

**APPOINTMENTS**


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<b>Assistant Professor of Communication, Curry College</b>	2020–present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I design and teach the Video Gaming Studies Concentration + Minor: Introduction to Critical Play, Game Design, Gaming Industries, Video Games: Theory &amp; Analysis, and Death &amp; Games. I also teach Fundamentals of Communication and Improv Theatre.</li> </ul>	
<b>Associate Editor, Journal of Gaming &amp; Virtual Worlds</b>	2019–present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With Sonia Fizek, I edit a double-blind, peer-reviewed academic journal of gaming scholarship, publishing three issues per year.</li> </ul>	
<b>Visiting Scholar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology</b>	2019–2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I conducted research on transgressive, counter-colonialist play of board games and video games, in collaboration with Mikael Jakobsson and Rik Eberhardt at the Game Lab.</li> </ul>	
<b>Tufts University, Experimental College Visiting Lecturer</b>	Spring 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I taught <i>Wandering Games: Play, Performance, Protest</i>.</li> </ul>	
<b>UK Assistant Professor in Digital Media &amp; Gaming, Bangor University</b>	2017–2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I researched and taught game studies, game design, new media, and digital culture, as part of the school's new gaming minor, which I was hired to design and teach.</li> </ul>	
<b>Lecturer in Comparative Literature, Stanford University</b>	2016–2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I taught multiple courses, including an interdisciplinary arts seminar on wandering, a first-year writing &amp; composition course, an introductory German language course, and an upper-level German literature &amp; videogame seminar.</li> </ul>	

**EDUCATION**


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<b>Ph.D. in German Studies, Stanford University</b>	2011–2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>“Alle Wege der Welt”: Wandering in Early 20th-Century German/Jewish Opera</i> This project traced the intertwined myths of the Wandering Jew and the German Wanderer, illuminating the connections between art, race, anti-Semitism, and authoritarianism in operas by four German and Austrian Jews: Franz Schreker, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Arnold Schoenberg, and Kurt Weill. —Advisor: Adrian Daub</li> </ul>	
<b>M.A. in Humanities, University of Chicago</b>	2009–2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thesis: “Jewish National Identity in 1840: Der ‘Fliegende Jude’ and the Promise of Redemption in Heine and Wagner”—Advisor: Na’ama Rokem</li> </ul>	
<b>B.A. in Literary Arts (with Honors), magna cum laude, Brown University</b>	2005–2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thesis in Fiction: “Asylum”—Advisor: Meredith Steinbach</li> <li>Semester abroad at <b>Eberhard Karls Universität</b>, Tübingen, Germany</li> </ul>	

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE****Assistant Professor, Curry College**


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<b>Game Design</b>	Spring 2022
Using iterative design and rapid prototyping techniques, students will brainstorm, prototype, and playtest game designs. Focus will be on paper prototyping and analog games, though students will be encouraged to use digital tools where applicable. For their final project, students will design a 3-room escape room, playtest their rooms, and pitch to professional escape room designers at <i>Trapology</i> .	
<b>Gaming Industries</b>	Spring 2022
Students will study the current state of the gaming industry, learning about a wide variety of careers in the field and exploring how the industry has grown and evolved. From console wars and killer apps to current labor issues like crunch and unionization, we will discuss and dissect how gaming has grown into the biggest sector in entertainment. This semester will be highlighted by class visits from game industry	

professionals in the Boston area (including XSET, Trapology, iCivics, Game Workers United, Boston FIG, and Game Audio Boston).

### **Improv**

Students will practice the art of improvisation, improving their ability to make quick decisions in theatrical and real-life situations, and developing their vocal techniques, stage presence, character development, body movement, humor, and spontaneity. Focus on group work, short-form, and long-form games. Students will put together 1-hour and 30 min. sets to perform at the end of the semester.

Fall 2021  
Spring 2022

### **Introduction to Games**

Students will learn the core principles of games and examine many varieties of play. Each week, they will critically play and debate influential digital and non-digital games, studying how rules, play, and culture combine to create an experience. They will consider the aesthetics of the game and the game world, as well as the impact that narrative, character, players, visuals, plot, and music all contribute.

