

Computer Game Studies

MEVI345

Fall 2017

Lecturer:

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MA in Media Studies, University of Bergen

Contents and plan

Week 1

Monday August 21

Introduction and Definitions

Readings:

- Juul, Jesper (2005): "Video Games and the Classic Game Model" in *Half-Real*, J. Juul, Cambridge, MA: MIT press, pp. 23-54.
- Salen, Katie & Eric Zimmerman (2004): "Defining Games," in *Rules of Play*, ed. by K. Salen & E. Zimmerman, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 70-83.
- Salen, Katie & Eric Zimmerman (2004): "Defining Digital Games," in *Rules of Play*, ed. by K. Salen & E. Zimmerman, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 84-91.

Tuesday August 22

Play Session

Gather first-hand-experience with some interesting and historical games and try discussing them academically. Make sure to download these free games from home and bring your computer!

- *Façade* (2005). Procedural Arts. <http://www.interactivestory.net/>
- *Passage* (2007). Jason Rohrer. <http://hcssoftware.sourceforge.net/passage/>
- *Press F to Win* (2015). Cocayeenun, Nordic Game Jam 2015, <https://t3ngil.itch.io/press-f-to-win>

Week 2

Monday August 28

Predigital Theories of Play and Games I

Readings:

- Huizinga, Johan (1998 [1938]): *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, London et. al.: Routledge, 1-27.
- Caillois, Roger (2001 [1961]): *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. by M. Barash, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 3-34.

Tuesday August 29

Predigital Theories of Play and Games II

Readings:

- Bateson, Gregory (2000 [1955]): "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 177-193.
- Avedon, Elliott (1971): "The Structural Elements of Games," in *The Study of Games*, ed. by E. Avedon, Elliot & Brian Sutton-Smith, New York: John Wiley, pp. 419-427.
- Sutton-Smith, Brian (1997): *The Ambiguity of Play*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 1-17.

Week 3

Monday September 4

Game Analysis Methods

Readings:

- Aarseth, Espen (2003): "Playing Research: Methodological Approaches to Game Analysis," in *Fine Art Forum*, volume 17, issue 8 (Special issue: DAC Conference Papers, Aug 2003), URL: <http://hypertext.rmit.edu.au/dac/papers/Aarseth.pdf>.
- Lankoski, Petri, and Staffan Björk (2015): "Formal analysis of gameplay." In *Game Research Methods*, pp. 23-35. ETC Press. Free book available at <http://press.etc.cmu.edu/content/game-research-methods-overview>
- Bizzocchi, Jim, and Joshua Tanenbaum (2011): "Well read: Applying close reading techniques to gameplay experiences." In *Well played 3.0*, pp. 262-290. ETC Press.

Tuesday September 5

Game Analysis Tools

Readings:

- Konzack, Lars (2002): "Computer Game Criticism: A Method for Computer Game Analysis," in *Proceedings of Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference*, ed. by F. Mäyrä, Tampere: UP, pp. 89-100, URL: <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/05164.32231.pdf>.
- Consalvo, Mia & Nathan Dutton (2006): "Game analysis: Developing a methodological toolkit for the qualitative study of games," in *Game Studies* volume 6, issue 1. URL: http://gamestudies.org/0601/articles/consalvo_dutton.
- Järvinen, Aki (2007): "Introducing applied ludology: Hands-on methods for game studies." In *Proceedings of the DiGRA 2007 Situated Play*, Tokyo, Japan, pp. 134-144. URL: <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/introducing-applied-ludology-hands-on-methods-for-game-studies/>

- Hunicke, Robin, Marc LeBlanc, and Robert Zubek (2004): "MDA: A formal approach to game design and game research." In Proceedings of the AAAI Workshop on Challenges in Game AI, vol. 4, no. 1. URL: <http://www.aaai.org/Papers/Workshops/2004/WS-04-04/WS04-04-001.pdf>

Preparation for Mandatory Assignment – Game Analysis Presentation

To be presented Monday September 26

Week 4

Monday September 11

Taxonomies and Typologies

Readings:

