

Melissa Kagen, Ph.D.

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Comparative Media Studies/Writing (Game Lab)

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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APPOINTMENTS

Visiting Scholar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2019–2020

- I conduct research on transgressive, counter-colonialist play of board games and video games, in collaboration with Mikael Jakobsson and Rik Eberhardt at the Game Lab.

Tufts University, Experimental College Visiting Lecturer Spring 2020

- I'm teaching *Wandering Games: Play, Performance, Protest*.

Lecturer (UK Assistant Professor) in Digital Media & Gaming, Bangor University 2017–2019

- I researched and taught game studies, game design, new media, and digital culture. I designed the curriculum and taught the school's new minor in Game Design.

Lecturer in Comparative Literature, Stanford University 2016–2017

- 1-year position teaching 4 courses: an interdisciplinary arts seminar on wandering, a first-year writing & composition course, a German language course, and an upper-level German literature & videogame seminar.

ONGOING PROJECTS

Research Interests: wandering games, walking simulators, gender and queerness in gaming, postcolonial play, critical play, death mechanics, site-specific game design, immersive/participatory performance.

Book Projects

- *Hellsites: How Fan-friendly Platforms Empower ComicsGate, GamerGate, and the Alt-Right* (co-written with Anastasia Salter and Bridget Blodgett) focuses each chapter on a different platform and analyzes what kinds of harassment are enabled/encouraged by the mechanics of that platform.
- *Wandering Games* (single-authored) considers the connotations of wandering in different game worlds, drawing together notions of embodiment, environment, orientation, and community alongside scholarly, dramatic, and historical practices of wandering.

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in German Studies, **Stanford University** 2011–2016

- *"Alle Wege der Welt": Wandering in Early 20th-Century German/Jewish Opera*
This project traces the intertwined myths of the Wandering Jew and the German Wanderer, illuminating the connections between art, race, anti-Semitism, and authoritarianism in operas by Franz Schreker, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Arnold Schoenberg, and Kurt Weill.
- Advisor: Adrian Daub

M.A. in Humanities, **University of Chicago** 2009–2010

- Thesis: "Jewish National Identity in 1840: Der 'Fliegende Jude' and the Promise of Redemption in Heine and Wagner"—Advisor: Na'ama Rokem

B.A. in Literary Arts (with Honors), magna cum laude, **Brown University** 2005–2009

- Thesis in Fiction: "Asylum"—Advisor: Meredith Steinbach
- Semester abroad at **Eberhard Karls Universität**, Tübingen, Germany

PUBLICATIONS

Peer Reviewed

"'Glory to Trumpland!' Critically Playing Border Games," *Gamevironments* (Special Issue: Gaming, Identity, and Nation(alism)), Available at <https://elib.suub.uni-bremen.de/edocs/00107842-1.pdf>. 2019

"Archival Adventuring," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, Available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1354856519847875>. 2019

- "Walking, Talking and Playing with Masculinities in *Firewatch*," *Game Studies* 18.2, Available at <http://gamestudies.org/1802/articles/kagen>. 2018
- "Zombie *Parsifal*: Undead Walkers and Postapocalyptic Stagings," *The Opera Quarterly* 33.2: 122–139, Available at <https://doi.org/10.1093/oq/kbx022>. 2017
- "The Wanderer as Soldier: Robert Walser's *Der Spaziergang*, Switzerland in World War I, and Digression as Occupation," *The German Quarterly* 89.1: 36-50, Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/gequ.10254>. 2016

Book Chapters

- "Walking Simulators, #GamerGate, and the Gender of Wandering," In *The Year's Work in Nerds, Wonks, and Neocons*, Eds. Jonathan Eburne and Benjamin Schreier, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 24 pp. 2017

Web-based Publications

- "Controlling Sound: Musical Torture from the Shoah to Guantánamo," *The Appendix* 3.1, Available at <http://theappendix.net/issues/2013/7/controlling-sound-musical-torture-from-the-shoah-to-guantanamo>. 2013

