ACTIVITIES

At the beginning of every class, I intend to have the students participate in an activity. I believe that this will create a sense of comfort through socialization as well as encouraging the flow of creative thinking for the students. Hopefully, these activities will stimulate better discussion and comprehension throughout lectures and discussions. These activities are not simply intended as pedagogical tools but also as preparation for gaining the most from the lectures and discussions that follow.

Week 1 – Gaming Tree (Intro Topic – Game Experiences)

Description: Students will split-up into small groups and create a tree-diagram for their favourite games (game genealogy). Interesting findings from the activity can be discussed afterward. Students can present what they learned about each other.

Week 2 – Canuck Swap (Intro Topic – Inclusiveness)

Description: Self-identification using Bartle's gamer playstyle schema. Students self-identify using Bartle's four types. They assemble in like groups and discuss the shared values of that playstyle. Then, the students split up and form new groups with a mix of playstyle preferences. The students ask questions of each other and then present interesting findings during open class discussion afterward.

Week 3 – Don't Bogart (Topic – Ergodic Texts)

Description: Students form groups based on major genres of games (platformer, puzzler, RPG, etc.). The members of the group discuss the key features of the genre. New groups are formed with a member of each genre-focused group. The task is to conceptualize and mentally prototype a game that would have a feature from each of the genres. Are the game concepts viable and would they be playable as games? Is there a hierarchy within game genres? Students can discuss interesting findings.

Week 4 – It's Only A Game (Topic – Effects Model)

Description: Students form groups and are given a list of ten familiar games. In a hypothetical thought-experiment it is explained that eight of those games must be censored (5 banned and 3 with label warnings) from the world's population. Student groups decide which games they will let people play and which they will not. They explain their rationale and justifications as censors to the class.

Week 5 - Rooms without Walls (Topic – Narratology vs Ludology)

Description: Students form small groups and then pick a narrative-based video game. They will produce an extensive description of the game without using any narrative components

and only by using mechanics. These ludic-based descriptions are presented to other student groups to see if they can guess the game. For example, using Super Mario Bros. one could describe jumping on platforms and hitting boxes with items inside, but they could not mention plumbers, princesses, or stocky dinosaurs. Assassin's Creed could mention duelling and parkour, but nothing about historical context. The groups attempt to find a game that other groups will guess incorrectly.

Week 6 – Purple Monkey Dishwasher (Topic – Materialism)

Description: Students form groups and take a blank piece of paper. Each group draws out a segment of a platformer game. The groups come together and assemble the separate segments. What new segments must be added to create continuity between the discrete segments? The class discusses the platformer level they created with respect to its procedural logic.

Week 7 – To the Victor (Topic – Circuit of Game Culture)

Description: Students form groups and decide on a game that has either only a skill-based reward system or a social-based reward system. Devise the alternative reward system for the game so that the game would be more inclusive to varied player values. How does the reward system work and how does it work well with the pre-existing reward system of the game. Groups present their findings to the class.

Week 8 - The Transmedia Express (Topic – Game Industry)

Description: Students form groups to discuss the para-textual cultural life they have experienced around video games. How has the paratextual culture enhanced or constrained the player community in the game? Groups should devise a set of suggestions for how to use para-textual media in order to best maintain the integrity and growth of a game's player culture. For example, perhaps players shouldn't use cheat guides from outside the game, or players shouldn't make personal attacks via chat apps, or game developers should officially support tutorial video makers on Twitch or YouTube. In short, how could the game industry (studios, social media platforms, etc.) develop to better serve gamers.

Week 9 – Show and Tell (Topic – Playbour)

Description: Students form small groups and think of a noteworthy and interesting cultural curator for video games. They introduce this cultural curator to group members. A cultural curator could be a Twitchstreamer or YouTuber or could be a game blogger or game reviewer. It could be a game designer or game artist or a game activist. Is there are sense that these cultural curators are being exploited (ie. playbour) and in what ways. Students can present their most interesting findings to the class.

Week 10 – Casually Hardcore (Topic – Player Identity)

Description: Students self-identify as casual or hardcore gamers (scale of 1-10, with 1 being hardcore and 10 being casual). Groups are formed with a mix across the spectrum. Groups discuss differing player values and then present to the rest of the class the greatest shared values and the most significant points of departure in values.

Week 11 - Killers Among Us (Topic – Dark Play)

Description: Students form groups and share stories about having cheated in games and having been cheated against in games (dark play generally). As a group, members pick the best story told and share it with the entire class.

Week 12 - In With the New (Topic – Identity in Games)

Description: Students form small groups and take a video game from the past as subject for group discussion. The groups devise how the game could be redesigned in the present to be more inclusive with respect to representation of marginalized communities. The groups will be questioned as to whether this redesigned game would be marketable? Mix the students into new groups and have the new groups try to add features that would make the redesigned games more marketable.

Week 13 – Guest Speaker

Description: I will attempt to find an appropriate guest speaker for the final class meeting.