ENGL 4375 / CSE 4392: Esports

Fall 2026

As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course.
– Doug Stark

Instructor Information

Instructor Name

Doug Stark, Ph.D. (he/him/his)

Office Location

Carlisle 413

Office Phone Number

817-272-2692

Email Address

douglas.stark@uta.edu

Faculty Profile

Doug Stark

Office Hours

Tuesdays, 3:00–5:00 p.m., and by appointment.

Communication Guidelines

Either chat with me after class or send me an email. I endeavor to respond within 48 hours.

Course Information

Section Information

ENGL 4375 - 001 / CSE 4392 - 003

Time and Place of Class Meetings

Monday and Wednesday, 2:30–3:50 p.m. (CT), in person. Primary classroom PH 103. Practical meetings take place in The Basement as identified in the schedule.

Description of Course Content

Since Rolling Stone covered the first event of its kind in 1972, video game competitions have evolved into a global industry called 'esports.' We will chart this development from early arcade gaming to contemporary internet culture and, en route, follow five paths scholars have trodden in an attempt to understand it. First of all, we will address the status of esports as sports. E-athletes had to

fight for their art to be considered a legitimate endeavor, and we will embody the trials and tribulations of competitive gaming by attempting to 'git gud' at a few gaming skills. But the rhetoric that persuades us to see playing a video game as a sport is hardly neutral. From the game developers who own the basis of play to the universities who have tried integrating gaming into the NCAA, the legitimation of esports has proved lucrative for various institutions. We will, second of all, consider esports as an industry. If this industry was once confined to tournament arenas, then it has now spilled out onto our smartphones, laptops, and tablets by way of platforms like Twitch and YouTube. Third, we will examine esports as design, asking how games are constructed for competitive balance, spectator appeal, or training purposes. Fourth, we will consider the entertainment dimension, focusing on how esports has been packaged as a media spectacle that merges streaming, celebrity culture, and traditional broadcast forms. Finally, we will analyze esports as culture and community, attending to the players, fans, and grassroots scenes whose practices sustain the phenomenon and whose conflicts shape its meanings.

Overall, this hands-on course will involve playing and analyzing esports titles, designing tournaments and training regimens, watching broadcasts and streams, meeting coaches, athletes, and other esports professionals, and visiting The Basement, where we will access video games for free and receive technical support for our projects. Assignments include selected Google and Adobe training, five individual applied portfolio projects, two group debrief-and-reel packages, and a research-backed group application with a demo video.

Prerequisites

For ENGL 4375: C or better in ENGL 1301. For CSE 4392: admission into the professional program.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Define** and contextualize key esports concepts, including competitive formats, platforms, and technical infrastructures.
2. **Explain** the historical development of esports as a digital competitive, media, and cultural ecosystem.
3. **Examine** esports as sport and performance, including skill, training, legitimacy, and embodiment.
4. **Evaluate** the organizational, institutional, and economic structures that shape esports practices and values.
5. **Assess** esports as a design problem, including competitive balance, spectatorship, and training systems.
6. **Identify** critical concerns in esports, including labor, player health, governance, and platform moderation.
7. **Produce** written, verbal, and visual work that clearly explains and justifies claims about esports systems, cultures, and power relations.
8. Develop, test, and present a research-backed application that addresses a bounded problem in the esports industry.

Recording of Classroom and Online Lectures

Faculty maintain the academic right to determine whether students are permitted to record classroom and online lectures. Recordings, if permitted by the instructor or pursuant to an ADA accommodation, may only be used for academic purposes related to the specific course. They may

not be used commercially or shared with non-course participants except in connection with a legal proceeding.

As the instructor of this course, I prohibit recording classroom or online lectures, guests, classmates, or interviews unless other arrangements have been made with my consent and every recorded participant has explicitly consented. Permission to create an assigned clip or demo video does not authorize recording class discussion.

