

Board Games: History, Culture, and Strategy

www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/muse

MUSE/ENGL 096IY, Section 1 (#48094) 📖 Fall 2008 📖 CL 125

Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00 - 4:15 pm

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Peer Mentor Center Hours: Tuesdays 12-2pm and Thursdays 12-2:30pm

Office Hours:

Tuesdays and Thursdays

8:00 – 8:45 am, 4:30-5:30 pm

This course fulfills the General Education requirement for Area D1: Social, Political, and Economic Institutions and Behavior.

Course Description: This course looks at the inter-cultural phenomenon of board games—common (in some form) to societies around the world—their history, development, rules, strategies, and what they have to tell us about the people who originated or played them. Board games provide an interesting entry into various aspects of a culture: the amount of leisure time available to play them (and therefore, usually, the class structure and wealth of a society); the competing social values of cooperation and competition; beliefs about skill and luck (or fate), and so on. We will begin with Senet, a board game rediscovered in an ancient Egyptian tomb, include such traditional games as chess and go (both of which originated in eastern Asia), backgammon (eastern Mediterranean), and mancala (Africa), and finish with modern “classics” such as Monopoly, Stratego, and Scrabble. For a final project, students will create their own “Game of SJSU,” incorporating ideas about board games, culture, and life at this university they have encountered during the semester.

Course Goals:

- ▶ to increase your understanding of human behavior and social interaction in the context of value systems, cultural structures, and social groups, by tracing the similarities and differences of a single activity—game-playing—through societies separated by space and time, and the impact of that activity, within those societies on such factors as gender, religion, class, ethnicity, culture, and education.
- ▶ to learn and enjoy a wide variety of traditional board games, originating in those societies but serving a variety of universal social functions, including employment of leisure, companionship, socially acceptable competition, intellectual stimulation, and game theory.
- ▶ to support and model habits of thought and study which enable you to be successful in university-level courses, through academic assignments, discussions of student skills (time-management, note-taking, and others), self-reflection, and intentional learning techniques.
- ▶ to provide activities which help you to become acclimated to both the intellectual and social activities of university life, including MUSE workshops and others.

Area Learning Objectives and Activities: This course qualifies as an Area D1 (Social Sciences-Human Behavior) course in

your General Education requirements. It is designed to enable you to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- ▶ identify and analyze the social dimension of society as a context for human life, the processes of social change and social continuity, the role of human agency in those social processes, and the forces that engender social cohesion and fragmentation—for example, by studying the elements shared by societies in which board games are created (relative leisure, competition vs. cooperation, and so on).
- ▶ place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts; identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them; and evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues—for example, the way games are played (or restricted) by gender in different societies, and why.
- ▶ recognize the interaction of social institutions, culture, and environment with the behavior of individuals—for example, the way the European development of chess reflects the medieval court, while the Chinese version of chess more closely reflects court intrigue.
- ▶ understand the learning process and your responsibility and role in it and know what it means to be a member of a metropolitan university community—especially in the creation of the final group project: the Game of SJSU.

MUSE Goals: University-level study is different from what you experienced in high school. The Metropolitan University Scholars’ Experience (MUSE) is designed to help make your transition into a successful student by helping you develop the skills and attitude needed for the intellectual engagement and challenge of in-depth university-level study. Discovery, research, critical thinking, written work, attention to the rich cultural diversity of the campus, and active discussion will be key parts of this MUSE course. Enrollment in MUSE courses is limited to a small number of students because these courses are intended to be highly interactive and allow you to easily interact with your professor and fellow students. MUSE courses explore topics and issues from an interdisciplinary focus to show how interesting and important ideas can be viewed from different perspectives. The goals of the MUSE Program are to help students to:

- ▶ establish a strong foundation for becoming a university-level student and scholar—by not only assigning you work, but discussing the expectations of instructors and students about such assignments, and developing a familiarity with the tools needed (especially when dealing with library resources) to successfully complete those assignments.
- ▶ become acclimated to both the intellectual and social activities of university life—with class discussions and out-of-class projects designed to introduce you to the academic expectations and co-curricular possibilities, including the structure of the university.

