

EALC 10622 Topics in EALC:
Understanding Games and Play with Pre-modern East Asia Literature
Subject to Change

Class Meetings: Mon & Wed 3:00-4:20 pm

Instructor: Jiayi Chen, jiayic@uchicago.edu

Office Hours: Fridays 1:00-3:00 pm over zoom and by appointment

<https://calendly.com/cjiayi0311/officehours>



Players, welcome aboard. Please read through the following game rules that contain all the essential information you need in order to join our game.

Introduction:

Games are everywhere, so pervasive that we tend to take for granted what games are and how the notion of play is associated with specific cultural and historical contexts. In this class, we will defamiliarize our understandings of games and play by exploring their active interactions with literature mainly in pre-modern China and Japan. From Tang dynasty riddle tales to Edo period puppet theater, from the fantastic pilgrimage in the novel *Journey to the West* to the virtual journey on the *Sugoroku* game board—all these materials we will cover in class center on the ways in which playing, storytelling, and reading go hand in hand with one another. Stories are turned into games, and sometimes, games start to tell stories. By looking closely at a series of short stories, novels, and plays, together with actual games like boardgames, playing cards, and dolls, we will consider: How can literature and literary approaches enrich our understandings of certain games and their gameplay experience? How can the perspectives drawn from game studies today shed new light on our readings of the literary works from the past? How does the interplay between literature and games provide an alternative lens to probe into the changing cultural values, historical backgrounds, and social identities in East Asia?

All readings will be provided in English.

Goals:

The class itself is like a game in which you are asked to complete a set of tasks. Throughout the process, you will encounter a wide range of materials consisting of literary texts, images, objects, and of course, games. Please join us so as to:

- Form a deeper, more situated understanding of the two-way relationships between literature and games/play in East Asian historical and cultural contexts
- Develop new perspectives to study East Asian literatures and cultures through the lens of games and play
- Critically experience, interpret, present, and write about the interplay between literature and games

Tasks:

You are required to complete four mandatory tasks throughout the quarter. You are also encouraged to earn bonus points by finishing the side tasks. Your points will be calculated and adjusted to letter grades at the end of the quarter.

Remember, games can be both competitive and collaborative. But here, we are always working together to complete these tasks!

Mandatory Tasks:

1. Thoughtful and respectful participation (20 pts)

You earn points by attending all class meetings and actively contributing to in-class conversation. You are asked to come to class with all the assigned readings completed. In class, you are encouraged to engage in discussion, ask questions, and listen carefully to your fellow players. You are allowed to have **one free absence**. After that, you need to contact me by email beforehand explaining why you must be absent, or you will **lose 3 points** for each unexcused absence. Please feel free to let me know if there is any way I can help to facilitate your participation.

2. Weekly Canvas posts (15 pts)

You earn points by writing **7 weekly Canvas posts** from week 2 to week 10 (This means you can skip one week). A post is normally **one to two paragraphs, around 150-250 words**, about your reflections on the assigned readings (primary or secondary texts). You may also respond to each other's posts, but try to relate to the course materials to support your ideas. In weeks 5 & 6, you are welcome to share your experiences of visiting the study room at the Smart Museum and preparing for the curatorial experiment (details to follow).

The purpose of this task is not just to give you a place to do thought experiments and explore your ideas by writing in a succinct manner. In addition, it is to prepare for and expand our in-class discussion. So, try to think for yourself and your fellows, and not just summarize the plots or simply repeat what the authors have said. Each week, I will provide a reading guide with essential background information and some general questions, but don't hesitate to include anything in the reading(s) you find interesting, confusing, or feel eager to bring up. You are also encouraged to raise your own questions without an answer: What do you find hard to understand? What aspects do you hope to discuss/tackle together with your fellow players?

The points you earn are based on:

1) Promptness: You should post once a week on canvas **by 9 am the day of the class** (i.e. by either Monday or Wednesday, 9 am). You will lose **1 point** for each late posting.

2) Quality and originality of your thought pieces: You will lose **1 point** for each post that merely summarizes the plots or the authors' points, that keeps repeating yourself and does not engage the readings, or that is too roughly written (e.g. full of grammatical mistakes and sentence fragments, etc.)

