

**UW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**  
*Developing Competent and Democratic Professionals*

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**ITEC 5480 – Short Course in Virtual Environments**  
**Summer 2014**



**Instructor**

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**Office Hours**

Wednesday: 9:00-10:30 AM or by appointment

**Course Description**

During this course, students will explore the uses of 3D virtual environments (in particular Second Life) for learning purposes in both formal and informal settings. Topics will include differentiating between 3D games and simulations, considering the role of virtual environments in distance education settings, and examining promises made of these technologies, their management, and benefits and limitations. We will discuss commercial off-the-shelf games, massively multiplayer online games, and virtual worlds and their potential roles in education.

**Course Goals**

- Identify various 3D virtual world platforms including those with and without game components and age associations
- Compare and contrast traditional e-learning environments with virtual environments
- Identify potential strengths and limitations of game-based and simulation-based virtual environments for differing learner characteristics
- Consider accessibility and privacy issues associated with virtual environments
- Determine appropriate strategies to incorporate virtual environments in various formal and informal educational settings
- Locate and synthesize research regarding virtual environment strategies
- Develop content in Second Life
- Develop instructional plans that incorporate virtual environments based on instructional contexts and desired outcomes

**Disability Statement**

“The University of Wyoming is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and institution and does not discriminate on the basis of...individual handicap” (UW General Bulletin, 2008, p.

3). If you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let your instructor know as soon as possible. You must register with, and provide documentation of your disability to University Disability Support Services (UDSS) at 307-766-6189 or TTY: 766-3073, in SEO room 330 Knight Hall.

### Required Texts

There are two required texts for this course. Everyone will read:

Steinkuehler, C., Squire, K., & Barab, S. (2012). *Games, learning, and society: Learning and meaning in the digital age*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Additionally, you should select one of the following texts:

Danielsen, J. M., & Deutschmann, M. (2009). *Learning and teaching in the virtual world of Second Life*. Trondheim, NO: Tapir Academic Press.

Gee, J. P. (2003). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*. New York: Macmillan.

Gee, J. P., & Hayes, E. R. (2010). *Women and gaming: The SIMS and 21st century learning*. New York: Macmillan.

### Recommended Texts

American Psychology Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th revised ed.). Washington, DC: Author. ISBN – 10: 1-4338-0561-8

### Course Delivery

This course is delivered via **synchronous and asynchronous** online systems and tools. Recently, the University of Wyoming switched to a new learning management system: Canvas. There are several differences between Canvas and eCollege (our previous LMS). Although some of you may have experienced Canvas during Fall semester 2014, unanticipated challenges may occur as we continue to get used to this new system. Be patient with each other as we encounter difficulties.

Interactions with instructors and peers will primarily take place in the course shell. As with other courses, there is a general Q&A discussion board. Questions associated with course structure, assignment clarification, and other broad topics that affect all students should be posted there. There are also discussion boards associated with each module. The navigation link **Discussions** will take you to a list of all discussion boards used in the course. Links to appropriate discussions are also located in each module.

Unlike eCollege, modules are not listed in the main navigation section of the course shell. Rather, they are found within the **Modules** section. The *unit overview* describes all expectations and activities associated with that module. Be sure to read this overview because it may describe readings and activities that are not found in other pages.

Email options are also available under the **People** section of the course (or the **Inbox** section of the LMS). Select the person that you want to email and select the Send Message button. I try to respond to email with 48 hours of receiving it (excluding holidays and weekends). If you have

not heard from me in a timely manner, I may have lost your message in my inbox. Either try to resend it or call me directly.

All course assignments are detailed in the **Assignments** section of the course shell and include submitting and grading criteria. Brief assignment descriptions are also included in this syllabus. It is your responsibility to examine assignment details and due dates carefully.

The **Grades** section provides information regarding your current status in the class. Individual grades and feedback for assignments will be posted in this section. I encourage you to check this section frequently. I try to grade accurately but am not perfect. Checking your work will help you perform well on future assignments as well as help you catch problems should they arise.

Canvas provides many options that eCollege did not. As I learn more about the system, I may experiment with different functions. I'll let you know in advance if I am going to try something new. However, this is a short course and experimentation is encouraged. Again, patience is key.

### **ePortfolio Goals**

If you are enrolled in ITEC graduate programs, you are required to submit an electronic portfolio as part of your capstone defense (masters students) or preliminary exam (doctoral students). Each semester you should work on one or two goals related to educational foundations, learning and development, technological understanding, or research and scholarship. Handbooks for each program provide a few generic goal suggestions. For your consideration, below are a few goal ideas that align more directly to this course. This list is not meant to be exhaustive:

#### *Educational Foundations*

- Describe how one or more learning theories (e.g., situated cognition, andragogy, information processing, social learning theory, social presence, transactional distance) influences training in virtual environments for a specified audience and setting. Indicate how you would develop a learning setting that uses virtual environments based on this description.
- Describe how virtual environments influence (for good and bad) distance education opportunities.
- Compare and contrast traditional e-learning strategies with virtual environment strategies

#### *Technological understanding.*

- Develop learning objects within Second Life for a specified topic and age group. Indicate how these objects may foster learning with your group.
- Demonstrate how your understanding of virtual environments has increased over the semester

#### *Learning and Development*

- Develop a learning center (like the Cultural Café) in Second Life and indicate how it would be used to promote learning goals/objectives among a specified audience and setting
- Develop a lesson/unit plan that incorporates virtual environments as a key learning component

- Articulate how virtual environments may be used for learning purposes among an identified audience with specific learning needs

### *Research and Scholarship*

- Identify various virtual environments and describe their advantages and limitations in educational settings based on age appropriateness, license agreements, availability of educational resources, access to the target learners, and so forth.
- Examine the myriad privacy issues associated with using virtual environments for K12 settings. What protections are available for various environments?

