

DEAD THEORISTS

A spectre is haunting the university — actually, several spectres. The ghosts of Karl Marx, Simone De Beauvoir,

Michel Foucault, and W.E.B. Du Bois have inexplicably taken residence on campus.

Exorcisms, séances, and cleansing rituals don't seem to affect these ghosts. They can't depart this earthly plane until they've completed some unfinished business: training one last protégé.



In *Dead Theorists*, you play as 1 of 4 great (but deceased) thinkers seeking to recruit your final and greatest disciple from the ranks of students on one college campus. But you've encountered two challenges you didn't expect:

First, the forces of neoliberalism have been hard at work dismantling the education system. It will be tough to enlist a final protégé from within today's profit-oriented university.

Second, you've got competition! Other spirits have also awoken. The other players are dead set on halting your progress and advancing their own ghostly pedagogical agendas. In addition, other ghosts are lurking and may instantly appear to hinder or help your progress! Who can say how much time you have to complete your unfinished business — and to be the first one to do it?

Dead Theorists is a satirical and educational turn-based card game for **2 to 4 players**. Each player becomes a different dead theorist, occupying the spectral forms of Marx, De Beauvoir, Foucault, or Du Bois. On each turn, players do what they can to find proof of their success in recruiting one final pupil.

You'll know you're affecting your new protégé when you start revealing the trappings of a life of the mind: Collect and display books, apparel, and other miscellaneous academic accoutrements that your protégé has adopted. You'll also need to prove that they've mastered key concepts from your repertoire.

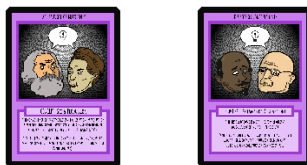
Each of these is represented by a distinct card type. *Item* cards are yellow:



The 3 types of items (books, apparel, and misc.) are denoted by corresponding symbols in the top right corner. Some *item* cards may be played as different types.



Concept cards are purple:



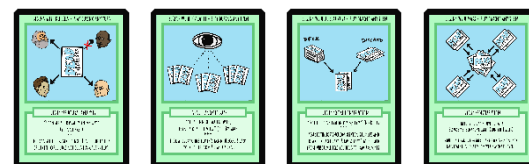
Concept cards depict the images of whichever players can play them. Each concept can only be played by the theorists shown on the card:



Players may also play green *event* cards. Most event cards disrupt the actions of others and can be played at any time, during any player's turn:



In addition, each player starts the game with their own *special event* card with unique effects:



Finally, *instant* cards are blue. These include non-player ghosts who can appear to help or harm players:



The backs of these cards are black instead of white, so players can easily identify when a ghost is near. Any time an *instant* ghost card is drawn, its effects must be applied immediately. After applying the effects of the *instant* ghost, play proceeds as normal. During standard gameplay (described below), when a player draws an *instant* ghost from the deck as part of their turn or as a result of another card's effects, the *instant* card counts as a normal draw unless noted.

If a player encounters an *instant* card during a situation in which it is not their turn (such as during *Blood Moon Rising*), they must still apply its effects immediately before any other gameplay actions can proceed.

Dead Theorists offers 3 modes of play, which are detailed below: *standard mode*, *easy mode*, and the *ghost deck variant*...

GAME SETUP: STANDARD MODE

Remove the following cards from the deck:

- All 4 character cards
- All 4 special event cards
- *Blood Moon Rising* and *It's Here*

Each player must select 1 *character* card: De Beauvoir, Du Bois, Foucault, or Marx. This is your character for the remainder of the game. If there are fewer than 4 players, set aside all unused character cards. The *It's Here* card is not used in standard play (see *ghost deck variant* rules below). Set it aside.



Then, each player takes the unique *special event* card corresponding to their character: *Social Construction*, *Structural Analysis*, *Panoptic Gaze*, or *Redistribution* (the top of each *special event* lists the player it should start with). Any unassigned *special event* cards (for characters that are not in use) should be shuffled into the deck. Each player's *special event* card will start in their opening hand. (After you eventually play this card, place it in the discard pile like normal. It may then be used by any player who draws it.)

