DIGITAL STUDIES: WHAT'S IN A GAME? From –Isms to Indie Games
English 508 | UVic | Fall 2017 | R | 14:30-17:20 | CLE C316 | jentery.github.io/508v3
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE TERRITORIES
The Department of English acknowledges and respects the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territories the University of Victoria stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Hello! This seminar is about literary and cultural approaches to prototyping indie games—games as gifts, letters, ephemera, hacks, souvenirs, mix tapes, commentaries, glitches, jokes, tricks, satire, memoirs, self-care, lo-fi, bit collage, accidents, performances, activism, zines . . . We'll play some games, read some history and critical theory, and experiment with an array of design and development techniques from paper to screen. Early in the term, you'll select a few "-isms" (e.g., Futurism, Minimalism, and Surrealism) from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that will inform your approaches to prototyping throughout the seminar, and by the end you'll create and share your own indie games, complete with their own user manuals. In the process, you'll learn about the intersections of new media with art, literature, and politics, and we'll demystify the popular assumption that only a "select few" can make games. I will not assume that you are a gamer, want to be a gamer, have ever made an indie game, or know how to develop or design games. I will also not assume that you've taken a course in digital studies. Technical competency required: know how to send an email.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Anna Anthropy's *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters: How Freaks, Normals, Amateurs, Artists, Dreamers, Drop-outs, Queers, Housewives, and People Like You Are Taking Back an Art Form* (Seven Stories Press, 2012) is available at the UVic Bookstore. All other readings are available online in PDF (see me for an ID and password) or open access via jentery.github.io/508v3. As you play games throughout the term, I encourage you to support the authors and developers, most of whom accept donations via Patreon or the like.

FORMAT
This seminar is project-based, meaning you will iteratively develop your own indie game prototype in response to a series of prompts. You will document and periodically share your work and present it at the term's end. Each of our seminar meetings will involve:

- **A Workshop**: We will experiment with a particular technique for prototyping games. You will be asked to apply what you learned to your own work and prototype.

- **Some Discussion**: We will chat about the workshop and readings. I may decide to listen, without much (if any) intervention in the conversation. I may also decide to lecture on a given topic or ask you to present material from your research and prototyping.

You should arrive to each seminar meeting on time, having read the texts and responded to the prompts, all of which are listed at jentery.github.io/508v3.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT
You will be required to keep a log, give a presentation, develop your own prototype and user's manual, write a brief statement, and participate in workshops and discussions. Below are descriptions of the assignments together with grading rubrics for each. All assessment practices will follow the UVic Faculty of Graduate Studies Grading Scale (see bit.ly/uvicgrading).

Please note that the assignments are subject to minor changes as the seminar progresses. If I do make a change, then I will notify you by email. Also, the prototype, manual, statement, and presentation are essential to passing the course. Failure to complete these requirements will result in a failing N grade (calculated as a 0 for your GPA). I do not post marks outside my office, and I do not use plagiarism detection software.

Log (two marks, each 20% of your final mark, due 12 October and 14 December)
At the beginning of the term, you will form groups of two, three, or four people (your choice). With this group, you will research and prototype your own indie game, and (as a group) you will keep *one* log documenting the group's work during and outside of seminar. Consider treating the log like a lab notebook, with hypotheses, lit reviews, documentation, experiments, findings, and reflections. The log will be assessed twice. I will mark it based on its: 1) consistency from week to week, 2) development over time, 3) self-reflexivity (including its awareness of methods and decisions), 4) integration of seminar discussions and course material, 5) quality (including its combination of critique with creativity and experimentation), 6) inclusion of documentation or sample material, and 7) attention to change (including notes on hiccups and surprises). Each entry in your log will be prompted. I will provide detailed instructions during seminar and at jentery.github.io/508v3.

The tone and style of your log should be more formal than notes from seminar meetings but less formal than a seminar paper intended for an academic audience. Your entries should be self-aware, and feel free to reference work conducted by your peers or to spark dialogue with them via the log. Also, don't hesitate to combine your preferred modes of composition: writing, drawing, collage, outlining, sketching, graphing, programming, images, audio, video, etc. At some point early in the term, you'll need to create an online folder, site, or repository to share digital files with me and amongst your group. Then you can point others and me to the appropriate URL. For the purposes of this seminar, your log may be composed across digital and tactile

media, with material available online and off. I recommend documenting the development of all media, including tactile media, using photography, video, or the like. In short, work done in the log should be steeped in evidence of iterative development.

For the log, grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

- **90-100 = A+:** Logs in this range are incredibly detailed, filled with documentation, and demonstrate new or innovative uses of specific methods or techniques. They respond to seminar discussions, engage assigned material (including readings), are reflexive, and exhibit a combination of critical thinking, critical design, and creativity.
- **85-89 = A:** Logs in this range are incredibly detailed and filled with documentation. They respond to seminar discussions, engage assigned material (including readings), are reflexive, and exhibit a combination of critical thinking, critical design, and creativity.
- **80-84 = A-:** Logs in this range are incredibly detailed and filled with documentation. They respond to seminar discussions, engage assigned material (including readings), and are reflexive.
- **77-79 = B+:** Logs in this range are filled with documentation. They respond to seminar discussions and are reflexive.
- **73-76 = B:** Logs in this range are marginally acceptable at the graduate level.

