after:hours Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication

**Course Descriptor**

**Course Title:** Abstract Strategy Games

**Type of Course:** Adult Education

**Credit:** Not credit bearing

**Weekly Session Titles and Descriptions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Week | Session Title |
| 1 | What is a ‘Game’ and what are the characteristics of Abstract Strategy Games? |
| 2 | N in a Row games and First Player Advantage. |
| 3 | Connection games and board shapes. |
| 4 | Understanding the traits of a 'good' game through complexity and other features. |
| 5 | History and development of chess and chess-like games. |
| 6 | Exploring ancient and contemporary Race games. |
| 7 | Game changer: the role of Artificial Intelligence in Board Games. |
| 8 | Territorial games: the long history of Go and its heritage. |
| 9 | Two more classics and numerous variants: Draughts and Mancala. |
| 10 | Miscellanea of contemporary games: innovations in game design. |

|  |
| --- |
| Course OverviewBoard games are as much a part of human civilization as the pyramids at Giza, the Benin Bronzes of West Africa and the Mona Lisa in Paris. They are also astonishingly ancient.In this course we are going to look at abstract strategy games. Within the community of board gamers, the term 'abstract strategy games' refers to two-player games with no inherent element of luck, with perfect information and no theme. These are also sometimes called 'combinatorial games'.While Chess and Go are the most well known and global examples of abstract strategy games, a large number of lesser-known games, both ancient and contemporary, also share high replayability, complexity, and social, cultural and scientific relevance.Required Previous Experience (if any)No previous experience is necessary.Required Reading Material or Special Equipment Needed (if any)* None specified

Learning OutcomesAt the end of this course you should be able to identify:1. The evolution across history and diverse cultures of the rules of both traditional games (such as Chess, Go, Draughts and Mancala) and modern board games (such as Othello, Hive, Hex, Quoridor).
2. Understand some of the mathematical aspects of some abstract games and their connections to various branches of science, including the ubiquitous domain of artificial intelligence.
3. Recognise some of the fundamental strategic and tactical principles of some of these games, enabling students to enhance their skills and enjoy such games (practising with each other during the second part of each class).
4. Discuss what makes a game popular, fun and replayable in terms of game mechanics and goals, exploring their deliberate application in the modern board game industry (principles of game design).

**Possible Further Study**Further courses on the after:hours programme might be useful to you.Additional informationThis course descriptor may be subject to change during the delivery of the course, depending on the specific direction and nature of the learner cohort, and is intended to be responsive to the group dynamics as they emerge during the delivery of the course. |