

MKT 494 (80188): The Business of Esports

Fall 2024

INSTRUCTOR:	John Pierce
EMAIL / LinkedIn:	Jpierc11@asu.edu https://www.linkedin.com/in/johnfpierce
PHONE:	719.358.3587
CANVAS:	https://canvas.asu.edu/courses/191122
CLASS HOURS:	Monday & Wednesday, 4:30 - 5:45pm
CLASS LOCATION:	BA 241, Tempe Campus
ZOOM LINK	https://asu.zoom.us/j/4643427769
OFFICE HOURS:	M W 1:45 - 2:45 pm

Course Description:

With total revenues nearing 1.7 billion in 2023, esports was a global phenomenon. But a revenue dip in 2022 and early 2023 has caused team owners, investors, and game publishers to take a second look at the factors driving its rise and decline. This course will dive deep into the business of owning and managing professional teams as well as operating leagues and major events. Students will learn how live and video-on-demand content is being distributed and how brands are activating in the esports space. Special attention will be paid to the underlying economics of the game publishers, top tier teams, events, platforms, and streamers.

Classes will feature guest experts, giving students an opportunity to learn from leaders in the esports industry. Guest speakers will join the class often, hailing from all ends of the esports ecosystem including team officials, publishers, platforms, brands, streamers, and event organizers.

Students will spend time working in a small group setting researching a brand and identifying opportunities for that brand to engage in gaming broadly or esports more specifically.

The Undergraduate Program of the W.P. Carey School of Business has established the following learning goals for its graduates:

- **Critical Thinking**
- Communication
- **Discipline Specific Knowledge**
- Ethical Awareness and Reasoning

- **Global Awareness**

Items in bold have significant coverage in this course.

Course Objectives:

- Demonstrate knowledge of business models of the elements of gaming/esports/streaming industries, including teams, leagues, publishers, distributors, sponsors, youth/amateur, and independent event operators.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the similarities and differences between esports and traditional sports with specific attention paid to players' rights, gender equity, and cost structures.
- Explain the differences between the three fundamental areas of the video gaming industry: gaming (broadly), esports, and streaming.
- Identify personal/professional strengths, weaknesses, and areas of interest within and outside of the gaming industry.
- Research, prepare, write and present a proposed collaboration between a non-gaming brand and a gaming-related organization (game, content creator, or esports organization) utilizing gaming, esports, and/or streaming to achieve the stated business objectives of a company or organization.
- Through the use of the Porter's Five Forces model, evaluate and explain how competitive advantage is framed within the gaming, esports, and streaming industries.

Course Pre-requisites:

Prerequisite(s): W.P. Carey BA or BS major; MKT 300, 302, or 303 with C or better

Software tools you can expect to use in this class include:

- G Suite (i.e. Google Docs, Sheets, Slides, etc.)
- Respondus Lockdown Browser (for midterm and final)
- Canvas (<https://canvas.asu.edu/courses/154967>)

CLASS PARTICIPATION / ATTENDANCE

The benefits of this course can only be realized when students are excellent co-producers and actively participate in the classroom experience (e.g., are prepared for class, contribute to in-class discussion, offer examples, ask questions when course concepts are not understood, etc.). Students are expected to attend ALL class meetings and PARTICIPATE in class discussions. Ten percent (10%) of your class participation grade will come from the quality and quantity of your contributions. So, the idea is to add intellectually rich comments to the class discussion. Some students may err on the side of thinking too much and saying nothing, while others err on the side of thinking too little and talking too much. Simply showing up for class is not enough to earn full credit.

Class co-production/participation grades will be based on each student's contribution to the class. Active co-production and participation is expected and is essential for success in the course. Class attendance is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for you to do well in terms of class co-production.

Bringing in real world examples from outside reading that highlight course concepts, service innovations etc. is highly encouraged and will be considered an example of class co-production/participation. You should be prepared to discuss how the article relates to course concepts/services marketing.