3. Curatorial Experiment (35 pts)

You earn points by playing the role of a curator. We, as a class, will curate a small online exhibition on "East Asian games and play." This will be our collaborative response to the first half of the class in which we will read literature in tandem with playing games as well as viewing and handling various objects in class. You are asked to form a curatorial team of **2 members**. You are responsible for telling the audience a story on a certain theme (that we may or may not cover in class) with the visual and material objects. From Week 4 to Week 6, you need to choose your theme and **4-6 objects** for display, write a short introduction and exhibition labels, and give a mini "gallery talk." Our exhibition is planned to be launched in Week 7 via our class website. Details and rubrics will be given in Week 3.

4. Final research project or creative project (30 pts)

You can choose either to write **a research paper (6-8 double-spaced pages)** or conduct a creative project to earn these final points. Final project proposals (about 200-250 words) will be due on **11/19 (Friday), 11:59 pm**. Final projects will be due on **12/10 (Friday), 11:59 pm**. Please discuss with me in advance about your selected topic and project format. More details will be announced after the mid-term curatorial project.

A research paper should be an exploration of a topic of your own choice. It can be related to your curatorial experiment (e.g. an in-depth study of one of the objects). It can also be a careful and original reading of the primary texts, a deeper understanding of a particular issue or theme covered in class, or a comparative analysis. You need to submit a short proposal via email that describes the idea and format of the paper.

If you choose to do the creative project, you can either complete it individually or together with up to two team members. The project can be an advanced version of your curatorial experiment (with more themes and objects, in formats of your choice), a game design, a hypertext, a piece of creative writing, a podcast, a film, etc. The creative project provides you an alternative path to explore the issues and concepts we will cover in class. You need to 1) submit a short proposal via email, 2) present your project (5 minutes) in the last class, if time allows, and 3) write **an introduction or artist's statement for your final work (2-3 double-spaced pages)**. For a group project, each team member should also turn in an additional brief individual reflection to comment on the collaborative experience (2 double-spaced pages).

Side Tasks:

1. Game Report (5 pts)

From Week 2 to Week 7, each week, I will recommend one video game (except the game of *go*, a board game that you can learn and play online) related to our weekly topics. You are encouraged to post your critical game report on our class blog. **It should be two to three paragraphs long (250-350 words)**. Play the game (no more than three hours!), tell us your experience, and describe how the games and the literature we discuss in class inform each other: What are their connections and differences? What are lost or gained in the video games? Once you have completed this task, you

will earn **5 points** for one report. This is optional, and you can choose to complete it anytime throughout the quarter.

2. Note sharing (3 pts)

This side task is to help our class as a whole to share the notes of our discussion. For each class session, I ask one or two volunteers to take notes in class. Each student can only be the note taker twice. Once you have completed this task, you will earn **3 points**.

Suggestions:

1. Late work is risky.

The mandatory tasks have time limitations. Keep in mind these important dates:

- Week 2-8, **Monday or Wednesday by 9 am**: Weekly Canvas posts due
- Week 5 **10/31 (Sunday) by 11:59 pm**: Draft exhibition introduction and labels due
- Week 6, **11/3 (Wednesday) in class**: Gallery talks for the curatorial experiments
- Week 7, **11/12 (Friday) by 11:59 pm**: Exhibition launch online
- Week 8, **11/19 (Friday), by 11:59 pm**: Proposals for final papers/final creative projects due
- Week 10, **12/1 (Wednesday) in class**: Creative projects presentations (if time allows)
- Week 11, **12/10 (Sunday), by 11:59 pm**: Final projects due

I will consider extensions for your papers if you contact me at least **5 days** in advance. Last-minute extensions will only be granted in cases of emergency or illness. You will lose **3 points** of your total points for each day that your paper is late.

2. Plagiarism is against the rules.

Plagiarism will result in failing the course. All works should be your own. Do not copy and paste (or use Google Translate) things online, in books, or from your previous written assignments. Do not hesitate to check with me if you have any questions concerning what constitutes plagiarism or how to cite.

3. Accessibility

My aim is to create a space in which everyone is empowered to engage fully. If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see me, and the Office of Student Disability Services so that such accommodations may be arranged. Here is their contact information:

Phone: 773-702-6000

Email: disabilities@uchicago.edu; <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/>

5. Use of technology in the classroom

You are responsible for downloading, printing out, and bringing to class the texts we are dealing with on a particular day or having the texts downloaded and easily accessible on a laptop or tablet. That said, you are welcome to use a laptop or tablet in class as long as it contributes to your learning. The class is discussion based. You need to show respect for your peers. If you are unable to contribute to the discussion or are otherwise distracted by your computer, cell phone, or tablet, I will ask that you refrain from using it in class.