I will assess your log twice. Please submit it on 12 October and then again on 30 November. Since you are developing one log per group and also conducting this work collaboratively, everyone in your group will receive the same mark for your log.

Prototype and Manual (30% of your final mark, due by 12p.m., 14 December)
Your group should create, develop, test, and share a working prototype for an indie game. Note that a prototype is not a complete game; for instance, it may be a functioning scene or sequence. The prototype should be accompanied by a user's manual intended for reading without a screen. (You are welcome to make a screen-based version of your manual, too, if you wish. The existence of multiple formats increases accessibility.) The manual should be made *as if your game were complete and ready for circulation*. You are welcome to design and develop a game of any type/genre: 2-D, 3-D, turn-based strategy, multiplayer, single-player, platformer, RPG, text-based, action-adventure, simulation, sports . . . However, the game should correspond with your selected –ism.

Your prototype and manual should include:

- All of your assets and source files (e.g., images, code, audio, and video) compiled in a single folder or repository,
- An executable version of those files (i.e., a functioning game) that can be played with readily available controllers (such as keyboards),
- A README file containing a brief description (100-250 words) of your game,
- A name/title for your game,
- A list of everyone who contributed to the game (i.e., everyone in your group),

- A tactile user's manual for your game *as* if it were complete (the manual should at least include instructions and rules for play),
- A draft or alpha version to me by 23 November, and
- A group consultation with me by 23 November.

You may submit your prototype and prototype files via a URL or USB stick. Please submit the manual to me in person or via my department box.

For the prototype and manual, grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

- **90-100 = A+:** Games in this range are especially sophisticated, engaging, and perceptive pieces of work that make an original contribution to scholarly and/or popular thinking about games, new media, and/or digital/literary/cultural studies. They are ready for circulation, and they correspond with their –isms in clever and compelling ways.
- **85-89 = A:** Games in this range are perceptive, engaging, and original, but may require substantial development for circulation. They could act as core material for a gaming project, and they correspond with their –isms in clever and compelling ways.
- **80-84 = A-:** Games in this range are adequate at the graduate level with regard to the research, development, presentation, and quality of content. With additional work, they could act as core material for a gaming project. They correspond with their –isms in notable ways.
- **77-79 = B+:** Games in this range have significant flaws in some areas, but they still meet graduate standards. With more work, they could act as core material for a gaming project. They demonstrate a basic understanding of their –isms.
- **73-76 = B:** Games in this range are marginally acceptable at the graduate level.

The prototype and manual are due by 12p.m. on 14 December. Since you are developing one prototype and manual per group and also conducting this work collaboratively, everyone in your group will receive the same mark for your prototype and manual.

Statement (15% of your final mark, due by 12p.m., 14 December)

The statement is your opportunity to speak to what you (as an individual) contributed to your group's prototype, what you learned in the process, and where you'd take the project with more time, labour, and resources. The statement should be written individually, and it should not be treated as an academic essay. Its conventions might borrow from an artist's, designer's, or developer's statement, and it should be written in the first-person. It should consist of 500-750 words, and it may include screen grabs (or the like) of your group's prototype. It may draw upon readings from or related to the course (including material about your –ism); however, it's not an analytical paper. Instead, it should draw upon details from your prototype, log, presentation, manual, and –ism to not only communicate but also demonstrate your prototype as:

- A learning process (both intimate and social) involving experiments, hiccups, surprises, and success,

- A playable indie game with features, bugs, limitations, perks, expectations, an audience, and an interface, and
- A responsibility, or something with your name on it, out there for others, with assumptions, consequences, and room for development.

For the statement, grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

- **90-100 = A+:** Statements in this range are incredibly compelling, self-aware, and steeped in detail. They demonstrate what was learned during the prototyping process and provide convincing evidence of that learning. They also speak thoroughly to matters of audience (expectations and actual play) and how the prototype could be improved, with attention to what works, what doesn't, and what's unknown or uncertain. These statements would be examples for other students who may take an indie games course in the future.
- **85-89 = A:** Statements in this range are incredibly compelling, self-aware, and steeped in detail. They demonstrate what was learned during the prototyping process and provide evidence of that learning. They also speak to matters of audience (expectations and actual play) and how the prototype could be improved, with attention to what works, what doesn't, and what's unknown or uncertain.
- **80-84 = A-:** Statements in this range are self-aware and steeped in detail. They demonstrate what was learned during the prototyping process and provide evidence of that learning. They also speak to how the prototype could be improved, with attention to what works, what doesn't, and what's unknown or uncertain.
- **77-79 = B+:** Statements in this range are steeped in detail. They demonstrate what was learned during the prototyping process and provide evidence of that learning.
- **73-76 = B:** Statements in this range are marginally acceptable at the graduate level.

Your statements are due by 12p.m. on 14 December. Feel free to email them to me in DOCX, PDF, RTF, MD, or HTML. They can be submitted as attachments or via URLs.

Presentation of Prototype (15% of your final mark, on 30 November)

Our final seminar meeting ("Open the Arcade") will mimic an indiecade event, with everyone from the seminar presenting their playable prototypes to a public audience. I will make posters for the event and circulate an announcement around campus. You are welcome to do the same.