The following are guidelines concerning how you should think about class co-production. This list is not exhaustive but will give you a sense of my criteria for evaluating your co-production during the semester. At a minimum, co-production in this setting would consist of the following:

At the end of the semester, you will be asked to evaluate your own co-production in the course and assign yourself a score. Please see the course schedule for the due date. On this date, you will turn in a one page write-up in which you give yourself an explicit score (from 0 to 50 points) that reflects your perception of your level of co-production as well as justification for the percentage you have given yourself.

To help you to assign yourself a score, there is a form that you will fill out. You can find this document in the Assignments tab of Canvas. Additionally, be sure to keep track of class periods where you took a significant leadership role in class participation and other evidence of excellent co-production. I reserve the right to make adjustments to your suggested co-production grade if I think it is warranted.

Proctoring Software for Exams

This class uses Respondus Lockdown Browser (or Respondus, for short) to proctor the midterm and final exam. For information on how to install and use Respondus, please visit: <https://sites.google.com/asu.edu/using-rldb/home>.

Instructor Absences

In the event that the professor cannot attend class, students will be expected to work on their project in their teams as they would on any other class day. If the professor is expected to be absent, he will post slides ahead of time and quiz (if quiz is to be given that day).

WEEKLY SCHEDULE (Subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment Due
1	M August 26	Course Introduction	None
1	W August 28	Esports 101	None
2	M Sept 2	NO CLASS: Labor Day Holiday	None
2	W Sept 4	Business Model: Game Publishers	None
3	M Sept 9	Business Model: Game Publishers Part 2	
3	W Sept 11	Introduction of Small Group Project: Organize into small groups	
4	M Sept 16	Business Model: Teams	Teams Case Study Due

4	W Sept 18	Business Model: Teams Part 2	
5	M Sept 23	Collegiate Esports	Content Review Paper Due
5	W Sept 25	Collegiate Esports Part 2	
6	M Sept 30	Business Model: Esports Leagues Part 1: LCS / League of Legends	Riot LCS Case Study Due
6	W October 2	Business Model: Esports Leagues Part 2: Call of Duty League + What Happened to the Overwatch League	
7	M October 7	Midterm exam	Midterm Exam
7	W October 9	Mid-semester small group project check-in and group work	
8	M October 14	No Class- Fall Break	
8	W October 16	Business Model: Distributors (Twitch)	Twitch Case Study Due
9	M October 21	Business Model: Distributors (Twitch competitors: YouTube / Kick)	
9	W October 23	Investments in Esports - How it Started, How it's Going Now	
10	M October 28	Esports Players Rights and Opportunities	Research Paper Due
10	W October 30	Esports Players Rights and Opportunities Part 2	
11	M November 4	Business Model: Events (TI, IEM, EVO, ESL One) & Venues	
11	W November 6	Sponsorship & Activation in Esports	Sponsorship Case Study Due
12	M November 11	No Class- Veterans Day	
12	W November 13	Small Group Presentations Part 1	Small Group Presentations Due
13	M November 18	Small Group Presentations Part 2	
13	W November 20	Small Group Presentations Part 3	
14	M November 25	Brands & The Metaverse	Roblox Case Study Due
14	W November 27	Career Prep Session	
15	M December 2	Brands & The Metaverse Part 2	Class Participation Self Evals Due
15	W December 4	Final Exam	Final Exam

Readings/Videos

Readings are a very important part of this course. Each week students will be required to read select newspaper and magazine articles (or watch specific videos) in advance of the class session. Quizzes will be given to test basic knowledge of the readings. The reading/viewing list can be found on the Canvas site for this course.

Grading and Course Requirements*

Deliverables

Points

Individual Work:

Case Studies	100 points (5 @20 points each)
Content Review Paper	125 points
Research Paper	175 points
Midterm Exam	175 points
Final Exam	175 points
Class Participation	50 points

Team Project:

Small Group Project	100 points
Small Group Project In-Class Presentation	50 points

Total: 1,000 Points

EXTRA CREDIT

Behavioral Lab Extra Credit: Four (4) extra credit points for each wave students participate in, up to a total of six (6) waves, applied to the student's final course score, maximum of 24 points.

