

## **Prof. PhD J. Jesse Ramírez**

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### Biographical Note

Jesse Ramírez holds a PhD in American Studies from Yale University, and worked at Munich University and Frankfurt University before becoming Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of St. Gallen in 2016. Jesse's research and teaching cluster around science fiction, which is the subject of his current book project called *Un-American Dreams*, digital technology, automation and the so-called rise of the robots, and Latino/a studies. Jesse blogs at [jjesseramirez.com](http://jjesseramirez.com).

### Lecture Abstract

“Playing with the End of the World: *The Last of Us* and Post-Apocalyptic Gaming”  
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Historians of secular apocalyptic fiction have argued that one of the genre's conditions of possibility was a shift in the structure of narrative in the eighteenth century. This shift broke religious discourses' monopoly on prophecy and opened up the future—and its possible ends—to aesthetic narration. In this talk, I want to reflect on the ways that another mode of mediating the speculative future—play or gamic action—changes how we think about apocalyptic popular culture in the United States. My case study is *The Last of Us*, a zombie-survival video game produced for the Sony PlayStation console by the American developer Naughty Dog. Since its release in 2013, *The Last of Us* has sold millions of copies and has drawn comparisons to Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel *The Road* because of its narrative sophistication. But what happens to the American tradition of apocalyptic culture, I ask, when we not only read the end of the world, or view it (as in film), but play it? How do the media-specific elements of gaming interact with the zombie apocalypse genre in particular, and the ideologies of apocalypse in general?