Spring 2021

### **Death & Games**

Senior seminar. An exploration of a variety of recent digital and non-digital games that do something fascinating with death and post-death play. Students will analyze recent digital and analog games focused on death (including *Hades*, *That Dragon, Cancer*, *Ten Candles*, *Dialect*, *Doki Doki Literature Club*, *A Mortician's Tale*, *Return of the Obra Dinn*, and *Spiritfarer*) and consider: how do we play when we know the end is coming? How do we play after the end has arrived, and we are somehow still here? How does an artform famous for violence depict quieter aspects of the aftermath of violence, like mourning or redemption?

Spring 2021

### **Video Games: Theory & Analysis**

An upper-level critical study of contemporary videogames and videogame culture, designed to orient you towards a future professional career in video game criticism, analysis, review, and contextualization. Students will pick one major game to analyze over the course of the semester.

Fall 2020

### **Fundamentals of Communication**

Students will study the theory and practice of communication, gaining a basic understanding of the field and developing skills and self-confidence in a variety of settings. For their final assignment, students will complete a 10-page annotation project, analyzing their choice of media through the concepts they've studied during the semester.

Fall 2020  
Spring 2021  
Fall 2021  
Spring 2022

### **Experimental College Lecturer, Tufts University**

### **Wandering Games: Play, Performance, Protest**

This course situates the walking simulator in context, considering wandering as an act of performance, philosophy, protest, and play. We will connect the threads between Baudelaire and #GamerGate, Virginia Woolf and *Return of the Obra Dinn*, the Civil Rights Era and *Gone Home*. Students will spend time in the classroom as well as on their feet, participating in wandering experiments during each class session. In addition to reading texts and analyzing videogames, students will design a walking sim, conceptualize a protest, and create an open final project. Previously taught at Stanford and Bangor.

Spring 2020

### **UK Assistant Professor, Bangor University**

### **Game Studies: Core Concepts (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.

### **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.

### **Gaming & Virtual Environments (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 will then use this knowledge to design and produce a site-specific game.

### **Game Design: Levels and Mechanics (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 will use GameMaker Studio 2 to create their digital prototypes.

### **Game Development (Year 2)**

Spring 2019

Students will acquire or 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 will utilize rapid iterative prototyping and test the technical feasibility of their ideas in Unity. In addition to a workable 3D prototype, students will maintain a production diary that includes plans, revisions, and critical reflection on process.

### **Wandering: Videogames, Performance, and Protest (Year 3)**

Spring 2019

This final year 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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

**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.

### Graduate Teaching Experience at Stanford University

**Instructor: Stanford Language Center** 2012–2015

For these courses, I was entirely responsible for all teaching, 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 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, *Fluent City*, NYC Summer 2011  
 Drama Instructor, Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter School 2010–2011  
 Teaching Assistant, Brown University, Introductory German Spring 2009

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### Peer Reviewed Publications

***Wandering Games* (MIT Press)** 2022

My first book 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: <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/wandering-games>. According to reviewers:

- “This landmark study explains the roots and implications of computer games that move beyond combat and simple agon. With revealing insights into narratology, art, and intellectual history, Kagen opens promising new paths for technological humanism.” – Stuart Moulthrop
- “Beautifully conceived and written, *Wandering Games* maps the many ways we measure ourselves against the worlds of games. Kagen brings to life the pleasures and subversive potential of traveling without a destination.” – Alenda Chang

- " **'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

### **Edited Publications (Selected)**

- "**The Worries of a Patriarchy,**" Review of *Death Stranding*. *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds*, eds. Eben Muse and Melissa Kagen. 2020
- "**If you need to go for a walk...why not wander around a video game?"** *The Guardian*, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/apr/16/video-games-escape-lockdown-walk-around-virtual-landscapes>. 2020
- "**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
- "**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

### **OPERA DIRECTION & SITE-SPECIFIC THEATRE**

I directed 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. Several 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

### **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 Odra 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 <i>Der Kaiser von Atlantis</i> ," 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