Late assignments are not accepted without previous approval, and otherwise receive an automatic grade of zero.

Grading Scale:

970+ = A+,	940-969 = A,	900-939 = A-
870-899 = B+,	840-869 = B,	800-839 = B-
770-799 = C+,	740-769 = C,	700-739 = C-
600-699 = D,	0-599 = E	

Y Grades

Y grade options to replace satisfactory grades will only be used in very rare circumstances after consultation with the instructor. Any requests must be made in writing and resolved prior to the course's final deliverable is graded. Once a request is granted, it is irreversible.

Deliverables

Content Review & Summary

Students will read or watch one of the titles listed below and write a brief essay (750 words) explaining the main characters of the content, identify the main issues or plot points, and offer a summary of the implications for the esports industry.

- [Optic Gaming: The Making of Esports Champions](#) book
- [Gran Turismo: Movie](#) (Netflix)
- [Seven Days Out - League of Legends](#) (Netflix)
- [How Underdogs Made League of Legends History | DRX The Rise](#) (YouTube)
- [A New Hero: The Rise of College Esports](#) (YouTube)

- [No Girls Allowed](#) (Polygon)

Case Studies

There will be five case studies assigned during the semester, with each being assigned 20 points for a total of 100 points. Case study work will include reading about a current event in esports/gaming related to the topics being covered in class and writing a 500-word summary of the case following the case study rubric. In addition, students will post the summary responding to it in a Canvas discussion board, while also responding to at least one other student's Canvas post.

Topic	Article	Due Date
Teams	Why The Esports Community's Toxicity Is Becoming The Industry's Most Enduring Problem With Brands	9/16/24
LCS Esports	Riot Games Rolls Out Consolidation Plan, New Spring Event For League of Legends Esports	9/30/24
Twitch	The future of Twitch: safety, growth, and the importance of finding community	10/16/24
Sponsorship / Activation	Honda Dives Deeper Into Gaming, Esports With Twitch Rivals Sponsorship	11/6/24
Brands & The Metaverse	Walmart and Roblox are Teaming up to Make Virtual E-commerce a Reality	11/25/24

Research Paper

Students will prepare a fact-based research paper on an issue facing esports today. Papers will be fact-based and feature syndicated and/or third-party research and proper citations.

Topics could include but are not limited to the following:

1. What happened to the FIFA video game collaboration between FIFA and Electronic Arts? Looking back after the initial release of EA FC 24, how is the new game performing and what are FIFA's plans for a new soccer game?
2. What happened to the Overwatch League? Explore the factors that led to its founding and ultimate demise.
3. What is the esports winter? Is it permanent or just a temporary cooling? What are the factors that led to the esports winter?
4. What are the roots of gender equity issues in esports? What can game publishers, leagues, and teams do to create and sustain equity for women?
5. How will Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) impact collegiate esports?
6. What can traditional sports learn from esports?
7. What is the current state of the Call of Duty League? Explore current viewership, partnerships (including YouTube), and ownership consolidation.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, and long-answer questions covering material from the required readings, lectures, guest presentations, class discussions, and in-class exercises from the first half of the semester. A make-up mid-term exam may be given at the discretion of the instructor and a request must be received at least one week in advance. Failing to attend class on the day of the midterm exam without prior notification, will result in a grade of zero. The professor reserves the right to refuse admittance to any student arriving more than 10 minutes late to the exam. The midterm exam will be delivered via Canvas and will require use of the Respondus Lockdown browser.

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, and long-answer questions covering material from the required readings, lectures, guest presentations, class discussions, and in-class exercises from the second half of the semester. A make-up final exam may be given at the discretion of the instructor and a request must be received at least one week in advance. Failing to attend class on the day of the final exam without prior notification, will result in a grade of zero. The professor reserves the right to refuse admittance to any student arriving more than 10 minutes late to the exam. The midterm exam will be delivered via Canvas and will require use of the Respondus Lockdown browser.