Your group presentation should include the following:

- A ten-minute talk (by the group) about your game, including its aims, assumptions, aesthetic, and audience,
- A functioning prototype of your game, available for other people to play, and

- A “one-sheet” describing or releasing your game to newcomers (one-sheets are common in press kits.). The one-sheet should be printed and either mounted next to your prototype or distributed by hand to visitors.

For the presentation, grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

- **90-100 = A+:** Presentations in this range are well prepared, compelling, and even memorable. They prompt the audience to ask questions and to also play the prototype. They are grounded in the prototype itself, discuss its relation to an –ism, highlight its aims and features, and speak to its intended audience. They use visual and/or auditory material (images, video, code, and/or audio) in a persuasive fashion.
- **85-89 = A:** Presentations in this range are well prepared and compelling. They prompt the audience to play the prototype. They are grounded in the prototype itself, discuss its relation to an –ism, highlight its aims and features, and speak to its intended audience. They use visual and/or auditory material (images, video, code, and/or audio) in a persuasive fashion.
- **80-84 = A-:** Presentations in this range are well prepared and compelling. They prompt the audience to play the prototype. They are grounded in the prototype itself, discuss its relation to an –ism, and highlight its aims and features. They use visual and/or auditory material (images, video, code, and/or audio).
- **77-79 = B+:** Presentations in this range prompt the audience to play the prototype. They are grounded in the prototype itself and highlight its aims and features.
- **73-76 = B:** Presentations in this range are marginally acceptable at the graduate level.

The presentations are scheduled for our last seminar meeting (on 30 November). Since you are developing one prototype per group and also conducting this work collaboratively, everyone in your group will receive the same mark for your presentation.

POLICIES

Late Submissions

Barring exceptional circumstances, I will not accept your logs, prototypes, or user manuals after the due date. Since log entries are meant to build on each other, I recommend that you do not fall behind on them. Of note, the presentation can only occur during the final meeting of the seminar. Thanks for understanding.

Absences

Regular attendance in graduate seminars is expected. Attendance and active participation in discussions and workshops are part of fulfilling the course requirements. If you must be absent from a seminar meeting, then you should contact me beforehand, if only to keep me in the loop. Cases of continuous, unexplained

absence could result in your ineligibility to complete the course. I will notify the Graduate Adviser if you have two or more unwarranted absences.

Laptops
The use of laptops during seminar is encouraged but not required.

Educational Technology
UVic cannot require students to disclose personal information to technologies or organizations that may store information on servers located outside of Canada because disclosure of personal information to vendors, systems, or services or accessing that personal information outside of Canada is restricted by section 30.1 of BC's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA). Personal information is information about an identifiable individual—for example, your name or your email address. In this course, I will not require you to use any educational technologies that store or access your personal information outside of Canada.

Extensions
No extensions will be given except in extreme (and verifiable) circumstances. These circumstances include reasons of health and extenuating circumstances, such as the death of a family member.

Learning Climate, Human Rights, Equity, and Fairness
The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing, and protecting a positive, supportive, and safe learning and working environment for all its members. All students and faculty members are expected to adhere to the UVic Human Rights, Equity, and Fairness policy (Policy GV0200). You should alert me immediately if you have any questions about this policy and its application, or if you have concerns about course proceedings or participants.

Academic Integrity
All students are also expected to adhere to the UVic Policy on Academic Integrity. (Please note the new regulation change, effective May 2017: "unauthorized use of an Editor is prohibited, unless the instructor grants explicit written authorization.") Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade for the given assignment and may additionally result in a failing grade for the course. By taking this course, you agree that all submitted assignments may be subject to an originality review. I do not use software to detect plagiarism in essays or any other assignments.

Accessibility
Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability (RCSD) as soon as possible. RCSD staff is available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us

know your needs, the sooner we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Email
With the exception of holidays and weekends, I will respond to your emails within 24 hours.

Course Evaluation Survey
The Evaluation Survey for this course will be available online and distributed by the university via a URL. I encourage you to complete it immediately before or after our last seminar meeting. I use course evaluations to improve my courses and teaching.

SCHEDULE
The schedule is available (with links to readings, games, and related materials) at jentery.github.io/508v3. It is also copied below, and it is subject to change. Throughout the term, I will touch base with you about the workload and (if need be) will adjust the schedule accordingly. If I make any changes to the schedule, then I will notify you by email and during seminar.

WEEK 1 (SEPT 7): GAMES + ZINES
What if some games, and the more general concept of "play," not only provide outlets for entertainment but also function as means for creative expression, as instruments for conceptual thinking, or as tools to help examine or work through social issues? -- Mary Flanagan, *Critical Play: Radical Game Design*

During our first meeting, we'll introduce ourselves, talk about indie games and zines, and work our way through Anthropy's book. We'll also discuss how you can log (or document) your research and prototyping throughout the term. And before we leave, we should chat about forming groups. You don't have to write a seminar paper for this course, and you only have a few assignments; however, 85% of your final mark is based on collaborative work. I made this decision because collaboration is important to research in the humanities (even tho it is taught infrequently in literary and cultural studies), and games are rarely produced alone. If you have any concerns about collaboration, then please touch base. I'm happy to chat with you about it.

