shared Virtual Environments*. London: Springer-Verlag, 2002 at <http://tltaylor.com/texts/>)
 Boellstorff Chapter 5 (118-150)
 Pearce Chapters 5-9 (69-154)

Week 6 October 20 The Devs: Code, Rules, Governance and Techno-libertarianism

- Nardi Chapter 4 (52-93)
 Taylor Chapter 5 (125-150)
 T.L. Taylor. [Beyond Management: Considering Participatory Design and Governance in Player Culture](#) (*First Monday*, 2006, Special Issue #7: Command Lines: The Emergence of Governance in Global Cyberspace, <http://firstmonday.org/>)
 Thomas M. Malaby. [Coding Control: Governance and Contingency in the Production of Online Worlds](#) (*First Monday*, 2006, Special Issue #7: Command Lines: The Emergence of Governance in Global Cyberspace, <http://firstmonday.org/>)
 Coleman, Gabriella. [The Political Agnosticism of Free and Open Source Software](#). (*Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 77, No. 3 (Summer, 2004), pp. 507-519)

Fall Break

Week 7 November 3 Interaction and Community

- Boellstorff Chapters 6-7 (151-202)

Constance Steinkuehler and Dimitri Williams, [Where Everybody Knows Your \(Screen\) Name: Online Games as “Third Places.”](#) *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11(4), article 1, 2006.

Bonnie Nardi and Justin Harris.

[Strangers and Friends: Collaborative Play in World of Warcraft](#)

[Learning Conversations in World of Warcraft](#)

Mimi Ito et al. *Hanging Out ... Genres of Participation: Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out (On Webct)*

Week 8 November 10 “Playbor”, work, play, addiction; production, consumption, prosumption

Boellstorff chapter 8 (205-236)

Nardi Chapters 5-6 (94-136)

Pearce Chapters 10-12 (155-192)

Celia Pearce, [Productive Play: Game Culture from the Bottom Up](#). *Games & Culture* 1(1):17–24, 2006. (Available at TOPCAT online at Trent or on WEBCT)

Week 9 November 17 Class Cancelled, Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association

Week 10 November 24 Real and imagined players: Women play these games?!! And what about the Chinese gold farmers?!!

Nardi Chapters 8-9 (152-204)

Taylor Chapter 4 (93-124)

Nicholas DiGiuseppe, Bonnie Nardi . [Real genders choose fantasy characters: Class choice in world of warcraft](#) (*First Monday*, Volume 12, Number 5 — 7 May 2007, <http://firstmonday.org/>)

Bonnie Nardi, Yong Ming Kow. [Digital imaginaries: How we know what we \(think we\) know about Chinese gold farming](#) (*First Monday*, Volume 15, Number 6 - 7 June 2010, <http://firstmonday.org/>)

Julian Dibbell, [The Life of the Chinese Gold Farmer](#). *New York Times*, June 17, 2007.

Week 11 December 1 Augmented Play, Intertextuality

Mimi Ito et al. *Hanging Out*

Chapter on 'gaming' especially augmented game play – end (On WebCt)

Nardi Chapter 7 (137-152)

Taylor Chapter 3 (67-92)

Week 12 December 8 Materiality: Mangles and Assemblages

Taylor, T.L. [The Assemblage of Play](#) (*Games and Culture* October 2009 vol. 4 no. 4 331-339)

Star, Susan. [The Ethnography of Infrastructure](#). (*American Behavioral Scientist* November 1999 vol. 43 no. 3 377-391)

Simon, Bart. [Geek Chic: Machine Aesthetics, Digital Gaming, and the Cultural Politics of the Case Mod](#) (*Games and Culture* July 2007 vol. 2 no. 3 175-193)

Steinkuehler, Constance. [The Mangle of Play](#) (*Games and Culture* July 2006 vol. 1 no. 3 199-213)

Final Papers and Projects are Due. Class Projects will be posted.