Assessment

Assignments and Weightings

Grades will be posted on Canvas. There are 100 points on offer. Totals equate to final letter grades:

A (90–100), B (80–89), C (70–79), D (60–69), F (<60)

The instructor reserves the right to adjudicate whether rounding up is warranted (e.g., 89.5 may receive an A). Further instructions and compact rubrics will be provided on Canvas. Unless stated otherwise, assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. CT on the listed date.

Assignment	Points	Description	SLOs	Due
Selected Professional Training	10	Five badges from selected Google AI and Adobe courses.	1–8	B1–B5
Applied Portfolio	30	Five individual, bounded six-point projects: Tournament Design, Training Regimen, Stream Clip, Product Pitch, and Interview Analysis. Each begins in the scheduled workshop and should require no more than 1–2 additional hours to finish.	1–8	P1–P5
Group Debriefs and Reels	20	Each group completes two 10-point Monday debrief-and-reel packages. For each, the group uses up to 10 minutes to explain what the preceding week's lecture and practical work revealed, then poses questions and guides up to 10 minutes of discussion. The accompanying short-form reel is submitted before class.	1–8	Assigned Mondays, 2:30 p.m. CT
Group Application Project	30	Project Proposal (2.5), Prototype (2.5), Final Application (20), and Demo Video (5). The final application must address one bounded esports problem for a	3–8	Proposal: Oct. 11, 11:59 p.m. CT Prototype: Nov. 8, 11:59 p.m. CT Demo Video: Dec. 7,

Assignment	Points	Description	SLOs	Due
		defined user or operator, contain one complete, demonstrable workflow, and document testing and consequential revision; a static mockup alone does not satisfy the application requirement. The demo video must show the problem, intended user, core workflow, and known limitations. Missing the Virtual Showcase reduces the project grade by 5 points.		11:59 a.m. CT Final Application: Dec. 7, 11:59 p.m. CT
Participation and Attendance	10	Participation (5) and attendance (5). We have 29 scheduled class meetings; attend 26 and receive full attendance credit.	1–8	Term

Grounds for Grade Reduction

Behavior: Inappropriate, overbearing, or disruptive behavior in classes, groups, or asynchronous platforms.
Lateness: late recurring assignments will not be accepted. Late one-off assignments receive a 1-point reduction per day. Extensions are granted case by case, but you must contact me several days in advance. Three late arrivals convert to an absence.
Sloppiness: assignments must include a title and the student's name and follow supplied formatting and style guidelines. Failure to do so will receive a 0.5-point reduction.
Lack of attention: devices are allowed only when they amplify learning. Inattention will damage the participation grade.
Absence: Seven or more absences may result in a failing grade for the course.
Dishonesty: Plagiarism, fabricated evidence or citations, or misrepresentation of AI-generated material may result in a failing grade for the assignment or course.

Grade Grievances

Any appeal of a grade in this course must follow the procedures and deadlines for grade-related grievances as published in the current University Catalog Grades and Grading Policies.

Course Schedule

Week and Topic	Monday	Wednesday	Sunday
Week 1: Introduction	8/17 (#1) **What Is This Course?** *Watch* (in class) Free to Play (Valve,	8/19 (#2) **What Is Esports?** *Read* Nothelfer, Jenny, and Besombes, 'Defining	8/23 B1: Google AI Fundamentals B2: Google AI for Brainstorming and Planning

Week and Topic	Monday	Wednesday	Sunday
	2014), begin	and Spelling Esports,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 6–18	
Week 2: History and Critical Concerns	8/24 (#3) **From Spacewar to Stadiums** *Read* Jin and Besombes, 'Global History of Esports,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 19–29 *Watch* Free to Play (Valve, 2014), finish	8/26 (#4) **Critical Concerns** *Read* Brock and Cote, 'Introduction to Critical Concerns in Esports,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 479–481 Then, decide to read ONE other chapter from the section on "Critical Concerns in Esports" (482-574)	8/30 B3: Google AI for Research and Insights B4: Adobe Storytelling through Short-Form Video
Week 3: Design and Spectatorship	8/31 (#5) **Analyzing Game Design** *Read* Zubek, 'Introduction,' in Elements of Game Design (2020), xv–xix *Debrief*	9/2 (#6) **Analyzing Spectator Sport** *Read* Partin, 'Dota 2 as religious experience' (2014), np *Watch* theScore esports, 'The Story of Daigo Umehara: The Beast (FGC)' (2017)	9/6 B5: Google AI for App Building
Week 4: Game Design	9/7 **Labor Day Holiday**	9/9 (#7) **Fortnite — The Basement** *Play (in class)* Fortnite (Epic Games,	