KEYNOTES AND GUEST LECTURES

- "Wandering Games & Critical Play," Department of International Literary and Visual Studies. Tufts University. Guest Lecture. Nov. 2019
- "Late Capitalism: Archives, Corpses, and *The Return of the Obra Dinn*," STEP Lab, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Guest Lecture. Nov. 2019
- "Postcolonial Play of Board Games and Videogames," University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Guest Lecture. Nov. 2019
- "Unplaying Border Games," Migration Game Design Group, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Guest Lecture. Nov. 2019
- "Postcolonial Play in 'Around the World in 80 Days' Videogames and Board Games," Geographies of Gaming and Virtual Reality Symposium. University of Birmingham. Keynote lecture. July 2019
- "Glory to Trumpland! Critically Unplaying Immigration Games," Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association Postgraduate Network Conference. Bangor University. Keynote lecture. July 2019
- "Glory to Trumpland! Misplaying Border Games," No Culture Is Low Culture Symposium. Bangor University. Keynote lecture. April 2019
- "Inexorable Wandering in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*," Invited Speaker Series. Queens University Belfast, School of Arts, English and Languages. Feb. 2019
- "Musically Mapping Controlled Space," University of Minnesota. Guest lecture. Feb. 2013
- "Musical Geographies of Torture," Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA. Guest lecture. Nov. 2012

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (SELECTED)

- "Late Capitalism: Archives, Corpses, and *The Return of the Obra Dinn*," *ELO* (Electronic Literature Organization), Cork, Ireland. July 2019
- "80 Days of Queerness and Decolonization," *ELO*, Cork, Ireland. July 2019
- "Boys and their Brains: Neuro(a)typicality and Gamer Masculinity," *ELO* (Electronic Literature Organization), Cork, Ireland. July 2019
- "Archival Adventuring," *DiGRA* (Digital Games Research Association), University of Turin. July 2018
- "Archival Adventuring," *BACLS* (British Association for Contemporary Literary Studies), University of Loughborough. July 2018

“Glory to Trumpland! Misplay as Protest in Immigration Games,” 1968/2018 Conference, University of Warwick.	July 2018
“Archival Adventuring,” <i>Play/Pause Symposium</i> , University of Birmingham.	Jan. 2018
“Glory to Trumpland! Procedural Ethics and Transformative Play in <i>Papers, Please</i> ,” <i>MLA</i> (Modern Language Association), New York City.	Jan. 2018
“Deferral, Digression, and <i>The Eternal Road</i> ,” <i>AJS</i> (Association for Jewish Studies), San Diego.	Dec. 2016
“Video Games in the Second Language Classroom,” <i>ACTFL</i> (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages), Boston.	Nov. 2016
“Script Scoring in the L2 Classroom,” <i>ACTFL</i> , Boston.	Nov. 2016
“ ‘Technical Means’: Heimito von Doderer and the Modern Novel,” Seminar, <i>GSA</i> (German Studies Association), San Diego.	Sept. 2016
“ <i>The Path: Red Riding Hood and Wandering Video Games</i> ,” <i>MLA</i> , Austin.	Jan. 2016
“Place and Placelessness in <i>Arnold Schoenberg</i> ,” <i>MLA</i> , Vancouver.	Jan. 2015
“Wandering in Video Games,” <i>MLA</i> , Vancouver.	Jan. 2015

DIGITAL HUMANITIES

Stanford Code Poetry Slam, Director	Feb. 2016 & Jan. 2015 & Feb. 2014 & Nov. 2013
I directed and co-founded the Stanford Code Poetry Slam series (CPS 1.0 in Nov. 2013, CPS 1.1 in Feb. 2014, CPS 2.0 in Jan. 2015, Community Hack-a-Slam in May 2015, CPS 2.1 in February 2016). We accepted international submission of code poems in any language (computer, human, or hybrid), then selected finalists and invited them to present their poem however they wanted (through vocal performance, compiling the program, creating a video, etc.) followed by a group discussion. The CPS series received significant press coverage and inspired similar events at several universities internationally.	
The Musical Geography of Auschwitz	2012–2013
I created a musical map that spatially visualizes where different songs were heard and performed in Auschwitz–Main Camp and Auschwitz–Birkenau. Visitors could visually explore these interactive maps, listen to clips of the songs (some of which I recorded), and read descriptions of the music (taken from survivor testimonies). The project resulted in several guest lectures, conference presentations, and a publication comparing musical torture in Auschwitz and Guantánamo.	
Poetic Thinking Across Media Web Tool	Fall 2014
I designed a new web tool for a pedagogical annotation website. My tool made the website responsive to and reflective of the course themes, so that it wouldn’t only be a forum for annotating and posting comments, but also a developing course text. The tool visualized how students moved online from one course to another, displaying their “journey,” in conjunction with the course theme of “orientation.”	

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Lecturer at Bangor University

Game Studies: Core Concepts (Students in Year 1)	Fall 2017 & Fall 2018
Students learn the core principles of games, the history of videogaming, and the many varieties of play. Each week, we play and critically debate digital, physical, and immersive games through the schemas of rules, play, and culture. Before students can begin to design games, they must first consider the designer’s ethical and creative responsibilities, within the industry and in society at large. Assignments: <i>Game Journal</i> (5 entries, 1000 words each), <i>Research Poster</i>	
Graduate Research Design (Masters students)	Fall 2017
This module prepares students to design, plan and complete a major research project (practice-based or empirical), including identifying a research paradigm, selecting a	

qualitative or quantitative approach and methodological strategy, and constructing research questions.