WORKSHOP: Logging your work in a text editor (Sublime + Markdown)
READ: Anna Anthropy's *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters: How Freaks, Normals, Amateurs, Artists, Dreamers, Drop-outs, Queers, Housewives, and People Like You Are Taking Back an Art Form* (at the UVic Bookstore)
PERUSE: Bingham Center Zine Collections' "A Brief History of Zines" + Lana Polansky's *Sufficiently Human* + Arnaud De Bock et al.'s *PICO-8* + Alexandra Orlando (ed.) et al.'s *First Person Scholar* + merritt k's *Forest Ambassador* + Gareth Damian Martin (ed.) et al.'s *Heterotopias* + Lilith's website (including *Oneiric Gardens*) + Lewis Pulsipher's Glossary for Game Designers

WEEK 2 (SEPT 14): -ISMS + SPECULATIONS
Design your game first, and then add the technology necessary to make it happen. -- Tracy Fullerton, *Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games*

We'll begin our second meeting with a discussion of the various -isms you researched since last week. After that, we'll talk about speculative design (see Kraus) and games as art (see Pearce). Both will inform our prototyping this term. We'll conclude our meeting with a low-tech workshop on paper prototyping, which may help you to foreground your ideas and designs without getting caught up in the whiz-bang of software, engines, consoles, and the like.

WORKSHOP: Paper prototyping a game (see Una Lee and Paolo Pedercini's "A Computerless Videogame Modding Workshop")
READ: Kari Kraus's "Finding Fault Lines: An Approach to Speculative Design"(including "Family of Subjunctive Practices") + Celia Pearce's "Games as Art: The Aesthetics of Play" (via *Visible Language*)
PLAY (some games for/about groups): Ghost Town's *Overcooked* + Brendan Keogh's *One Button Real Time Twenty-Six Player Party Golfing* + Derek Yu's *Spelunky* + Asteroid Base's *Lovers in a Dangerous Spacetime*
LOG: *Form your groups. Research some -isms (1870-1970). Write about them. Pick your -ism for the term. Write about Kraus and Pearce.* Before you begin your log, please form groups of two, three, or four people. You might also want to start accounts with Itch and Steam and install Unity and Flash players for your preferred browser. Once you are in a group, collectively research at least five -isms active at any point between 1870 and 1970. (Mary Ann Caws's *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* is a good resource here.) For each -ism, note in your log the: 1) dates of activity (rough start and end dates), 2) names of participants/contributors, 3) titles of key publications and works of art (including literature, painting, sculpture, film, design, and manifestos), and 4) aesthetic and political particulars (including a sentence or two about how each -ism blended aesthetics with politics). Feel free to write these notes in point form. Once you are finished logging information about five -isms, please decide as a group which of them you'd like to study and reference throughout the term. You might want to consider matters of content, context, *and* design. What's curious? What's relevant today? What will keep you interested for four months? Communicate your decision (including your selected -ism) in your log. Also, to prep for our seminar discussion on speculative design and games as art, in your log please share (in your own words; only a sentence or two; no quotations) an important argument that Kraus makes. Do the same with Pearce, and alongside these arguments please articulate at least two specific questions you have about their texts. Your questions may address everything from assumptions made in the arguments to the potential effects of those arguments on critical or creative practice.

WEEK 3 (SEPT 21): HACKS + CHEATS
Hardware hacking enables a creative form of gameplay that does not necessarily follow the routine interactions intended by game companies. -- Nina Belojevic, "Circuit Bending Videogame Consoles as a Form of Applied Media Studies"

I'd like to begin this meeting with a conversation about Phillips's work on games and social justice. The notion of a hack or cheat may intersect nicely with some of her remarks about games, but I also want to discuss her points about ethical responsibilities and looking beyond the fun. Then we'll talk about your gameplay logs. The second half of the meeting will focus on modding existing games and bending/changing game templates. Modding games helps to lower the barrier of entry to game development, and it corresponds in several ways with critical practices in fields such as cultural studies. We'll look at somewhat accessible applications such as GameSalad and perhaps Stencyl. I'll also draw modding material from some open source HTML5 games (as an intro for those who are new to coding).

WORKSHOP: Modding and bending videogames (HTML5 + GameSalad + Stencyl)
READ: Amanda Phillips's "Game Studies for Great Justice" + Mia Consalvo and Nathan Dutton's "Game Analysis: Developing a Methodological Toolkit for the Qualitative Study of Games" + Raph Koster's "How I Analyze a Game"
PLAY (some notable hacks and mods): Elizabeth LaPensée's *Invaders* + The Chinese Room's *Dear Esther* (a mod of *Half Life 2*) + Davey Wreden's *The Stanley Parable* (also a mod of *Half Life 2*) + Cory Arcangel's *Super Mario Clouds* (files)
LOG: *Play a game. Document it. Watch your documentation. Describe it. Write about Phillips.* For this log entry, I'm asking you to perform your first of two gameplay logs this term. As a group, please select a videogame of your choice. Ideally it's an indie game, but I'm open. Please play the game together (online or F2F) for at least an hour. It may be multiplayer, co-op, turn-based, or even single-player (with people watching and commenting). Please document the play process using video or audio, and then listen to or watch the documentation. In about 250 words, your group should then respond to the documentation using one or two approaches suggested by Consalvo, Dutton, and/or Koster. For instance, you might focus on unexpected results, player suspicion or frustration, cheating or attempts to cheat, what made players feel good or powerful (and when), what kept people's interests (or didn't), language people used during play, or when and why players helped other players. No need to analyze anything, tho. Just document the social gameplay experience (at least an hour), review it, and write ~250 words describing one or two particular aspects of it. You don't need to submit the video or audio documentation as part of your log, and you should not circulate it online or elsewhere. However, assuming it's ok with everyone in your group, you're welcome to include clips or stills with your log entry. With this exercise, please also communicate one of Phillips's primary arguments in your own words, together with two specific questions you have about her essay.