Next, the deck should be shuffled and set face down between players. Place *Blood Moon Rising* at the bottom of the deck, also face down, so that it is the last card in the deck at the start of play.

Lastly, each player draws 3 cards from the deck, excluding *instant* cards (shuffle all *instant* cards back into the deck for now). This gives everyone a 4-card starting hand: the 3 cards they just drew + the 1 *special event* card for their character. *Now you're ready to begin!*

GAMEPLAY: STANDARD MODE

Whichever player really wants to go first can go first. Each turn consists of 2 phases:

1. **The draw phase:** Draw the top card from the deck *or* discard pile. You may *either*: **(a)** Draw as many cards as it takes to replenish your hand to 4 cards, **or** **(b)** if your hand already contains 4+ cards, draw only 1 card.
 - If you draw an *instant* card during the draw phase of your turn, you must *immediately* apply its effects! Drawing this card counts as a standard draw; however, applying its effects does not count as your play phase.
2. **The play phase:** After drawing, you may *either*: **(a)** Play 1 item or concept card, **or** **(b)** refresh your hand by discarding any number of cards and drawing the same number of cards *from the deck only*. (*Event* cards can be played at any time and don't count as a turn.)

When an *item* or *concept* is played, place it face up in front of you to signify that your protégé has acquired the item or mastered the concept. When an *event* card is played, follow the text on the card to determine its effects. An *event* may affect *either* the person playing it *or* the current player.

Once the 2 steps listed above are completed, the player's turn is over and play proceeds clockwise.

Keep in mind these *special considerations*:

- The discard pile should be face-up. You may only draw the top card from it.
- Defer to the card text (for instance, some *event* cards affect *all* players).
- *Instant* cards should be set aside in a separate discard pile. They may not be drawn from the discard.
- Each player may only play 1 *event* against any other player on any 1 turn (you may not play multiple *events* against someone at once).
- Some *item* cards possess multiple *item type* symbols. Players choose which type the card represents. This is not permanent. The type may be changed by the player as appropriate.
- Some *instant* cards instruct you to draw from the deck. While drawing in this way, ignore



- other *instant* cards (only draw cards with a white background, leaving cards with a black background in their place on top of the deck).
- If a card instructs you to discard or play a card from your hand that you don't have, you're off the hook for the ones you lack!
- Players may only play the number of *item* or *concept* cards needed to win (no stockpiling).
- A card is in play as soon as it touches the table (for instance, if someone places down an *event* before you placed down an *item*, the effects of the *event* must be applied first).

When *Blood Moon Rising* is played, apply its effects immediately. Then, shuffle all cards from the discard pile (including *Blood Moon Rising* and any discarded *special event* cards) along with any remaining *instant* cards together. This is the new deck. Play continues until a winner emerges.

WINNING DEAD THEORISTS

To win the game, you must demonstrate that your protégé has embraced your teachings by playing all required *items* and *concepts*. The first to play all of the following cards is the winner:

In a 4-player game:

- 1 book *item* card
- 1 apparel *item* card
- 1 miscellaneous *item* card
- 1 *concept* card

In a 3-player game:

- 1 book *item* card
- 1 apparel *item* card
- 1 miscellaneous *item* card
- 2 *concept* cards

In a 2-player game:

- 2 book *item* cards
- 2 apparel *item* cards
- 2 miscellaneous *item* cards
- 2 *concept* cards

If you acquire all of these things first, you win!

You trained your protégé well! They'll continue in your image while you finally get some well-earned rest.

GAMEPLAY: EASY MODE

Easy mode proceeds exactly like *standard mode* (see above) with one key exception: there are fewer *instant* ghosts to get in your way!

To play in *easy mode*, players should first determine how many ghosts they would like to include in the deck. It is recommended that players include half of the ghosts (leaving 6 *instant* cards in the deck). However, experienced players may wish to use more or fewer ghosts than this, depending on gameplay preferences. *Blood Moon Rising* should still be left in play.