- Elverdam, Christian & Espen Aarseth (2007): "Game Classification & Game Design: Construction Through Critical Analysis," in: *Games and Culture*, Volume 2, Number 1, pp. 3-22.
- Björk, Staffan, Sus Lundgren & Jussi Holopainen (2003): "Game Design Patterns," in *Proceedings of Level Up. 1st International Digital Games Research Conference*. Utrecht University: Digital Games Research Association DiGRA & Utrecht University, pp. 180-193, URL: <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/05163.15303.pdf>.
- Zagal, José P. et al (2005): "Towards an Ontological Language for Game Analysis," in *Proceedings of DiGRA 2005 Conference: Changing Views – Worlds in Play*, Vancouver: Digital Games Research Association DiGRA, 1-13, URL: <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/06276.09313.pdf>
- Bartle, Richard (1996): HEARTS, CLUBS, DIAMONDS, SPADES: PLAYERS WHO SUIT MUDS, URL: <http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm>

Preparation for Mandatory Assignment – Narrative Game Analysis

To be handed in Friday October 13

Tuesday September 12

Basic Narratology

Readings:

- Abbott, H. Porter (2010): *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Week 5

Work on Game Analysis Presentation + Narrative Analysis

There's the world championship in cycling in Bergen this week and it will be impossible to navigate around the 500.000 tourists in town. Therefore I urge you to stay away from the city center and instead use modern technology, like Skype, to communicate with your group and plan your game analysis presentation, and to start working on your narrative analyses.

Week 6

Monday September 25

Narrative, Fiction, and Games

Readings:

- Juul, Jesper (2005): *Half-Real. Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 121-141.
- Calleja, Gordon (2011). *In-game: From immersion to incorporation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 113-133.
- Aarseth, Espen (2007): "Doors and Perception: Fiction vs. Simulation in Games." In: *Intermedialités*, No. 9, pp. 35-44.

Tuesday September 26

Play Session + Game Analysis Presentation

Each group will present randomly picked analysis model, apply it to two selected games, and discuss their findings (10-15 min.). Groups will give each other feedback, and following the presentations we will discuss the various analysis models in comparison to each other, based on the presented analyses.

Gather first-hand-experience with some interesting and historical games and try discussing them academically. Make sure to download these free games from home and bring your computer!

- *Super Columbine Massacre RPG* (2005). Danny Ledonne.
<http://www.columbinegame.com/>
- *The Marriage* (2007). Rod Humble. <http://www.rodvik.com/rodgames/marriage.html>
- *Zork* (1980). Infocom.
http://textadventures.co.uk/games/view/5zyoqrsugeopel3ffhz_vq/zork

Week 7

Monday October 2

Space I

Readings:

- Jenkins, Henry (2004): “Game Design as Narrative Architecture,” in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, ed. by N. Wardrip-Fruin & P. Harrigan, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, pp. 118-130, URL: <http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/firstperson/lazzi-fair>.
- Fernández-Vara, Clara (2011): Game Spaces Speak Volumes: Indexical Storytelling. DiGRA 2011, URL: <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/game-spaces-speak-volumes-indexical-storytelling/>
- Carson, Don. (2000): Environmental Storytelling: Creating Immersive 3D Worlds Using Lessons Learned from the Theme Park Industry [web log post]. URL: http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/3186/environmental_storytelling_.php
- Abbott, H. Porter (2010): *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 12.

Tuesday October 3

Space II

Readings:

- Aarseth, Espen (2000): “Allegories of Space: The Question of Spatiality in Computer Games”, in *Cybertext Yearbook 2000*, ed. by M. Eskelinen & R. Koskimaa, University of Jyväskylä, pp. 152-171. URL: <http://cybertext.hum.jyu.fi/articles/129.pdf>
 - Fernández-Vara, Clara, José Zagal and Micheal Mateas. Evolution of Spatial Configurations In Videogames. DiGRA 2005, URL: <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/evolution-of-spatial-configurations-in-videogames/>
- McGregor, Georgia Leigh. Situations of Play: Patterns of Spatial Use in Videogames. DiGRA 2007, URL: <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/situations-of-play-patterns-of-spatial-use-in-videogames/>

Week 8

Fall Break – No classes

Week 9

Monday October 16

Quest Theory

- Ashmore, Calvin and Michael Nitsche. The Quest in a Generated World. DiGRA 2007, URL: <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/the-quest-in-a-generated-world/>
- Howard, Jeff (2008): "Introduction," in *Quests: Design, Theory, and History in Games and Narratives*, J. Howard, Wellesley, MA: AK Peters, pp. 1-29.
- Aarseth, Espen (2005): "From Hunt the Wumpus to EverQuest: Introduction to Quest Theory," in *Entertainment Computing-ICEC 2005*, ed. by F. Kishino, Y. Kitamura, H. Kato, and N. Nagata, 3711, Berlin; Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 496-506.