WEEK 4 (SEPT 28): INTERFACE + MEDIATION
Games are activities, and activities are best understood when carried out. -- Kristine Jørgensen, *Gameworld Interfaces*

We'll dedicate Weeks 4 and 5 to discussions of games as *negotiations*. This approach will prevent us from reducing indie games to either objects of inquiry (that can be studied without play) or immediate experiences (that are purely immersive or lack critical perspective). We'll talk about approaches to both critical design (see Belojevic) and critical play (see Flanagan), and then we'll circulate and discuss the designs from your log. During our workshop, we'll continue prototyping user interface (UI) wireframes and also experiment with some physical computing techniques. After these two weeks (Weeks 4 and 5), we'll transition into topics such as player motivation, rules, stories, characters, and contexts (Weeks 6-8).

WORKSHOP: Prototyping UI wireframes and controllers (graph paper, Balsamiq, and RPi or Arduino)
READ: Nina Belojevic's "Circuit Bending Videogame Consoles" + Mary Flanagan's "Critical Play and Responsible Design"
PLAY (some games with interesting interfaces and visual designs): Ian Snyder's *The Floor Is Jelly* + Emily Short's *Bee* + Ben Esposito's *Pale Machine* (with Bo En) + Peter Brinson and Kurosh ValaNejad's *The Cat and the Coup* + Stephen Lavelle's *Mirror Stage* + ModLab's *Play the Knave* + Peter Lu and Lea Schönfelder's *Perfect Woman*
LOG: *Wireframe your interface. Describe it. Write about Belojevic and Flanagan.*This is your first log entry where you'll prototype features of your game. First, return to your -ism and determine (as a group) the sort of interactions and interfaces it would encourage or endorse. How does your -ism draw boundaries? Involve or engage its audience? Address its medium? Which adjectives would you use to describe its blend of aesthetics with politics? Based on your assessment, use graph paper, plain paper, cardboard, or software to "wireframe" an example interface for a game informed by your -ism. For now, you might want to imagine a screen and machine (anything from a mobile phone to a console attached to a large display) for your game, and then wireframe accordingly. The wireframe should account for how your game and its interface would accept input (e.g., pressing buttons or swiping) and express output (e.g., sounds, movements, and images). But feel free to stick to abstractions such as blocks, windows, and frames for now. No need to include details such as specific characters, objects, environments, or achievements in your visual design. Once you've wireframed an interface, please describe it in ~250 words, attending to: 1) its correspondences with your -ism, 2) how it mediates the relations between not only people and technologies but also input and output, and 3) how you imagine people engaging and responding to it. Alongside your wireframe and description, please share arguments by Belojevic and Flanagan in your own words and articulate two questions in response their work.

WEEK 5 (OCT 5): ACTIONS + MECHANICS
Games, whether digital or analog, function precisely the same way computers do: they are derived from a system of rules that sets forth parameters or constraints for dynamic interaction. -- Celia Pearce, "Games as Art: The Aesthetics of Play"

This meeting will be anchored in the diegetic and non-diegetic machine operations of games and how those operations are entangled in culture and practice (as opposed to treating them as abstractions or universal procedures). We'll talk about recent calls for everyone to code (see the history Vee presents), and we'll also consider the implications of games as actions (see Galloway). Following last week's workshop on modding games with what-you-see-is-what-you-get (WYSIWYG) software such as GameSalad, we'll write and edit a few lines of code and then execute them as games. This workshop will be combined with discussions about the core actions and mechanics of your indie game prototypes.