Assignments: *Research Proposal Draft, Research Poster, Research Proposal*

Gaming & Virtual Environments (Students in Years 2 & 3)

Spring 2018

Students investigate the lively contemporary field of computer-mediated simulations and immersive environments by deeply analyzing a single game of their choosing through multiple lenses. Students investigate issues surrounding ludology, explore critical approaches to videogames, and chart the evolution of various game genres. Students then use this knowledge to design and produce a site-specific game.

Assignments: *Research Poster, Site-specific Game Prototype (Bangor Arcade), Research Essay*

Game Design 2: Levels and Mechanics (Students in Year 2)

Fall 2018

Students learn how to design game levels and mechanics, considering how a level's aesthetics, rules, characters, events, and narrative interact with each other to create a world. Students create prototypes using an iterative design paradigm and execute playtests with other media students 3x/semester. Students learn to use GameMaker Studio 2 to create their digital prototype.

Assignments: *Paper Prototype, Digital Prototype, 3 Playtests*

Game Development (Students in Year 2)

Spring 2019

Students acquire and improve their skills in C# programming and 3D game development, applying their worldbuilding and level design skills to the creation of a 3D game. They utilize rapid iterative prototyping and test the technical feasibility of their ideas using Unity. In addition to a workable 3D prototype, students maintain a production diary that includes plans, revisions and critical reflection on process.

Assignments: *Digital Prototype, Production Diary*

Wandering: Videogames, Performance, and Protest (Students in Year 3)

Spring 2019

This module looks at walking as a performative act and considers 20th and 21st century responses to wandering in philosophy, theater, literature, video games, and protest movements. Students read digressive texts, grapple with philosophies and protest ideas from Walter Benjamin to Congressman John Lewis, and play Walking Simulators.

Assignments: *Site-Specific Performance, Protest Design, Walking Sim Design*

Lecturer at Stanford University

Education as Self-Fashioning

Fall 2016

This course considers education not as training in external knowledge or skills but as a lifelong process of development and growth in which an individual cultivates her or his spiritual, cultural and social sensibilities. In addition to once weekly seminar discussions, students participate in intensive writing-and rhetoric instruction. I taught the writing-and-rhetoric part of the class.

Assignments: *3 Essays, each of which go through 3 rounds of formal revision*

Introductory German (GERLANG 001, Stanford Language Center)

Fall 2016

Students learn speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills in German, using authentic materials and an interactive approach, with emphasis on developing communicative expression.

Assignments: *5 Quizzes, 1 Presentation, and Daily Homework*

Wandering in Videogames, Performance, Philosophy and Protest

Spring 2017

This course looks at walking as a performative act and considers 20th and 21st century responses to wandering in philosophy, theater, literature, video games, and protest movements. Students connect the threads between Baudelaire and #GamerGate, Virginia Woolf and Journey, the revolution of 1968 and #BlackLivesMatter.

Assignments: *Site-Specific Performance, Protest Design, Walking Sim Design*

Madness: Mental Institutions in German Literature, Film, and Video Games

Spring 2017

Advanced German seminar looking at the representations of clinics and sanatoriums in classic German texts of the 20th-century, engaging critically with these representations and the ways in which insanity and illness are depicted. Texts include *Das Cabinet des*

Doktor Caligari, Der Zauberberg, Die Blechtrommel, Die Physiker, and the mysterious point-and-click adventure game *Edna Bricht Aus*. Taught in German.

Assignments: *Presentation, Final Essay*

Graduate Teaching Experience at Stanford University

Instructor: Stanford Language Center	2012–2015
For these courses, I was responsible for all teaching, lesson planning, and grading	
▪ Novice–Intermediate conversation (GERLANG 020A)	Spring 2015
▪ Intermediate Mid–Advanced High (GERLANG 021)	Winter 2015
▪ Intensive 3-week version of Gerlang 003 (GERLANG 05C)	Summer 2014
▪ Novice High–Intermediate Low (GERLANG 002)	Fall 2013
▪ Intermediate Low–Intermediate Mid (GERLANG 003)	Spring 2013
▪ Novice High–Intermediate Low (GERLANG 002)	Winter 2013
▪ Novice Low–Novice Mid (GERLANG 001)	Fall 2012
▪ Novice–Intermediate conversation (GERLANG 020A)	Spring 2012
Teaching Assistant: Poetic Thinking Across Media	Fall 2014
Upper-level comparative literature course, for which I led discussions on literary, filmic, and videogame texts, responded to student writing assignments, and designed an annotation tool to encourage students to think poetically online as well as in writing and speaking.	
Co-Instructor: What is German Literature?	Fall 2013
Survey literature course in German. I helped to design the syllabus, gave lectures and interactive lessons, co-wrote midterm and final exams, co-created lesson plans, and directed theater activities (scoring monologues, analyzing and performing scenes).	

