

Assignment: Game-Play Vlog

Objectives

- To foster critical, self-aware play;
- To closely engage specific games and thereby articulate the effects of different design choices on a player's experience of the game;
- To engage primary sources (games) in terms of and alongside secondary criticism.

Description

Throughout the semester, students will be responsible for keeping a video-blog of their critical gameplay. This vlog will be due by 11:59 pm the night BEFORE we discuss that game in class (see the schedule). In keeping with the practices of vide-blogging and gameplay videos on YouTube, this vlog should focus on narrating students' gameplay with a eye to personal, critical, and affective responses to the game. In keeping with practices of critical play, the vlog should also aim to connect the game with the secondary criticism.

The successful vlog will include images and recordings of gameplay, alongside oral commentary by the student-player, and will be between 5 and 10 minutes long. It will avoid summarizing the game, or explaining how much you "liked" or disliked the game. Rather, it will aim to critically engage the game and its promotion of meaningful play by responding to it in terms of its design, and its connection to the criticism.

Some questions to guide responses include:

1. How would you characterize the game's visual design? How does it affect you / your game play?
2. How would you characterize the game's sonic design? How does it affect you / your game play?
3. How would you characterize the game's interaction design? How does it affect you / your game play?
4. How would you characterize the game's narrative design? How does it affect you / your game play?
5. How would you describe the mechanics of game play? How do these mechanics affect you / your experience of the game?
6. How easy / hard is this game to play? What makes it easy or hard?

7. Were there moments where you felt any strong emotions: fear? sadness? happiness? excitement? frustration? anger? (etc.) When were these moments? Why did you feel this way?
8. How engaging do you find this game? What makes the game more or less engaging than others?
9. How does this game respond to or engage issues presented in the secondary criticism?
10. Does the game uphold the arguments presented in the criticism? Does it reveal limits to these arguments or otherwise complicate them?
11. How do the arguments in the criticism affect your experience of the game?
12. How does the game promote meaningful play? How does it introduce complexity to keep a player playing?
13. How did you learn to play this game? How did the game work “tutorial” mechanics into its gameplay / gameworld? How effectively did you find this model?

Assessment:

Game-play vlogs will be assessed on a 10-point scale. Points will be awarded as follows:

1 point: Submitting the vlog on time;

1 point: Producing a vlog that is within the time constraints listed above;

2 points: Producing a vlog that includes your oral commentary on the video-game(s) in question, alongside relevant images and/or recordings of game-play;

3 points: Producing a vlog that focuses on the effects of the game’s visual, sonic, interactive, and narrative design, rather than on summarizing its narrative or “walking through” the game, as a “how to” guide.

3 points: Producing a vlog that engages the secondary criticism alongside the game in a meaningful, productive way.

Submission:

Game-play vlogs will be submitted in each student’s Dropbox on T-Square as videos viewable within a browser (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.). They must be submitted by 11:59 on the day specified on the schedule.