### **Course Assignments**

This section provides a brief overview of assignments associated with the course. Additional details are located in the assignments section of the course shell.

**Discussion participation.** Active participation is essential for this course. You must demonstrate verbal and written communication skills in a variety of forums. Lack of participation during the course will substantially limit your ability to demonstrate those skills. Every effort must be made to be proactive in posting, reading, and collaborating if you wish to do well in this course. I expect you to post relevant and insightful comments to discussion threads a *minimum of 4 times each week (on separate days)* in addition to participating in other unit activities where applicable. You do not have to have read or mastered all module materials to begin posting. Summaries of how you interpret materials at a point in time, questions, comparisons with past readings, “ah hah” moments, and identification of related resources are all acceptable posts (to name a few). *Discussion participation is worth 5 points each week (for a total of 30 points).*

**Second Life participation.** Most weeks (five total) we will have a *synchronous meeting* in Second Life. The first two will help you learn about the program, how to navigate the terrain, and how to purchase and develop objects. The final three meetings will demonstrate learning environments in Second Life via a cultural exchange activity between international students. Topics for these exchanges will be posted a week in advance along with any other requirements for the meeting. You are required to attend and actively participate in these sessions. The course calendar details specific dates and times. *Active attendance and participation is worth 10 points for each session (for a total of 50 points).*

**Video game reflection.** During the first week of this course you will select and play an *unfamiliar, multiplayer video game for a minimum of two hours*. During that time, you will consider how the storyline, context, visuals, player perspective, and other representations influence your engagement in the game. You should also examine how the game teaches controls, goals and sub goals, and provides feedback. Finally, you compare your experience with the TED talk by Jane McGonigal where she advocates for games to help the world. You will write up your thoughts in a *reflection worth 10 points*.

**Second Life reflection.** Twice during the semester you will reflect on your synchronous experiences using Second Life to promote multicultural awareness among international students. During the first reflection you will describe concepts associated with your avatar, selection

processes, representation of self, and feelings of access and influence in the virtual environment. The second reflection will focus on the use of visuals and virtual objects to foster learning outcomes. Both reflections should incorporate current literature (according to current APA guidelines) to support or refute claims. *Each reflection is worth 10 points (for a total of 20 points).*

**Book critique.** During this course you will select and read one of three books associated with 3D gaming and virtual environments in education. After reading the book, you will write a 5 page review and critique (excluding title page, abstract, and references), supporting your claims and ideas with course readings and additional resources. *This review is worth 40 points.*

**Virtual environment lesson plans.** You will develop one to five lesson plans that incorporates some aspect of virtual environments to meet desired outcomes among a specified audience and subject. Lessons and resources must be audience appropriate, address stated objectives, and fit within desired learning contexts. *This plan is worth 50 points.*

### Grading Policy and Breakdown

Available course points are summarized in the following table:

Assignments	Value
Discussion Participation	30 Points
Second Life Participation	50 Points
Video Game Reflection	10 Points
Second Life Reflection	20 Points
Book Critique	40 Points
Virtual Environment Lesson Plans	50 Points
<b>Total:</b>	<b>200 Points</b>

**Grade breakdown.** Course grades will be determined as follows:

- A = 90% and above
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- D = 60-69%
- F = 59% or below

**APA formatting.** APA is the writing format adopted by the College of Education and you are expected to know and use current APA guidelines to complete all assignments. Failing to follow these guidelines may result in reduced assignment and course grades even if no mention of them was made in assignment rubrics. Writing quality is very important in this program and reflects your professional development. Several resources exist to help you learn and use APA guidelines correctly.

**Late work.** Assignment due dates are posted in the course calendar. It is imperative that these deadlines be kept. I will not allow make-up work for lack of course participation. I am happy to provide opportunities to make up work for course assignments if you've been in touch

with me and alerted me to problems. However, make-up work may not be awarded full credit. If you anticipate a legitimate absence or encounter an unavoidable situation, contact your instructor **before** the assignment is due to discuss alternative arrangements. The final decision is up to your instructor.

### **Academic Honesty**

As with all university courses, any written work a student submits is expected to be the student's work done originally for this course and for this semester. Be careful about sharing your work with other students. Any work "borrowed" from other sources and represented as the student's own or recycled from previous semesters will result in a failing course grade. Any student who knowingly assists another in committing an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade in the course. Refer to the [University Student Code of Conduct](#) for additional information.

The University of Wyoming is built upon a strong foundation of integrity, respect and trust. All members of the university community have a responsibility to be honest and the right to expect honesty from others. Any form of academic dishonesty is unacceptable to our community and will not be tolerated (University of Wyoming, 2008, p. 3). Students should report suspected violations of standards of academic honesty to the instructor, department head, or dean.

**The instructor may make changes to the syllabus and course schedule as the course proceeds. These changes will be announced in class.**