Small Group Project

Students will be placed into small groups of three with the task of developing a collaboration between one of the brands listed below and a gaming organization (game publisher, content creator, or esports organization/event). The project will entail researching the brand's stated objectives, its background, previous marketing activities, collaborations, and partnerships. The next still step will be to identify and explain at least three potential gaming-related partnerships or collaborations for your chosen brand. Finally, the small groups will take one of the partnership/collaboration concepts and dig deep into its proposed elements, including the rationale for the partnership, proposed objectives and anticipated results. The project will also require a deep-dive on the gaming organization, its target audience, reach, history of partnerships, and relevance to your chosen brand.

Brand List

Band-Aid	Kit-Kat
Crocs	Lululemon
Dollar Tree	Lunchables
Doordash	M&M's
Doritos	Shein
Dove	Southwest Airlines

Dunkin Donuts	Spotify
Gatorade	Taco Bell
Geico	Tesla
Twix	

The assignment will be presented in powerpoint, google slides, canva, or other presentation format. It should be 15-20 pages long and follow the format/outline below:

Each group project presentation must include the following sections:

1. Brand: Background / Situation Analysis / Competitive Environment
 - a. What is the history of your chosen brand, what is its market share, what industry does it compete in, what are its challenges and opportunities (internal and external)?
2. Detailed discussion of your brand's customer segments (who does it primarily sell to, is it's target audience aging, how does your brand's target audience overlap (if at all) with gaming audiences)?
3. Exploration of your brand's previous marketing campaigns and entertainment-related partnerships or collaborations.
 - a. Have they engaged in previous gaming-related partnerships?
 - b. If so, explain the partnership(s)
4. Outline at least three (3) gaming-related partnerships for your chosen brand with brief explanations of each.
 - a. Provide a brief background of each gaming organization
5. Detailed description of the proposed gaming collaboration for your brand
 - a. What is the rationale for the partnership?
 - i. Does it grow the target market for the brand or reinforce an existing target market?
 - b. What are the proposed objectives and anticipated results for this partnership?
 - c. What is the term of the partnership?

USE OF GENERATIVE AI

Use of Generative AI is Generally Permitted Within Guidelines

Artificial Intelligence (AI), including ChatGPT, are being used in workplaces all over the world to save time and improve outcomes by generating text, images, computer code, audio, or other media. Use of AI tools is generally welcome and even encouraged in this class with attribution aligned with disciplinary guidelines. AI tools might be employed to brainstorm, draft, edit, revise, etc. I will provide direction regarding the permitted usage of AI in specific assignment rubrics and provide examples of how to properly cite use. Any submitted course assignment not explicitly identified as having used generative AI will be assumed to be your original work. Using AI tools to generate content without

proper attribution will be considered a violation of the ASU Academic Integrity Policy, and students may be sanctioned for confirmed, non-allowable use. If at any point you have questions about what is permitted, contact the instructor to discuss before submitting work.

Classroom Policies

Classroom Behavior

You are enrolled in a professional course; please treat our classroom in the professional manner it deserves. Students are coming to class to learn - please do not disrupt this process. Regular class attendance is required (either in person or online). Please arrive on time and listen respectfully while the instructor, guest lecturer or other students are speaking. In addition, the university takes threatening behavior very seriously and these situations will be handled in accordance with the *Student Services Manual*, SSM 102-02 <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm104-02.html>.

Technology

Cell Phones: Please turn your cell phone off or to silent before class begins. If you need to take/make a call or send a text, please leave the classroom to avoid distracting others. Use of mobile phones in class is a significant distraction and will not be tolerated. I intend to treat this course like a business meeting. Students are welcome to excuse themselves should an urgent matter arise during class.

Laptops / Tablets: You are welcome to bring your laptop/tablet to class to take notes. As stated above, this class will run like a business meeting. When you are at work in a meeting with your supervisor, using laptops and/or phones for non-business purposes will likely result in you being disciplined or fired. So just as you would not use your phone or laptop for non-business purposes during a business meeting, using these devices for non-class related purposes will not be tolerated.