Week and Topic	Monday	Wednesday	Sunday
		2017–present)	
Week 5: Tournaments	9/14 (#8) **Tournament Design** *Read* Ashton, 'Esports Developers, Publishers, and Game Design Considerations,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 54–64 *Debrief*	9/16 (#9) **Tournament Design Workshop — The Basement** *Watch (in class)* Selected Fortnite tournament	9/20 **P1: Tournament Design**
Week 6: Training	9/21 (#10) **Training and Performance** *Read* Jenny, 'Esports Performance Skills,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 178–190 *Read* Karhulahti, 'Preface' and 'Noob,' in Esport Play (2022), x–20 *Debrief*	9/23 (#11) **Skill and Training Lab — The Basement** *Play (in class)* Aimlabs; cornhole	
Week 7: Coaching and Health	9/28 (#12) **Coaching, Health, and Development** *Watch* LoL Esports, 'Nike LPL League of Legends Documentary' (2019), 15 min.	9/30 (#13) **Training Regimen Workshop — The Basement** Guest Speaker	10/4 **P2: Training Regimen**

Week and Topic	Monday	Wednesday	Sunday
	Debrief		
Week 8: Broadcasting	10/5 (#14) **Broadcasting** *Read* Knutson and Liebig, 'Esports Production,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 393–403 *Debrief*	10/7 (#15) **Watch Party — The Basement** *Watch (in class)* Selected esports broadcast	10/11 **Group Project Proposal**
Week 9: Streaming	10/12 (#16) **Streaming** *Read* Smethers, 'Streaming Esports,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 404–413 *Debrief*	10/14 (#17) **Stream Clipping Workshop — The Basement** *Watch (in class)* Student-selected esports streams	10/18 **P3: Stream Clip**
Week 10: Business Models	10/19 (#18) **Business Models** *Read* Parshakov and Barajas, 'Esports Business and Finance,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 284–291 *Debrief*	10/21 (#19) **Follow the Money — The Basement** *Activity* Follow the Money	
Week 11: Organizations	10/26 (#20) **OpTic and Esports Stadium Arlington** *Read* OpTic Gaming, 'OpTic Gaming to Operate Esports	10/28 (#21) **Product Pitch Workshop — The Basement**	11/1 P4: Product Pitch

Week and Topic	Monday	Wednesday	Sunday
	Stadium Arlington' (2022), np *Read* Swanger, 'What Happened to Esports? Inside the Industry's Billion-Dollar Reality Check' (2026), np *Debrief*		
Week 12: Collegiate	11/2 (#22) **Collegiate Programs** *Read* Foxman et al., 'Competitive Collegiate Esports Programs,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 454–465 *Debrief*	11/4 (#23) **Guest Speaker**	11/8 **Group Project Prototype**
Week 13: Culture and Community	11/9 (#24) **Culture and Community** *Read* Cote, Foxman, and Law, 'Qualitative Esports Research Methodology,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 123–134 *Debrief*	11/11 (#25) **Interview Workshop — The Basement**	11/15 **P5: Interview Analysis**
Week 14: Projects I	11/16 (#26) **Group Project Meetings** *Debrief*	11/18 (#27) **Group Project Meetings**	

Week and Topic	Monday	Wednesday	Sunday
Week 15: Projects II	11/23 (#28) **Application and Demo Video Workshop — The Basement**	11/25 **No Classes Scheduled**	
Week 16: Review	11/30 (#29) **Course Review** *Read* Jenny et al., 'The Future of Esports,' in Routledge Handbook of Esports (2025), 657–670 *Debrief*	12/2 **Student Study Day**	
Week 17: Virtual Showcase	12/7 **Virtual Showcase (online), 2:00–4:30 p.m.** Demo Video due by 11:59 a.m.; Final Application due by 11:59 p.m.		

