CMM 214G
Gamification in Politics, Business & Communications: An Interdisciplinary Approach

Number of ECTS credits: 6

Course Prerequisite
No course prerequisite

Course Description
In its most commonly used and widely accepted definition, *Gamification* describes the introduction of game design elements (badges, points, levels, rankings, challenges, virtual currencies, etc.) into non-game contexts, with the former aimed at making the latter more enjoyable. *Gamification* is a broad concept, which has been increasingly applied to different sectors and areas, ranging from political communications, the non-profit sector (“gamification for advocacy”), the business sector, and even the public sector.

The spread of game elements beyond the traditional connotation of entertainment has reached new prominence in recent years with the rise of digital platforms, and especially the near-universal adoption of social media. We can venture to say that *gamification* is ubiquitous – 70% of the companies surveyed by Forbes Global 2000 declare that they use gamification for marketing and customer retention, while the top 2,000 public organizations worldwide have at least one gamified application in place. While this offers exciting perspectives about the future of business strategies, governing, knowledge-sharing, and more broadly about human relationships, it also raises fundamental questions about the opportunities, challenges and the risks of the increased use of websites, online games and apps for major sectors of society.

Should we be glad? Worried even? Probably both. This is what this course intends to cover. It is an investigation of strategies of *gamification* by business multinationals, newspapers, governments and non-governmental organizations. In this respect, this course offers a comparative overview of several sectors that attempt to innovate through entailing game elements. Beyond that, this course aims at exploring the
potential – but also at understanding the limits – of the use of gamification in public and private sectors.

This interdisciplinary course has the following aims: (1) introducing and comparing scholarly analyses of gamification across a variety of fields (communications, politics, public governance, advocacy, marketing); (2) illustrating relevant case-studies and best practices of gamified strategies from business organizations, non-profit organizations, media outlets, political parties and governments; (3) pinpointing common patterns in the development of gamification strategies from various actors; (4) highlighting the benefits and drawbacks for participation and democracy arising from the increased use of gamification strategies.

The course mixes theoretical approaches with practical application of the concepts and theories. As such, typical classes involve case analysis, group problem solving, analysis of relevant materials (movies, podcasts, pictures) and debate.

**Course Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will have a firm grasp of:

- **In terms of knowledge** – (1) Gain an understanding of the concept of gamification and its usages in different contexts, ranging from political communication to civil society advocacy and business; (2) Gain an understanding of how different actors (business companies, public administrations, not-for-profits) may use games for different scopes; (3) Develop a conceptual framework to understand how gamification shapes and transforms marketing strategies, communication tactics, civil society advocacy and public policies (both national and supranational); (4) Gain a deep understanding of the promises and the risks of increased use of games.

- **In terms of skills** – (1) How to carry out independent research using a wide range of sources (e.g. being able to complete a literature review; being able to identify and describe core issues related with the topic of choice); (2) How to identify major patterns of relevant case studies and summarize them effectively; (3) How to work effectively in a team; (4) How to present case studies in class and argue dialectically with other students; (5) How to structure and compose a short essay integrating information from various sources and from class debate.

- **In terms of attitudes** – (1) Develop networking skills along with the ability to employ rhetorical strategies to defend opinions in a class debate; (2) Mature a management approach towards problem-solving; (3) Develop critical approach in the framework of written and oral assignments; (4) Understand one’s limitations and apprehend ways to improve them.

**Course Materials**

The Course Materials consists of: (1) Prezi presentations; (2) ‘main readings’ (ranging from chapters of core textbook, journal articles by key scholars, reports and essays from think-tanks and newspapers articles); (3) ‘additional readings’ related to case-studies to be discussed in class (see below for further info); (4) TedTalk videos
The syllabus, Prezi presentations, ‘main readings’ as well as important messages will be uploaded to the IES Vesalius learning platform (ies.instructure.com) at the beginning of and during the Semester. **Students are expected to visit this site regularly to keep abreast of course evolutions.** TedTalk videos are hyperlinked to the video.