Schedule

Unit I. A Game Tutorial

Week 1 Introduction

Mon 9/27 Gambit: Games and East Asian Literature

Wed 9/29 Playing in Contexts

- Zhang Dai, “West Lake on the Fifteenth Night of the Seventh Month”
- Shikitei Sanba, *The Bathhouse of the Floating World*, 167, 188-192
- Craig Clunas, “Pleasure, Play, Excess,” *Empire of the Great Brightness*, 137-158
- Rupert Cox, “Is there a Japanese Way of Playing,” 169-185

♠ **Game:** AI Dungeon (2019)

Unit II. Playful Things

Week 2 Time and Space of Boardgames

Mon 10/4 *Weiqi/Go/Baduk*

- Kawabata Yasunari, *The Master of Go*, selections
- “The Battle of Coxinga,” in Chikamatsu Monzaemon, Donald Keene trans *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, Scene 3, 251-261
- Xiaofei Tian, *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang* (502-557), 252-259
- Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “Treatise on Nomadology: The War Machine”
- **REC** Qi Dongfang, “Literati and Poems about *Go*,” *JCLC* (2016) 3 (1), 85-107

Wed 10/6 *E-Sugoroku* (**Play the role of a *sugoroku* game designer in class**)

- “Scenic Views: *E-Sugoroku*,” in *Asian Games: The Art of Contest*, 76-87 (mainly images)
- Charlotte Eubanks, “Reading as Patterned Play: Everyday Religion and the Spatialization of Doctrine in a Buddhist Board Game,” *Book History* vol.23 (2020), 40-75
- Henry Jenkins, “Game Design as Narrative Architecture,” in *FirstPerson: New Media as Story, Performance, and Genre*, 118-130
- **REC** (For other Chinese Board Games) Ellen Johnston Laing, “Chinese Pictorial Board Game Prints,” in *Arts Asiatiques* vol.70 (2015), 77-86

♠ **Game:** The Game of *Go* (<https://www.usgo.org/learn-play>)

Week 3 Playing Cards: Outlaws and Courtesans

Mon 10/11 The One versus the Many: Collecting Outlaws

- *The Marshes of Mount Liang (The Water Margin)*, Chapter 38, 40, 42-43

- Woloch, *The One versus the Many*, 12-21
- Andrew Lo, “China’s Passion for *Pai*: Playing Cards, Dominoes, and Mahjong,” in *Asian Games: The Art of Contest*, 217-219, 224-226

Wed 10/13 Half-Real: Visiting Courtesans (**Play the role of a 17th-century literati in class**)

- Yu Huai, *Miscellaneous Records of the Plank Bridge*, selections
- Dorothy Ko, “The Written Word and the Bound Foot: A History of the Courtesan’s Aura,” 82-86
- Jesper Juul, *Half-Real*, Chapter 5, selections

♠ **Game:** Super Smash Bros. (Nintendo, 2018)

You can get it as well as the Switch at Crerar (Call Number: GV1469.35.S98 2018)

Week 4 Playful Beings

Mon 10/18 Dolls and Puppets

- Jeehee Hong, “Virtual Theater of the Dead: Actor Figurines and Their Stage in Houma Tomb No.1 Shanxi Province,” *Artibus Asiae*, 2011, vol.71, No.1 (2011), 81-84, 101 (skim other parts)
- Short Stories: “Third Lady of Plank Bridge Inn,” & “Magical Arts”
- Roland Barthes, “On Bunraku,” *The Drama Review: TDR* vol.15, no.2 (1971), 76-80
- Chikamatsu, *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, in Donald Keene trans., *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 39-56

Unit II. Playful Worlds

Wed 10/20 The Floating World

- Santō Kyōden, *Playboy, Roasted à la Edo*, in Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan*, 359-426 (skim the intro if you have time, 339-355)

♠ **Game:** Tengami (2014)