Read, Play, and Watch: Unless specified as 'in class,' readings, watchings, and playings must be completed before the class session they correspond with. All watching and reading will be accessible online or through the course Google Drive. Video games will either link from Canvas or be accessible in The Basement.

Slides: I create extensive slides for posterity. If you miss a session, reviewing those slides closely—playing included videos and games, thinking through posed questions, and taking notes—will prepare you for the next class.

Required Chapters, Articles, and Media Available on Canvas

Ashton, Graham. 'Esports Developers, Publishers, and Game Design Considerations.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 54–64. Routledge, 2025.
Brock, Tom, and Amanda C. Cote. 'Introduction to Critical Concerns in Esports.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 479–481. Routledge, 2025.
Cote, Amanda C., Maxwell Foxman, and Ying-Ying Law. 'Qualitative Esports Research Methodology.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 123–134. Routledge, 2025.
Foxman, Maxwell, Seth E. Jenny, Amanda C. Cote, Michele R. King, and Leandro Becka. 'Competitive Collegiate Esports Programs.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 454–465. Routledge, 2025.
Hassan, Lobna, Pauliina Baltzar, and Markus Kämäräinen. 'Esports for People With Disabilities.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 551–560. Routledge, 2025.

Helmefalk, Miralem, et al. 'Organizing Esports Events.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 302–314. Routledge, 2025.
Jenny, Seth E. 'Esports Performance Skills.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 178–190. Routledge, 2025.
Jenny, Seth E., Tom Brock, Tobias M. Scholz, Amanda C. Cote, and Nicolas Besombes. 'The Future of Esports.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 657–670. Routledge, 2025.
Jin, Dal Yong, and Nicolas Besombes. 'Global History of Esports.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 19–29. Routledge, 2025.
Karhulahti, Veli-Matti. Esport Play: Anticipation, Attachment, and Addiction in Psycholudic Development. Bloomsbury Academic, 2022.
Knutson, Matt, and Jonathan Liebig. 'Esports Production.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 393–403. Routledge, 2025.
LoL Esports. 'Nike LPL League of Legends Documentary.' Video, 2019.
Nothelfer, Nepomuk, Seth E. Jenny, and Nicolas Besombes. 'Defining and Spelling Esports.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 6–18. Routledge, 2025.
OpTic Gaming. 'OpTic Gaming to Operate Esports Stadium Arlington.' 13 Jan. 2022.
Parshakov, Petr, and Angel Barajas. 'Esports Business and Finance.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 284–291. Routledge, 2025.
Partin, Will. 'Dota 2 as religious experience.' Kill Screen, 19 Aug. 2014.
Reitman, Jason G., Reginald Gardner, Kathryn Campbell, Alex Cho, and Constance Steinkuehler. 'Esports Research: A Literature Review.' Games and Culture 15, no. 1 (2020): 32–50.
Richard, Gabriela T., Zachary McKinley, and Robert Ashley. 'Collegiate Esports as Learning Ecologies: Investigating Collaboration, Reflection and Cognition During Competitions.' Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association 4, no. 3 (2019): 1–41.
Scholz, Tobias M. eSports Is Business: Management in the World of Competitive Gaming. Springer, 2019.
Smethers, Jason. 'Streaming Esports.' In Routledge Handbook of Esports, 404–413. Routledge, 2025.
Swanger, Ben. 'What Happened to Esports? Inside the Industry's Billion-Dollar Reality Check.' D CEO, 8 June 2026.
Taylor, T. L. Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming. Princeton University Press, 2018.
theScore esports. 'The Story of Daigo Umehara: The Beast (FGC).' Video, 2017.
Valve Corporation. Free to Play. Documentary film, 2014.
Zubek, Robert. 'Introduction.' In Elements of Game Design, xv–xix. MIT Press, 2020.