WORKSHOP: Programming a simple game (JavaScript + HTML5 + Processing)
READ: Annette Vee's "Programming as Literacy" + Alexander Galloway's "Gamic Action, Four Moments" (also see *Kriegspiel*, a game by Guy Debord and remade by Galloway and RadSoftGroup)
PLAY (some games that do a lot with simple mechanics): Sophie Houlden's *Swift*Stitch* + merritt k's *Lim* and *Lullaby for Heartsick Spacer* + Lucas Pope's *Papers, Please* + Anna Anthropy's *Calamity Annie* and *dys4ia* + Yijala Yala Project's *Love Punks*
LOG: *Identify your core actions. Describe them. Integrate them into your UI wireframe. Write about Vee and Galloway.* Most books about game dev and design prompt readers to start with character development and related concept art; however, following Anthropy and Clark (see "Signs Versus Design" in particular), I'm encouraging you to begin with your core actions. Based on what you know about your -ism, what might these actions be, and what role would they play in an indie game? In your log, please identify between two and five core actions for your game. Down the line, you might not integrate them all into your prototype, but it doesn't hurt to experiment with options. For each action, please include the following in your log: a verb, the choices that verb affords (is it complex? robust? simple? restrictive?), and its relation to your -ism (what actions make your -ism interesting, or could make your game unique?). Once you are finished with this list, please also consider your verbs together (as relations) and integrate them however you wish into your UI wireframe from last week. Show how the verbs could be combined (simultaneously or sequentially, as causes and effects, or to encourage repetitive actions such as "grinding") to comprise a system of behaviours, triggers, and mechanics that players would need to learn and navigate. While adding your actions to your wireframe, you are also welcome to map them to a controller (such as a keyboard and its binary keys). You could even illustrate your controller layout (with software or pencil) or photograph an existing controller and annotate it. Pick what's most appropriate. Just make sure to include between two and five actions, the choices they afford, their relation to your -ism, and a demonstration of how they would be integrated into your interface and, if you wish, a controller. No need

to worry about characters or environments at this point. Just use simple boxes and markers for now, and we'll study and prototype the details later in the term. Also, in your log please include arguments by Vee and Galloway in your own words as well as two specific questions you have about their research and its implications for praxis (the entanglement of theory with practice).

WEEK 6 (OCT 12): CHANCE + MOTIVATION
Interactivity: it can make a story powerful in new ways, but it's not a guarantee of fun. -- Emily Short, "*The Path* and Story Pacing"

This week we'll spend most of our time on the question of why people play games and, more specifically, why they might play your indie games. We'll consider issues of leisure and affect (see Anable), motivation (see Yee), and randomness and chance (see Costikyan). During the workshop, you'll prototype some "play personas" for your game and also discuss your experiences observing other people play games. After this meeting, we'll turn our attention to narratives, stories, characters, and scenes in your games.

WORKSHOP: Prototyping play personas (using paper)
READ: Aubrey Anable's "Casual Games, Time Management, and the Work of Affect" + Nick Yee's "A Model of Player Motivations" + Greg Costikyan's "Randomness: Blight or Bane?"
PLAY (some games about games and play): Mordechai Buckman and Kyler Kelly's *Gamer Mom* + Molleindustria's *Game Definitions* + Ian Bogost's *Cow Clicker* + Stephanie Boluk and Patrick LeMieux on *Triforce*, *Memento Mortem Mortis*, *It Is Pitch Black*, *99 Exercises in Style*, and *Tide Hunter*
LOG: *Watch people play a game. Take notes. Reflect on that.* Your second gameplay log is scheduled for this week. For thirty minutes, watch at least one person in your group play a videogame. Ideally it's an indie game, but I'm open. Document the play session with video, audio, or photography, if you wish; however, you should not include that documentation in your log or circulate it online. As you watch, take notes on one (and only one) of the following: casual gaming and leisure (see Anable), player motivation (see Yee), or randomness (see Costikyan). If you focus on casual gaming and leisure, then observe how the play is linked to affect but also how the game is gendered. If you focus on player motivation, then observe how the play is linked to immersion, social activity, and achievement (or just pick one of these). If you focus on randomness, then observe its aesthetics (e.g., abstract strategy and wargamer) as well as its "good" and "evil" effects on play. After thirty minutes, interview your group member(s) for about ten minutes, asking them two things in particular: 1) why they play the game (or like playing the game), and 2) to clarify anything (e.g., game details) that wasn't obvious to you during observation. When you are done with the observation and interview, use ~250 words to reflect on your observations. Include your notes from the observation and interview in your log alongside your reflection. Your group's log should include notes and reflections for at least *two* observation sessions involving at least two different players.

SOMETHING'S DUE: Your logs are due this week for mid-term assessment. They should include 1) the names of everyone in your group, 2) evidence of your prototyping and research, 3) your selected -ism, 4) info about that -ism, 5) your UI wireframe(s), 6) a description of that wireframe, 7) your core actions, 8) descriptions of those actions, 9) those actions integrated into your UI wireframe and (if you wish) mapped onto a controller, 10) two gameplay logs (a documentation log that engages Consalvo, Dutton, and/or Koster, and an observation log that engages Anable, Yee, or Costikyan), and 11) brief summaries of and questions about Kraus, Pearce, Phillips, Belojevic, Flanagan, Vee, and Galloway. I should receive one log per group.

WEEK 7 (Oct 19): RULES + STORIES
We impose a pattern, a meaningful sequence, on a set of events, and a story emerges. -- Naomi Clark, *A Game Design Vocabulary* (with Anna Anthropy)

Our meeting this week will foreground the role of stories, narrative, and experience in indie games (via Salter, Jagoda, and McDonald). We'll base most of our conversations in your prototypes, and we'll step back a bit from the technology to examine how actions and stories come together (or fall apart). This week will also be an opportunity for you to start threading together the various components of your prototype to see what holds, doesn't fit, and seems peripheral or extraneous.