After selecting the predetermined number of *instant* cards that will be used, game setup proceeds as normal. Shuffle the selected *instant* cards into the deck. Set aside the remaining *instant* cards. They should be left out of play for this game.

Gameplay proceeds as outlined for *standard mode* above. Winning the game in *easy mode* occurs in the same way as *standard mode* (but players may choose to use the *4-player game* win conditions for any number of players if desired).

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GAME SETUP: GHOST DECK VARIANT

The *ghost deck variant* offers a distinct style of gameplay from the *standard* or *easy* modes of *Dead Theorists*. For this style of play, *instant* cards are *not* shuffled into the deck. Instead, they are placed into their own separate deck. In this mode, ghosts continue to steadily appear, but players rotate the risk of a ghost encounter.

To set up the *ghost deck variant* of play, create two decks: a standard deck (containing all cards with a white background) and a *ghost deck* (containing all cards with a black background). Shuffle all *instant* ghost cards and set them face

down. Then, place *Blood Moon Rising* at the bottom of this pile. This is the *ghost deck*.

After each player has selected their *character* card and the corresponding *special event card* associated with their character (as described in game setup instructions for *standard mode*), the remaining cards should be shuffled and placed facedown (excluding ghost cards, which now form the *ghost deck*). This is the standard deck.

Lastly, locate the *It's Here* card. This card will function as a turn-marker for the *ghost phase*: whichever player has this card must draw from the *ghost deck* at the end of each full round of turns, as described below.



GAMEPLAY: GHOST DECK VARIANT

Whichever player is willing to go first can go first. They will be referred to as the *lead player*. The *lead player* begins with the *It's Here* card. This card should be placed on the table next to their *character* card for all to see.

In the *ghost deck variant* of play, turns proceed in *rounds*. Players take turns as outlined for *standard mode* above (completing a draw phase and play phase per turn). During the draw phase, players may draw from the standard deck or the discard pile but may never draw from the *ghost deck* or from among discarded *instant* cards.

A *round* has completed when every player has had an opportunity for a turn and play passes to the *lead player* once again. Every time a *round* has completed (before the *lead player* takes their next turn), it is time for the *ghost phase*. In the *ghost phase*, whichever player has the *It's Here* card (which will be the *lead player* during the first *round*) must draw the top card from the *ghost deck* and apply its effects immediately.

“It’s Here...” Your protégé stumbles upon an apparition in the library. They decide to confront the wayward spirit...

After applying the effects of an *instant* card, place the card face up beside the ghost deck (*instant* cards should never be placed in the regular discard pile). Then, pass the *It's Here* card to the next player in turn rotation.

Play now proceeds as normal until another full *round* is completed. Another *round* has been completed when play once again returns to the *lead player* (the *lead player* never changes – it is always the first person that took a turn at the start of the game). Once a new *round* has completed, the player that now holds the *It's Here* card draws from the *ghost deck* and applies the effects of the *instant* card that they drew. They then pass the *It's Here* card to the next person in play rotation.

Play continues like this with the *It's Here* card being passed to the next player in the turn rotation at the conclusion of each full *round*. If players reach the bottom of the *ghost deck* before the game concludes, *Blood Moon Rising* will appear. The player that draws this must shuffle all discarded ghost cards and deal 1 face down to each player. The remaining ghosts should then be placed in a stack face down as the new *ghost deck* (place *Blood Moon Rising* at the bottom of this deck once again). Players then flip the ghost cards they received and apply all effects in the order in which the cards were dealt.

Winning the *ghost deck variant* of *Dead Theorists* occurs in the same way as in the *standard mode* of play.

Good luck!



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Thanks for playing

DEAD
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Extra special thanks to everyone who helped me test-play or brainstorm ideas while I developed this game. This includes (but is probably not limited to) Karyn, Alex, Hannah, Marianna, Peter, Kyle, Jess, Andrew, Eric, Joe, Liz, Souder, and Maple, as well as Sarah and the whole team from Microcosm. Any bad jokes are mine, so don't blame them.

-MGL