Penalty: Students whose use of mobile devices disrupts class will be asked to leave and may be faced with other disciplinary action.

Academic

Please do not record any portion of the lecture (via pictures or video/audio recording) without express consent from the professor. **All course materials are copyrighted material, including in-class lectures, lecture notes, exams, in-class exercises, and handouts.**

Academic Integrity and Ethical Behavior

The W. P. Carey School takes academic integrity very seriously. Therefore, unless otherwise specified, it is imperative that you do your own work. Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Any suspected violations of academic integrity will be taken seriously and result in the following sanctions:

- A minimum of zero on the assignment AND
- A reduced grade in the course OR
- A failure in the course OR
- An XE which denotes failure due to academic dishonesty on the transcript OR

- Removal from the W. P. Carey School of Business

For additional information on ASU's academic integrity policy, visit:

<https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/studentacint.html>

Additional information on ASU's academic integrity policy may be found at

<http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Information about W. P. Carey's student honor code may be found at

<https://my.wpcarey.asu.edu/academic-integrity/upload/Undergraduate-Honor-Code.pdf>.

OTHER IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY POLICIES

[Several important W. P. Carey and ASU Policies for the course can be found here](#), including:

- Honor Code, Academic Integrity and Professionalism Policy
- Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation
- Instructor Absence Policy
- Religious Accommodations
- University-Sanctioned Activities
- Tutoring Support
- Threatening Behavior Policy
- Disability Accommodations
- Offensive Material
- Copyright Material

Value Statement

The ASU Charter sets forth a vision of a New American University, measured not by whom we exclude, but rather whom we include and how they succeed'; that advances research of public value, and that assumes responsibility for the well-being of the communities it serves. Now and in the future, ASU remains committed to supporting our students' success, to encouraging diversity and inclusion, and to enhancing the public good... We look forward to the continuation of conversations on our campuses that facilitate understanding among us, and that demonstrate respect, kindness, and civility towards all members of our diverse and multifaceted ASU communities.

Please note the following university deadlines:

- Last Day to add: August 28, 2024
- Course Withdrawal Deadline: November 6, 2024
- Complete Session Withdrawal Deadline: December 6, 2024

FINAL NOTE

I am here as a resource to you, and I am happy to meet with you outside of class either in person or via video conference to help you be successful in this course. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional clarification or discussion. My personal goal is to see every single one of you do well in this course and gain the tools necessary to be successful in your future endeavors!

W. P. Carey School of Business Undergraduate Student Honor Code

The mission of the W. P. Carey School of Business is to change lives through delivering a business education, while adhering to the highest standards of academic and personal integrity. To achieve this, the W. P. Carey School of Business is committed to fostering an atmosphere of personal responsibility, trust, honor, and academic excellence for its students both on and off campus.

1. *Honesty and Faithful Representation:* W. P. Carey undergraduate students will be honest and act with integrity in all their interactions and decisions. Students will follow the Arizona State University Code of Conduct and the W. P. Carey School of Business Academic Integrity Policies during all academic and extracurricular activities.
2. *Thoughtfulness and Consideration for Others:* W. P. Carey undergraduate students will treat their peers, ASU staff, and faculty with respect and courtesy. Students should strive to add value to the university environment by helping and encouraging others, fostering intellectual dialogue, and promoting justice. By respecting others and articulating thoughtful input, students will continue to improve the image of business and business leaders.
3. *Commitment to the W. P. Carey Mission:* W. P. Carey undergraduate students should understand and recognize the value of cultivating an intrinsic desire to promote ethical and successful business practice. This means that students should implement their acquired knowledge with the intention of greatly enhancing their own business and social environments. In this sense, W. P. Carey students will become positive and responsible role models in their respective communities.

**Information contained within this syllabus
(except grading and absence policies) is subject to change.**