WORKSHOP: Developing story trees and dialogue (Twine + paper)
READ: Anastasia Salter's "Building Interactive Stories" + Patrick Jagoda and Peter McDonald's "Game Mechanics, Experience Design, and Affective Play"
PLAY (some games anchored in story and experience): Ryan Green et al.'s *That Dragon, Cancer* + Toby Fox's *Undertale* + The Fullbright Company's *Gone Home*+ Admiral Jota's *Lost Pig*
LOG: *Pick your software. Give your game a genre and story. Determine how difficult it'll be. Write about Salter, Jagoda, and McDonald.* Building on your UI wireframe and core actions, this week your group should attach your game to a (sub)genre. Simulation? Fantasy? Stealth? Party game? Text-based adventure? Platformer? Turn-based strategy? Interactive fiction? Racing? Horror? Roguelike? Survival? Tower defense? A blend of things? As you make this decision, consider your -ism as well as audience expectations and histories of your genre. Once you've settled on a genre, write it down in your log. Then use ~250 words to outline a brief story for your game and explain how the story will unfold through rules. (For rules, consider if-then-else and subject-verb-object statements, or you are welcome to express your rules through code.) What is the game about? What's the conflict, problem, or core issue? What are the rules? The goals? The achievements? How difficult will the game be, and how do notions of difficulty correspond with your -ism? While you write, feel free to situate the story within a narrative structure, if applicable. At some point in this log entry, please also mention the software or language you'll use to build your playable prototype. And of course, write an argument by both Salter and Jagoda and McDonald in your own words, accompanied by two questions you have about these texts.

WEEK 8 (OCT 26): CONTEXTS + CHARACTERS
What does it mean to represent something or someone in a media context? Often I think people believe representation is just about accurately depicting people of different identities, but the juicy issues are located in how fraught identity is in the first place, and then the warped agendas of representation add on top of that. -- Mattie Brice, "Using Play for Everyday Activism"

This week we'll discuss the intersections of game prototyping with representation and values. For whom, by whom, and under what assumptions are games authored? What role, if any, should empathy play in games? Here, writing and games by LaPensée and Brice will inform our conversations. We'll also spend time during our workshop on how characters are modeled and contextualized in 2-D and 3-D games. How are engines and available "assets" entwined with worldviews and habits of play?

WORKSHOP: Working with character models, sprites, and layers (Unity)
READ: Elizabeth LaPensée's "Self-Determination in Indigenous Games" (also see *We Sing for Healing*) + Mattie Brice's "Death of the Player" and "Moving On"(also see *Empathy Machine* + *EAT*)
PLAY (some games engaging social justice and decolonization): micha cárdenas's *Redshift and Portalmetal* + Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace's *Otsi:! | Rise of the Kanien'kehá:ka Legends* + E-Line Media's *Never Alone*
LOG: *Sketch your characters and environments. Describe them. Relate them to LaPensée and Brice.* Now it's time to put your actions, story, and interface into conversation with some characters and environments. For this log entry, please design and sketch at least two playable characters and at least two visual environments (e.g., landscapes) for your prototype. Again, these elements should be informed by your selected -ism. I encourage you to consider them in isolation for now: playable characters without visual environments, and visual environments without playable characters. Next week, you'll prototype some scenes, which will further integrate your characters and actions into space and time. You might want to prototype with software, plasticine, or pencil and paper. For each character and environment, please provide visual documentation/illustration (animations or stills), a brief description (~25 words per character/environment), and some remarks (~50 words per character/environment) on how your prototyping engaged or responded to work by LaPensée and Brice. Throughout the process, consider norms, embodiment, identification (or interpellation), perspective, land, and the differences between not only 2-D and 3-D design but also first-, second-, and third-person gaming (see the work of Pat Harrigan here). Your characters don't need to be protagonists or humans, and your environments don't need to be passive landscapes, backgrounds, or resources. They don't need to be intricate or complex, either. Feel free to keep it simple.

WEEK 9 (NOV 2): SCENES + CINEMA
As we embody ourselves digitally, participate in modding our own UIs, inhabit specific server communities—all the grainy specificity of our work—we are ourselves embedded

in a particular assemblage of play. We do not stand outside of it. -- T.L. Taylor, "The Assemblage of Play"

I'd like to begin this meeting with a discussion about the intersections of indie games with models (see Wardrip-Fruin) and post-cinema (see Shaviro). We'll then transition into a workshop about developing scenes and using cameras in games, drawing connections where we can with practices in 3-D modelling and film. Then I'll give you a chance to present and discuss your inventories.

WORKSHOP: Working with scenes, levels, and cameras (Unity)
READ: Noah Wardrip-Fruin's "Expressive Processing: Interpretation and Creation" + Steven Shaviro's "Splitting the Atom: Post-Cinematic Articulations of Sound and Vision"
PLAY (some games with experimental narratives, levels, scenes, and pacing): Tarn Adams and Zach Adams's *Dwarf Fortress* + Blendo's *Thirty Flights of Loving* + Robert Yang's *Intimate, Infinite* + Playdead's *Limbo* + DoubleDutch's *Speedrunners*
LOG: *Build your inventory. Integrate it, your characters, and your environments into your UI wireframe. Write about Wardrip-Fruin and Shaviro.* This week, your group should develop an inventory of objects that your characters and environments may use to facilitate actions. Your inventory should include between five and ten objects. Perhaps your characters collect or carry them, or maybe your environments contain or consume them. Use software, plasticine, or pencil and paper to prototype these objects and include them in your log together with ~250 words describing the inventory and its relation to your -ism. Once you've compiled and described your inventory, integrate it, your characters, and your environments (from last week) into your UI wireframe to comprise a scene in your game. (At this point in the term, you might want to prototype with your selected software.) Include this new scene in your log entry and, where possible, think about it as a camera or perspective. To whom, if anyone or anything, does it belong? How would it move, if at all, with the action? What does it assume about its audiences? What does it need from them? With the materials from your wireframe and scene in your log, please also provide arguments by Wardrip-Fruin and Shaviro in your own words, accompanied by two questions you have about their work.