#### PRESENTATIONS (SELECTED)

"Self-Help Tabletops," Generation Analog, online.	July 2022
"On Pilgrimage: Post-Apocalyptic Wandering in <i>Death Stranding</i> and <i>The Last of Us Part II</i> ," DiGRA, Kraków, Poland & online.	July 2022
"Ungrading: A Route Towards Equity," Curry College Faculty Retreat.	May 2022
"Experiments with Ungrading," Curry College Faculty Center.	Mar. 2022
"Therapy Games: Mental Health & the Games Classroom," <i>Curry Writes</i> , Faculty Lecture Series, Curry College.	Mar. 2022
"Romantic Precarity: <i>Eastshade</i> as a Fantasy of Work," PCA/ACA (Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association), virtual conference.	June 2021
"Death & Games," Boston Festival of Independent Games, virtual conference.	May 2021
"Wandering Games," Narrascope, virtual conference.	July 2020
"Late Capitalism: Archives, Corpses, and <i>The Return of the Obra Dinn</i> ," 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," <i>1968/2018 Conference</i> , 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> ," MLA (Modern Language Association), New York City.	Jan. 2018
"Deferral, Digression, and <i>The Eternal Road</i> ," AJS (Association for Jewish Studies), San Diego.	Dec. 2016
"Video Games in the Second Language Classroom," ACTFL (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages), Boston.	Nov. 2016
"Script Scoring in the L2 Classroom," ACTFL, Boston.	Nov. 2016



“ <b>Technical Means’: Heimito von Doderer and the Modern Novel,</b> ” Seminar, GSA (German Studies Association), San Diego.	Sept. 2016
“ <b>The Path: Red Riding Hood and Wandering Video Games,</b> ” <i>MLA</i> , Austin.	Jan. 2016
“ <b>Place and Placelessness in Arnold Schoenberg,</b> ” <i>MLA</i> , Vancouver.	Jan. 2015
“ <b>Wandering in Video Games,</b> ” <i>MLA</i> , Vancouver.	Jan. 2015

## DIGITAL HUMANITIES

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<b>Stanford Code Poetry Slam, Director</b> I directed and co-founded the Stanford Code Poetry Slam series. 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 a 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.	2013–2016
<b>The Musical Geography of Auschwitz</b> 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.	2012–2013
<b>Poetic Thinking Across Media Web Tool</b> 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.”	Fall 2014

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

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<b>Joint Committee on Release Time, Curry College</b> Awarded release time in 2023 for research on “Therapy Games” project	June 2022
<b>Early Career Researcher Small Grants, Bangor University</b> For funding to attend the BACLS conference	May 2018
<b>Stanford Arts Institute Student Grant</b> For production of a site-specific performance of Mozart’s <i>Don Giovanni</i>	May 2016
<b>DAAD Short-Term Research Grant</b> For archival research and working with colleagues in Köln, Berlin, and Nürnberg	Sept. 2015
<b>Spring Graduate Student Grant Competition, Stanford Europe Center</b> For archival research at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek	May 2015
<b>Graduate Research Opportunity Grant, Stanford University</b> For researching operatic staging in Frankfurt	May 2015
<b>Graduate Student Travel Grant, Modern Language Association</b> Funding to give two papers at the MLA convention in Vancouver, BC	Jan. 2015
<b>SPARK! Grant, Stanford Arts Institute</b> For production of a pedestrian performance of Mozart’s <i>Nozze di Figaro</i>	Mar. 2014
<b>Code Poetry Slam Series, Stanford Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages</b> Departmental funding to found and run the CPS series	2013–2016

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION (SELECTED)

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### Advisor

I have advised ~20 undergraduate and graduate students/semester on their academic progress, course selection, and personal challenges. 2017–2019  
2020–present

### Member Secretary, Curry Chapter, American Association of University Professors

2022

I was elected to serve on the Executive committee of the Faculty union. My role is outreach and organizing members, surveying for priorities, and ensuring all members are represented and heard.

### Bargaining Team, Curry Chapter, American Association of University Professors

2022

I was elected to serve on the 5-member Bargaining team, responsible for securing our next contract.

### “Wandering Games” conference

July 2019

I conceptualized and ran (with Eben Muse) a ~50-speaker conference that bridged academic game studies and indie game development. More information:

<http://wandering-games-conference.bangor.ac.uk/>

### Equality Officer, University and College Union, Bangor branch

2019

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 significant meetings (with management, staff, and students), activism, and training.

### Research Seminar Series Coordinator

2018–2019

I invited and liaised with ~20 visiting external speakers for the year's series.

### BAFTA Juror: Welsh Videogame category

July 2018

I served on the panel to determine the winner of the 2018 Welsh Videogame BAFTA winner.

### Peer Guide Coordinator

I corralled, trained, and mentored undergraduate student peer guides. 2017–2018

## SKILLS

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### Game Design and Programming Languages

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

### Human Languages

English (fluent), German (advanced), Spanish (reading proficiency), French (reading proficiency)

### Theater and Music

Songwriting, classical and folk vocals, classical and folk piano, stage direction, production, stage management, set/props/costume/concept design, dramaturgy, supertitles, rehearsal accompaniment