The following content and activities will be incorporated into the course as you engage in the subject matter of the course:

- ▶ Diversity: Issues of diversity shall be incorporated in an appropriate manner. [GE and MUSE]
- ▶ Writing: The minimum writing requirement is 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline. [GE]
- ▶ Social sciences: Content to promote all of the above GE competencies. [GE]
- ▶ University scholar: Course activities should be designed to enable students to improve critical thinking skills, information competencies, critical writing and reading skills, and group interactions. [MUSE]
- ▶ University life: Students should attend workshops and participate in group activities to help them learn about university resources and activities and to improve in areas they have identified. [MUSE]

Texts: In addition to the required texts, listed after the calendar, you should have access to a dictionary, thesaurus, and composition handbook (from English 1A). That dictionary, incidentally, should not be reserved for essays alone. You are expected to look up unfamiliar words encountered in the texts, and to be able to define them when called upon to do so in class. This is particularly important in a class like ours, dealing with distant parts of the world, since many of the settings, concepts, items, and expressions may be new to you.

Graded Work:

Essays:

Games in your life essay (250 words)	5%
Game theory essay (500 words)	10%
Research essay (1000 words)	20%
Oral Presentation.....	10%
Journals	10%
The Game of SJSU.....	10%
Participation	20%
Final exam.....	15%

For final marks, 100-90 is an A, 89-80 is a B, 79-70 is a C, 69-60 is a D, and below 60 is an F. Pluses and minuses are the top and bottom third of each range, respectively; so, for example, 89-87 is a B+, 86-83 is a B, and 82-80 is a B-.

Submission of Written Work: All written work must be typed, double-spaced, and follow standard MLA format. Papers may be submitted in class on or before the due date only by students attending the full class; late papers can only be submitted by prior arrangement; do not leave any work in the English

department office or under my office door. Corrected papers will be returned during the next class session to students in attendance; otherwise, they may be picked up during office hours. Please keep a copy of all work submitted (on disk at least), and retain all graded work returned until the end of the semester. Students should anticipate a significant delay in the return of late work.

Class Presentation: You will be assigned one game to present to the class, which will require researching the historical and cultural background of their games, and mastering the fundamentals of play. Depending on the complexity of a game, more than one student may be assigned to present specific aspects of it.

Journal: You will be asked to keep a journal detailing reactions to things you read (including *Water for Elephants*) and attend (including MUSE workshops), as well as commentaries on games you play, both in and out of class, and information about SJSU and university life generally that you encounter. Class time will be devoted to discussion of those reactions on a regular basis, and you will periodically be asked to submit your journal for review.

The Game of SJSU. Working in groups of three, students will utilize what they have learned about board games and the university, to create a “Game of SJSU.” The nature, rules, and construction of that game will be up to the group; the project will be graded on the quality of game play, on the aesthetics of design, and on the utilization of information about academia generally and this university in particular.

MUSE Workshops. Students are required to attend at least three MUSE workshops during the semester (or two MUSE and one other campus event, such as one related to *Water for Elephants*), and to describe those events in their journals. A list of workshops for the semester and registration forms can be found online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/>. Announcements about other events on campus will be made regularly in class.

SJSU Mission Statement: In collaboration with nearby industries and communities, SJSU faculty and staff are dedicated to achieving the university’s mission as a responsive institution of the State of California: To enrich the lives of its students, to transmit knowledge to its students along with the necessary skills for applying it in the service of our society, and to expand the base of knowledge through research and scholarship.

Diversity: San José State University is committed to creating a diverse community guided by core values of inclusion, civility, and respect for each individual. Such a community enriches the intellectual climate of the University and the educational experiences of its students, promotes personal growth and a healthy society, and supports a positive work environment.

Students with Disabilities: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, or if you need to share any emergency medical information, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the Disability Resource Center to establish a record of their disability. The DRC provides a variety of resources, including note takers, sign interpreters, assertive listening devices, and audiotapes as well as Braille and large print format services for testing. In addition, the resource center can provide a quiet environment for students who require alternate testing formats.

Academic Integrity. Students are expected to be familiar with the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The policy on academic integrity and other resources related to student conduct can be found at http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct.

Taking credit for work that you have not earned, in any sense, undermines the very education you are here to receive. For definitions of and policies on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of intellectual dishonesty, please see "the fine print" at the bottom of this page.

The Fine Print:

Turnitin.com: Students will submit all formal writing assignments for this class to Turnitin.com via the Internet for evaluation, as well as in printed form to be handed in to the instructor.