Teaching workshops and additional experience

Berkeley language teaching workshop	Dec. 2015
Heidelberg University language teaching (month-long course)	Aug. 2015
German courses at the Goethe Institut, Freiburg & Berlin, including C1 exam certification	2012–2014
ACTFL workshops in writing proficiency (WPA) and oral proficiency (OPI)	2012–2014
Instructor, Program Coordinator, and Curriculum Designer, <i>Fluent City</i> , NYC	Summer 2011
Drama Instructor, Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter School	2010–2011
Teaching Assistant, Brown University, Introductory German	Spring 2009

OPERA DIRECTION

As a stage director and dramaturg, I had the opportunity to design and produce 9 operatic productions starring students from the Stanford Music Department. I worked on these pieces in many different capacities, including directing, dramaturgy, teaching (improvisation and acting technique), designing and constructing sets, creating and designing props and costumes, stage managing, and working with professionals from the San Francisco Opera. The last 2 shows were site-specific, mobile performances, set outside on Stanford campus.

<i>Don Giovanni</i> , Director	May 2016
<i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> , Director	May 2015
<i>Die Fledermaus</i> , Stage Director & Set Designer	Feb. 2015
<i>Stanford on Avon</i> , Stage Director (Arts Intensive Program Assistant)	Sept. 2014
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Stage Director, Set Designer, & Stage Manager	Nov. 2013
<i>Genevieve de Brabant</i> , Stage Director & Set Designer	May 2013
<i>Opera-tions</i> , Stage Director & Stage Manager	Feb. 2013
<i>Mozart on the Make</i> , Stage Director (Arts Intensive Program Assistant)	Sept. 2012
<i>Der Jasager</i> , Dramaturg & Concept Designer	Feb. 2012

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Early Career Researcher Small Grants, Bangor University For funding to attend the BACLS conference	May 2018
Stanford Arts Institute Student Grant For production of a site-specific performance of Mozart's <i>Don Giovanni</i>	May 2016
DAAD Short-Term Research Grant For archival research and working with colleagues in Köln, Berlin, and Nürnberg	Sept. 2015
Spring Graduate Student Grant Competition, Stanford Europe Center For archival research at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek	May 2015
Graduate Research Opportunity Grant, Stanford University For researching operatic staging in Frankfurt	May 2015
Graduate Student Travel Grant, Modern Language Association Funding to give two papers at the MLA convention in Vancouver, BC	Jan. 2015
SPARK! Grant, Stanford Arts Institute For production of a pedestrian performance of Mozart's <i>Nozze di Figaro</i>	Mar. 2014
Code Poetry Slam Series, Stanford Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages Departmental funding to found and run the CPS series	2013–2106

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION (SELECTED)

Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds, Associate Editor I edit (with Sonia Fizek and Eben Muse) a double-blind peer-reviewed gaming journal with issues 3x/year.	2019–present
“Wandering Games” conference I conceptualized and ran (with Eben Muse) a ≈40-speaker conference that bridges academic game studies and the Welsh indie game dev scene. More information: http://wandering-games-conference.bangor.ac.uk/	July 2019
Equality Officer, University and College Union, Bangor branch I served as one of 6 officers for the Bangor University branch of the UCU (~450 members) as advocate for equality and diversity. This involved a lot of meetings (with management, staff, and students), activism, training, and only occasionally waving signs on picket lines.	2019
Research Seminar Series Coordinator I invited and liaised with ≈20 visiting external speakers for the year's series.	2018–2019
BAFTA Juror: Welsh Videogame category I served on the panel to determine the winner of the 2018 Welsh Videogame BAFTA winner.	July 2018
Peer Guide Coordinator I corralled, trained, and mentored undergraduate student peer guides.	2017–2018

SKILLS

Game Design and Programming Languages

Teaching proficiency in Gamemaker Studio 2 and Unity; teaching proficiency in Java, Python, and C#

Human Languages

German (near-native), Spanish (reading proficiency), French (reading proficiency), Italian (reading proficiency)

Theater and Music

Classical piano, classical voice training, stage direction, production, stage management, set/props/costume/concept design, dramaturgy, supertitles, rehearsal accompaniment