**Textbook:**
G. SGUEO, Games, Powers & Democracies, Bocconi University Press, 2018

**Reference books**
- D.C BRABHAM, Crowdsourcing, Boston 2013
- B. BURKE, Gamify: How Gamification Motivates People to Do Extraordinary Things, Gartner 2014;
- V.F. HENDRICKS, P.G. HANSEN, Infostorms. How to Take Information Punches and Save Democracy, Springer 2014
- B.S. NOVECK, Smart Citizens, Smarter State, Cambridge (MA) 2016

**Course Assessment**
The students will be evaluated and graded on the basis of their performance in gamification labs, mid-term and final exams. **However, participation in class activities will also play an important part in the assessment of students’ maturation throughout the semester.** As a rule, it is highly recommended to prepare for class using the course ‘main readings’ in order to be able to follow classes and pose questions. It is also crucial to have a look at the ‘additional readings’ related to case studies to be discussed in class. The weekly reading questions related to each class are helpful to orientate for preparations and discussion of case studies. Students who are absent are responsible for finding out what was covered in class.

The **final grade will be based on the following:**
- Gamification Labs: 25%
- Mid-Term Exam: 30%
- Final Exam: 45%
- Total: 100%

**Grading Scale of Vesalius College**
Vesalius College grading policy follows the American system of letter grades, which correspond to a point scale from 0 – 100. All assignments (including exams) must be graded on the scale of 0-100. To comply with the Flemish Educational norms,
professors should on request also provide the conversion of the grade on the Flemish scale of 0-20. The conversion table below outlines the grade equivalents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Scale of 100 (VeCo Grading Scale)</th>
<th>Scale of 20 (Flemish System)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-100</td>
<td>17.0-20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>81-84</td>
<td>16.1-16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-80</td>
<td>15.3-16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>14.5-15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>69-72</td>
<td>13.7-14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>66-68</td>
<td>13.1-13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>62-65</td>
<td>12.3-13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>58-61</td>
<td>11.5-12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>54-57</td>
<td>10.7-11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-53</td>
<td>10.0-10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>0-9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic Honesty Statement**

Academic dishonesty is **NOT** tolerated in this course.

Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship. Cheating and plagiarism (including self-plagiarism) are therefore serious breaches of academic integrity.

Following the College policy, cheating and plagiarism cases will be communicated in writing to the Associate Dean for Students and submitted to the Student Conduct Committee for disciplinary action.

If you refer to someone else’s work, appropriate references and citations must be provided. Grammar, spelling and punctuation count, so use the tools necessary to correct before handing in assignments.
**Course Schedule**

**WEEK 1** – **INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE** – Exploring (video-) games, serious games, games with purposes, and gamification

**WEEK 2** – **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS** NO. 1: “Libertarian paternalism” – Behavioural sciences and the theory of nudge

**WEEK 3** – **GAMIFICATION LAB** – 1st SESSION ‘Kick Off’

**WEEK 4** – **IN-FOCUS CLASS** NO. 1: The Gamification of Government

**WEEK 5** – **GAMIFICATION LAB** – 2nd SESSION ‘Advancing’

**WEEK 6** – **MOVIE SCREENING** NO. 1: ‘Black Mirror’

**WEEK 7**
MID-TERM EXAM

**WEEK 8** – **IN-FOCUS CLASS** NO. 2: The Gamification of Business

**WEEK 9** – **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS** NO. 2: Crowdsourcing, Collective Intelligence and Prosumerism

**WEEK 10** – **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS** NO. 3: Is Gaming Ethical?

**WEEK 11** – **GAMIFICATION LAB** – 3rd SESSION – **CONCLUSION**

**WEEK 12** – **NO CLASS** (ACADEMIC HOLIDAY, FALL 2019)

**WEEK 13** – **IN-FOCUS CLASS** NO. 3: The Gamification of Politics

**WEEK 14** – **MOVIE SCREENING** NO. 2: ‘War Games’

**WEEK 15**
FINAL EXAM