Academic Integrity Statement (from Office of Judicial Affairs): Academic integrity is essential to the mission of San José State University. As such, students are expected to perform their own work (except when collaboration is expressly permitted by the course instructor) without plagiarizing or paraphrasing from any outside resources, except as quoted and documented in their research. Students are not permitted to use old tests, quizzes when preparing for exams, nor may they consult with students who have already taken the exam. When practiced, academic integrity ensures that all students are fairly graded. Violations to the Academic Integrity Policy undermine the educational process and will not be tolerated. It also demonstrates a lack of respect for oneself, fellow students and the course instructor and can ruin the university's reputation and the value of the degrees it offers.

We all share the obligation to maintain an environment, which practices academic integrity. Violators of the Academic Integrity Policy will be subject to failing this course and being reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action, which could result in suspension or expulsion from San José State University.

Cheating: At SJSU, cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means. Cheating at SJSU includes but is not limited to:

Copying in part or in whole, from another's test or other evaluation instrument; submitting work previously graded in another course unless this has been approved by the course instructor or by departmental policy; submitting work simultaneously presented in two courses, unless this has been approved by both course instructors or by departmental policy; altering or interfering with grading or grading instructions; sitting for an examination by a surrogate, or as a surrogate; any other act committed by a student in the course of his or her academic work which defrauds or misrepresents, including aiding or abetting in any of the actions defined above.

Plagiarism: At SJSU plagiarism is the act of representing the work of another as one's own (without giving appropriate credit) regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements. Plagiarism at SJSU includes but is not limited to:

The act of incorporating the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substances of another's work, without giving appropriate credit, and representing the product as one's own work; and representing another's artistic/scholarly works such as musical compositions, computer programs, photographs, painting, drawing, sculptures, or similar works as one's own.

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance and will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:

The "A" essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The "B" essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the "A" essay. The chief difference is that the "B" essay will show some descriptibly slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The "C" essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the "B" essay.

The "D" essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment—that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The "F" essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A= excellent; B= above average; C= average; D= below average; F= failure. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC shall replace D or F. In such cases, NC shall also substitute for W (or Withdrawal) because neither grade (NC or W) affects students' GPA.

This statement shall be included in all Department of English syllabi or "greensheets."

Required Texts (Available in the Bookstore):

Gruen, Sara. *Water for Elephants*. Algonquin, 2007.
Sackson, Sid. *The Book of Classical Board Games*. Klutz Press, 1991.

Web Pages (Not in Library's "Electronic Reserves")

Kowalski, Wally J. "Roman Board Games." <http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/showcase/boardgames.html>
Schädler, Ulrich. "Some critical remarks on an Internet Site about Roman Board Games."
<http://www.boardgamestudies.info/research/notes.shtml>
Soubeyrand, Christine. "The Game of Senet." www.gamecabinet.com/history/Senet.html.

Readings Available in Library's "Electronic Reserves.

Austin, "Roman Board Games."	Murray, "Games in the Ancient World."
Capen, "Wei-chi: The Game of War."	Partlett, "All in a Row."
Carroll, <i>Through the Looking-Glass</i> . (Not in PDF collection.)	Petrik, "The House That Parchisi Built: Selchow & Righter Company"
Chalup, "The Machine Intelligence Hex Project"	Ray, "The Beast in the Box."
Cho, "Program Proves That Checkers, Played Perfectly, Is a No-Win Situation."	Rushdie, from <i>Midnight's Children</i> .
De Voogt, "Going: How Board Games Travel."	Seymour and Johnson, <i>The Compleat Gamester</i> (excerpts).
De Voogt, "Mancala: Games That Count."	Takeshi, "Othello, Game of the Century."
<i>The Economist</i> , "Thrills and Skills."	Topsfield, "The Indian Game of Snakes and Ladders"
Febey and Coyne, "Program Evaluation: Board Game."	Townshend, "African Mankala in Anthropological Perspective."
Finkel, "On the Rules for the Royal Game of Ur."	Van der Werf, "Learning to Predict Life and Death in Go."
Gale, review of <i>A Beautiful Mind</i> .	(NOTE: Board_Games_Readings.pdf includes everything in this section <u>except</u> <i>Through the Looking-Glass</i> .)
Gobet and Campitelli, "The Role of Domain-Specific Practice, Handedness, and Starting Age in Chess."	

