Exploring the Politics of PLAY

PLAY IS WASTE
PLAY IS DEVIL'S WORK
PLAY IS EXPRESSION
PLAY IS CHILDISH
PLAY IS LIFE
PLAY IS CHAOS
PLAY IS RATIONAL
PLAY IS TRIVIAL
PLAY IS FREEDOM
PLAY IS COSMOS
PLAY IS COMMUNICATION
PLAY IS IRRATIONAL
PLAY IS FUN
PLAY IS DISTRACTION
PLAY IS SIGNIFICANT
PLAY IS PURPOSIVE
PLAY IS EDUCATION
PLAY IS SUBVERSIVE
PLAY IS UNIVERSAL
PLAY IS FANTASY
PLAY IS SERIOUS
PLAY IS CULTURE
PLAY IS DANGEROUS
PLAY IS *POLITICAL*
PLAY IS EVOLUTION

This course explores the politics of historical and present conceptions of play and gameplay with a special emphasis on understanding problems and potentials of contemporary digital game culture. We will discuss a broad range of topics including the centrality of play in Hindu metaphysics, the ancient Greek connection between education and play, the influence of American Puritanism on our valuation of play, Native American use of games as conflict resolution and inter-generational community formation, South Korean professionalization of videogaming, the emergence of "games for change," "serious games" and "gamification" movements, issues of diversity and cultural difference in the making and reception of digital games, first and second wave "indie" game culture, play and cultural evolution, the conceptual separation of "play" from "work," codifications of sexism, racism, and classism in game design culture, the threats of a "military entertainment complex," and more.

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