Department and/or Course Policies

Course Policies

- **Late Assignments.** Late assignments are not accepted for any reason. Each assignment must be turned in on time and also in the manner stipulated for each. Assignments that are to be turned in in class will not be accepted via email or via webct, and vice versa.
- **Assignment Format.** All assignments must be turned in the requisite format (.doc or .docx, word perfect, pdf or other document formats are not accepted), in an appropriately labeled document (ANTH2310LastNameFirstNameAssignmentName.doc) that also is properly formatted inside (instructions on WebCT): for example, an assignment that does not have your name in it somewhere will not be credited to you. Not reading or following the instructions for doing the assignment is identical to not doing the assignment.
- **Proper Quotation, Citation and References.** Learning to quote, cite and reference the work of others is not only a scholarly skill, but it helps avoid unwittingly committing a serious form of academic dishonesty called *plagiarism* (see also [this link](#)). It is assumed that students will not only learn how to quote, cite and reference properly, but each student is also assumed to know how to identify and avoid plagiarism.

- **Acquiring and Doing the Reading.** Doing the reading on time is a requirement of the course. Gaining access to the reading is the students' sole responsibility. Students who have not done the reading preparation assignment do not get credit for attendance. Students must acquire the readings on a timely basis, if for some reason they cannot, they must inform the professor via email at least 72 hours in advance. Lectures do not replace the reading, and vice versa. Students are only deemed to have done the reading if they can produce a précis that demonstrates that they have done so.
- **Technical considerations.** This class has an obligatory and significant online component. Many assignments and readings (except for the books) will be accessed, handed in, and managed online. You should keep multiple backups of your work in multiple media (for example, email it to yourself whenever you complete a draft), and be able to provide a copy of any piece of your work until the final grades are posted. There will be no technical excuses accepted in this course. You may wish to download all readings early on.
- **Respect for Learning Policies.** There are a large number of students in the class, which means that each individual participant must be very careful to not degrade the learning experience of those around them. While in class, students should avoid disruptive and disrespectful behaviors that potentially may lessen the learning experiences of others, including the following:
 - Students should plan to attend all lectures on time, and should not leave until the class is over, other than normal scheduled breaks and individual bathroom breaks. Getting prepared to go before the class is dismissed should be avoided. Students who cannot attend the entire class for any reason should not come to class that day, rather than walk out or walk in in the middle.
 - Students should avoid disruptive side-involvements, including chatting, whispering, passing notes, chewing gum, sleeping, and knitting. When others are talking, students should limit their back channel behaviors, including for example, making nonverbal signs of approval, disapproval, and so forth.
 - Students should avoid disrespectful behaviors, including the use of racially, ethnically, or other potentially exclusionary or insulting statements and remarks, directed at either those present or those not present. They should also engage in discussion with others in the class with a sense of openness, charity, respect, and as unemotionally as possible.
 - Many of my courses involve exploring new media and technologies. This does not mean I embrace a multiplatform learning environment. Many studies show that laptop usage correlates with multitasking, and this strongly correlates both with lowered understanding and performance of the student so engaged, as well as the students around them. Whether or not wi-fi is engaged does not appear to be a significant variable. Therefore, all multimedia and wireless technology (cellphones, blackberries, iphones), as well as laptops (and similar platforms), must be turned off and stowed unless the student has a special written permission to use them. If they do, they must demonstrate that the wi-fi is not engaged and all laptop uses must sit on the far left side of the hall to minimize distractions to others.
- Students should indicate that they have read, understood, and agree to the conditions of this syllabus by signing and dating it below this line.

ANTHROPOLOGY GUIDELINES:

Workshop assignments will not be accepted in the anthropology office. All assignments will be collected and handed back in class or may be dropped off or picked up in the faculty offices during their office hours. The Anthropology Department will not accept assignments by fax or e-mail.

FAITH DATES/EXAMINATION PERIODS:

Students who wish to observe their cultural religious holidays during the scheduled examination periods should notify the Registrar's Office in writing by the final Friday in September. The Registrar's Office will, wherever possible, incorporate these exceptions into the scheduling of examinations. Where it is not possible to do so, the student should notify the instructor in order to make alternative arrangements.

RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS: All research involving the use of human subjects requires advance approval from the Departmental Ethics Committee.