Tuesday October 17

Abstract Writing

Preparation for Mandatory Assignment – Abstract for Exam Paper

To be handed in Friday October 27

Week 10

Time for working on abstracts/exam papers. No lectures.

Week 11

Monday October 30

Time

Readings:

- Zagal, Jose P. & Mateas, Michael (2007): "Temporal Frames: A Unifying Framework for the Analysis of Game Temporality". In: *Situated Play: Proceedings of the 2007 Digital Games Research Association Conference*. Tokyo: The University of Tokyo, 516-523.
http://www.digra.org/dl/display_html?chid=07312.25239.pdf
- Nitsche, Michael (2007): "Mapping Time in Video Games." In: *Situated Play: Proceedings of the 2007 Digital Games Research Association Conference*. Tokyo: The University of Tokyo, 145-151. <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/07313.10131.pdf>
- Tychsen, Anders & Michael Hitchens (2009): "Game Time: Modeling and Analyzing Time in Multiplayer and Massively Multiplayer Games." In: *Games and Culture* 2009 4: 170.
<http://gac.sagepub.com/content/4/2/170.full.pdf>

Tuesday October 31
Supervisions for Exam Paper + abstract feedback

Week 12
Monday November 6
Procedurality

Readings:

- Sicart, Miguel (2011): Against Procedurality. Game Studies. Vol. 11 Issue 3.
http://gamestudies.org/1103/articles/sicart_ap
- Treanor, Mike/Mateas, Michael (2013): "An Account of Proceduralist Meaning." DiGRA 2013 Proceedings. http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/paper_465.pdf

Tuesday November 7
Avatars, Characters, and Playable Figures

Readings:

- Abbott, H. Porter (2010): *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 10.
- Linderöth, Jonas. (2005): Animated game pieces. Avatars as roles, tools and props. In *Aesthetics of Play Conference Proceedings*, URL: <http://www.aestheticsofplay.org/linderöth.php>
- Klevjer, Rune (2012): "Enter the Avatar: The Phenomenology of Prosthetic Telepresence in Computer Game". In *The Philosophy of Computer Games* (pp. 17-38). Springer Netherlands.
- Bayliss, Peter (2007): "Beings in the game-world: characters, avatars, and players." In Proceedings of the 4th Australasian conference on Interactive entertainment, p. 4. RMIT University.
- Jørgensen, Kristine (2009): "'I'm overburdened!' An empirical study of the player, the avatar, and the gameworld." In Proceedings from DiGRA. URL: <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/im-overburdened-an-empirical-study-of-the-player-the-avatar-and-the-gameworld/>

Week 13
Monday November 13
Genres & Medium/Media

Readings:

- Apperley, Thomas H. (2006): "Genre and game studies: Toward a critical approach to video game genres." *Simulation & Gaming* 37, no. 1, pp. 6-23.
- Aarseth, Espen (2004). "Genre trouble: Narrativism and the Art of Simulation". In Wardrip-Fruin, N., & Harrigan, P. (2004). *First person: New media as story, performance, and game*. Mit Press, pp. 45-55.

Tuesday November 14

Transmedia, Crossmedia, and Games

Readings:

- Jenkins, Henry: "Searching for the Origami Unicorn. *The Matrix* and Transmedia Storytelling" In: *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York NYU Press, 2006, pp. 93-130.
- Dena, Christy (2004): "Current State of Cross Media Storytelling: Preliminary Observations for Future Design," paper presented at *European Information Society Technologies (IST) Event 2004: Participate in your future*, The Netherlands, URL: www.christydena.com/Docs/DENA_CrossMediaObservations.pdf.
- Davidson, Drew (2010): "Introduction: Terms and Process," in *Cross-Media Communications: An Introduction to the Art of Creating Integrated Media Experiences*, Pittsburgh: ETC Press, pp. 4-16.

Week 14

Monday November 20

Final Chance for Supervision for Exam Paper

Tuesday November 21

QA and Quiz