Schedule of Readings Assignments

(Tentative – Subject to Change – Check Class Web Page)

Aug 26, Tu: Introduction.	Oct 16, Th: <u>Roundabouts</u> , <u>Fandango</u> . Sackson (pp. 12-13, 26-7). Gobet and Campitelli. **Research essay: proposal due.
Aug 28, Th: <u>Monopoly</u> . Ray; Economist, "Thrills and Skills."	Oct 21, Tu: <u>Chess</u> . Seymour and Johnson.
Sept 2, Tu: <u>The new wave: German board games</u> ; **First essay ("Games in My Life") due.	Oct 23, Th: <u>Chess</u> . Carroll, <i>Through the Looking-Glass</i> (Ch. 1-6).
Sept 4, Th: <u>Senet</u> . Murray; Soubeyrand. Online tutorials: Library Basics, 5 Ways, & Plagiarism, at tutorials.sjlibrary.org .	Oct 28, Tu: <u>Chess</u> , <u>Chinese Chess</u> . Carroll, <i>Through the Looking-Glass</i> (Ch.7-12).
[Sept 5, F: Last day to drop classes.]	Oct 30, Th: <u>Hasami Shogi</u> , <u>Othello</u> . Sackson (pp. 14-15); Takeshi. **Research essay: annotated bibliography due.
Sept 9, Tu: Library Orientation in MLK 217; <i>Water for Elephants</i> , 1-89.	Nov 4, Tu: <u>Hex</u> , <u>Bridge-It</u> , <u>Twixt</u> . Sackson (pp. 17-18); Gale; Chalup; **Journal (3) due.
Sept 11, Th: <u>The Royal Game of Ur</u> . Finkel.	Nov 6, Th: <u>Go</u> . Sackson (pp. 16-17). Capen; <i>Water for Elephants</i> , 238-89
[Sept 12, F: Last day to add classes.]	Nov 11, Tu: VETERANS' DAY
Sept 16, Tu: <u>Parcheesi</u> , <u>Sorry</u> . Petrik; **Journal (1) due.	Nov 13, Th: <u>Go</u> . SJSU Catalog; Van der Werf; <i>Water for Elephants</i> , 290-331
Sept 18, Th: <u>Backgammon</u> . Sackson (pp. 36-43); Kowalski; Schädler." <i>Water for Elephants</i> , 90-141.	Nov 18, Tu: <u>Game of Life</u> , <u>Payday</u> , <u>Careers</u> , <u>Great Game of Britain</u> . SJSU Catalog. **Research essay: rough draft due.
Sept 23, Tu: <u>Backgammon</u> . Austin.	Nov 20, Th: <u>Stratego</u> , <u>Risk</u> ; SJSU Catalog; Febey & Coyne; **Journal (4) due.
Sept 25, Th: <u>Snakes and Ladders</u> . Topsfield; Rushdie.	Nov 25, Tu: <u>Trivial Pursuit</u> , <u>Scrabble</u> . **Self-Reflection assignment due.
Sept 30, Th: <u>Mancala</u> . Sackson (pp. 32-33); De Voogt, "Mancala: Games That Count." **Second essay ("Game Theory") due.	Nov 27, Th: THANKSGIVING
Oct 2, Th: <u>Mancala</u> . De Voogt, "Going – How Board Games Travel"; Townshend.	Dec 2, Tu: The Game of SJSU: **Game projects due.
Oct 7, Tu: <u>Nine Men's Morris</u> . Sackson (pp. 34-35); Partlett; **Journal (2) due.	Dec 4, Th: The Game of SJSU: Critiquing projects. **Research essay: revision due.
Oct 9, Th: <u>Dalmation Pirates and Volga Bulgars</u> . Sackson (pp. 10-11); Bell.	Dec 9, Tu: The Game of SJSU. Projects: final presentation.
Oct 14, Tu: <u>Checkers</u> , <u>Hoppers</u> , <u>Brax</u> , <u>Cats & Dogs</u> . Sackson (pp. 6-7, 22-25, 34-35); Cho; <i>Water for Elephants</i> , 196-237.	Dec 17, W: Final Exam, 2:45-5:00