Week 5 The World of Crime

Mon 10/25 Riddles and Crimes

- Li Gongzuo, “An Account of Xie Xiao’e”
- Ling Mengchu, “Li Gongzuo Ingeniously Reads a Dream, Xie Xia’e Cleverly Snares Pirates,” 391-410
- Feng Menglong, “Magistrate Teng Settles the Case of Inheritance with Ghostly Cleverness,” *Stories Old and New*, pp. 172–193

Wed 10/27 **Storage Visit at the Smart Museum**

- **REC** Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan*, Chapter 2

♠ **Game:** Word Game (30 min demo, 2021)

Week 6 The World of the Strange

Mon 11/1 Riddles and Strange Encounters

- Anonymous, “A Record of Nocturnal Spirits near Dongyang”, in eds. Victor Mair and Zhenjun Zhang, *Anthology of Tang and Song Tales: The Tang Song chuanqi ji of Lu Xun*, 426-459
- “Yellow Pride,” “Lotus Princess,” in Pu Songling, *Liaozhai zhiyi*
- Judith T. Zeitlin, “The Ghosts of Things” Chapter in *Fantômes dans l’Extrême-Orient d’hier*
- **REC** Sarah Allen, *Shifting Stories: History, Gossip, and Lore in Narratives from Tang Dynasty*, Chapter 4
- **REC** Daniel Tiffany, “Lyric Substance: On Riddles, Materialism, and Poetic Obscurity,” 72-82

Wed 11/3 ****Gallery Talks for the Curatorial Experiments****

♠ **Games:** Onmyoji (2017)

Week 7 The Illusory Worlds

Mon 11/8 Magics and Tricks

- Anthony Yu trans., *Journey to the West*, Chapter 27 & 46
- “Stealing a Peach,” “The Taoist Priest of Mount Lao” in Pu Songling, *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 43-53
- Tom Gunning, “Illusions Past and Future: The Phantasmagoria and its Specters,” 1-7
- **REC** Victor H. Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama*, Chapter 3

Wed 11/10 A Monkey’s Adventure: Walls and Virtual Reality

- Dong Yue, *Further Adventures on the Journey to the West*, Chapters 1-5
- “The Painted Wall,” in Pu Songling, *Liaozhai zhiyi*
- Pierre Lévy, “The Nature of Virtualization,” *Becoming Virtual*, 23-34

♠ **Game:** Ōkami (2017)

Week 8 This and Other Worlds

Mon 11/15 A Monkey’s Adventure (continued): Worlds and Games

- Dong Yue, *Further Adventures on the Journey to the West*, Chapters 6-10
- Marie-Laure Ryan, “The Text as World versus the Text as Game,” in *Narrative as Virtual Reality 2: Revisiting Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, 117-136

- **REC** Robert E. Hegel, “Picturing the Monkey King: Illustrations of the 1641 Novel *Xiyoubu*,” *The Art of the Book in China*, 175-191

Unit IV. Games and Stories, Now and Then

Wed 11/17 Gambling with Destiny

- “How a Samurai Who Served Lord Kazan’in Tadatsune, Minister of the Right, Won at Gambling and Received the Tonsure Thanks to His Wife,” in *The Demon at Aji Bridge and Other Japanese Tales*, 128-132
- Feng Menglong, “For One Penny, a Small Grudge Ends in Stark Tragedies”, *Stories to Awaken the World: A Ming Dynasty Collection*, 767-813
- Anne Richard, *The Romance of Gambling in the Eighteenth-Century British Novel*, Introduction, 1-17
- **REC** Mark E. Lewis, “Dicing and Divination in Early China,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* no.121 (2002), 1-22

****Final project proposal due 11/19 11:59 pm****

Week 9 Thanksgiving: No Class!

Week 10 Endgame: The Game’s Global Adventures

Mon 11/29 Pachinko

- *Pachinko* (Min Jin Lee, 2017), Book 2, Chapter 10-20, 237-321
- **REC** Wolfram Manzenreiter, “Time, Space, and Money: Cultural Dimensions of the ‘Pachinko’ Game” in Sepp Linhart and Sabine Fruhstuck eds., *Culture of Japan as Seen Through its Leisure*, 359-382

Wed 12/1 The Age of Pokémon

- Joseph Tobin, “The Rise and Fall of the Pokémon Empire,” in Joseph Tobin et al eds., *Pikachu’s Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, 257-292

****Final paper or creative project due 12/10 11:59 pm****