Required Games and Training

The course will provide or coordinate required access. Do not purchase anything unless instructed to do so in Canvas.
Fortnite. Epic Games, 2017–present.
Aimlabs. Statespace, 2018–present.
Cornhole and other analog training materials supplied in class.
Google AI Professional Certificate — selected courses only.
Google AI for App Building.
Adobe Storytelling through Short-Form Video.

University Policies

UTA students are encouraged to review the current Institutional Syllabus Policies. This page includes policies concerning course access, disability accommodations, Title IX, academic integrity, student feedback, and final assessments.

- Drop Policy
- Disability Accommodations

- Title IX Policy
- Academic Integrity
- Student Feedback Survey
- Final Exam Schedule

Attendance

Attending class sessions is a critical predictor and indicator of student success. The University of Texas at Arlington does not recognize a single attendance policy but encourages faculty to establish class-specific policies. I will take attendance at every class meeting. Contact me as early as possible about anticipated absences and coordinate any group obligations. The Dec. 7 Virtual Showcase is a required course meeting. See the UTA Attendance Policy.

Generative AI Use in This Course

The use of Generative AI (GenAI) in course assignments and assessments must align with the guidelines established by the instructor. Unauthorized or undisclosed use may constitute a breach of academic integrity.
This course permits cited and documented GenAI use for approved tasks including brainstorming, background research, organization, comparison, prototyping, coding assistance, testing, media production, and revision. AI output is not evidence or a citation authority. Students must verify sources, inspect generated code and media, test behavior, protect private and copyrighted material, disclose material assistance, and remain responsible for every claim and feature. Each student submits a concise AI/source-provenance and contribution record identifying the artifacts, builds, edits, tests, decisions, and coordination they completed for the final project. The instructor may adjust an individual student's group-project grade when this record and project evidence demonstrate materially unequal contributions.

Academic & Wellness Resources

Academic Success Center

The Academic Success Center offers tutoring, mentoring, supplemental instruction, and other services at no additional cost: Academic Success Center.

The English Writing Center (411 LIBR)

The Writing Center offers free face-to-face and online appointments for any phase of UTA coursework: Writing Center appointments.

Academic Plaza

The Library's second-floor Academic Plaza offers a central hub of academic support services.

UTA CARE Team

UTA's CARE Team helps students experiencing academic, emotional, psychological, or other difficulties and coordinates appropriate support. Submit a referral through the Behavior Intervention Team page. In an immediate emergency, call UTA Police at 817-272-3003 or dial 911; the MAVS TALK 24-hour crisis line is 817-272-8255.

Student Services

Current accessibility, health, counseling, military/veteran, recreation, and student-life services are available through UTA Student Affairs.

Librarian to Contact

Librarians by academic subject can assist with searching, databases, citations, and course materials: Librarians by Academic Subject.

Safety Information & Resources

Face Covering Policy

Face coverings are not mandatory; all students and instructional staff are welcome to wear face coverings while on campus or in the classroom.

Emergency Exit Procedures

If an emergency requires evacuation, leave the classroom or The Basement by the nearest safe exit and follow university instructions. Do not use an elevator. Faculty and staff will assist students in selecting the safest route and arranging assistance for individuals with disabilities. Room-specific exit directions for PH 103 will be reviewed in class.

MavAlert System

The MavAlert system sends emergency information to subscribed phones and email accounts. Manage alerts through UTA Emergency Management.

Emergency Phone Numbers

For an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at 817-272-3003 from a non-campus phone or 2-3003 from a campus phone; you may also dial 911. The non-emergency number is 817-272-3381.