WEEK 10 (NOV 9): SOUNDS + MOODS
Text as a waveform has creative and poetic uses. -- Allison Parrish, "Lossy Text Compression, for Some Reason?!?!"

It's time for sound! This week, we'll talk about approaches to sound (see Rodgers) and music in games (see Whalen). We'll edit some audio, too. As we do, we'll examine the role of sound in your indie games. Is it all about mood and atmosphere? Or does sound do other things in games, too? We might want to play a few games with and without sound and even mask the visuals to play with sound alone. (Michel Chion did this with film.)

WORKSHOP: Editing audio (Audacity)
READ: Tara Rodgers's "Approaching Sound" + Zach Whalen's "Play Along: An Approach to Videogame Music"
PLAY (some games with great sounds): Jonathan Kittaka's *Secrets Agent* + Porpentine's *With Those We Love Alive* + Deirdra Kiai's *Dominique Pamplemousse* + Amanita Design's *Botanicula* and *Machinarium*
LOG: *Give your game some sounds. Describe them. Write about Rodgers and Whalen. Remember the user's manual. And your title.* Sounds are probably my favourite parts of games, but you need not share this sentiment. I'm just asking you to prototype some sound effects and music for one scene in your game. Feel free to work with an existing bundle/library if you wish. That is, you don't need to invent your own sounds or make your own music. Once you have the sounds, you should sync them with the visuals in your scene (consider using your UI wireframe here). Please document this scene (sounds and all) and include all components (audio and all) in your log. Use ~250 words to describe the scene, its sounds, and their relation to your -ism. Alongside these new sounds, put arguments by Rodgers and Whalen in your own words and include two questions for seminar discussion. Also, you might want to start thinking about a title for your game as well as the composition of your user's manual, which is due in December. For now, I recommend looking for examples from existing games (including tabletop games and early console games) and determining some key elements (both aesthetic and instructional) you'd need to include in such a manual. And hey, if your group hasn't yet met with me to discuss your work (see the consultation component of your prototype), then either drop by during office hours or make an appointment.

WEEK 11 (NOV 16): LOADING . . .
Some prompts to ask yourself when you're trying to brainstorm fun game mechanics: What's the strongest, loveliest, funniest memory you have? How might you build a system that communicates that feeling? -- Jane Friedhoff, "Finding the Fun"

You're between scenes this week. There's no reading, no games, and no workshop. During this meeting, we'll develop, fine-tune, and playtest your prototypes.

LOG: *Carry on.* I don't have any specific instructions for this week's log entry. Just continue to develop your prototype and include documentation and sample material in your log. Thank you!

WEEK 12 (NOV 23): LABOUR + DISTRIBUTION
We need to ask whether or not games truly empower players to understand the systems they purport to describe. -- merritt k, "What Are Games Good For?"
We'll spend most of this meeting discussing the relationships between games, attention economics, digital labour (see Nakamura), and empire (see Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter). We'll also chat about how, if at all, you'd distribute or circulate your games, looking at Itch, GitHub, and other services as possibilities alongside Steam, consoles, and the like. Here, we might return to the notion of games as zines. Who is

your audience? How is your work attributed? Who gets compensated, and how? Who plays, and under what conditions?

WORKSHOP: Whether/how to circulate your prototypes (Itch + GitHub)
READ: Lisa Nakamura's "Dont Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in World of Warcraft" + Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter's introduction to *Games of Empire*
PLAY (some games about/around issues of digital labour): Nicky Case's *Nothing to Hide* + Molleindustria's *Unmanned* and *To Build a Better Mousetrap* + Vince de Vera, Jason Garner, and Klei's *Don't Starve*
LOG: *Keep carrying on. Note your approaches to attribution and distribution. Write about Nakamura and Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter.* Please continue to develop your prototype and include documentation and sample material in your log. With this material, please note how, if at all, you'd distribute your game. Online? Steam? Consoles? Sneakernet? Email? And also mention how you'd attribute the labour involved in your game's design and development. Through a list of individual contributors and contributions? As a collective? As a brand or formal entity? Once you've made these decisions, please use ~250 words to describe their relation to your -ism's stance on attribution and distribution. And together with it all, share arguments by Nakamura and Witheford and de Peuter in your own words alongside two specific questions you have about their research.

WEEK 13 (NOV 30): OPEN THE ARCADE
We must take seriously the vulnerability that comes with communications—not so that we simply condemn or accept all vulnerability without question but so that we might work together to create vulnerable systems with which we can live.-- Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom*

It's time to present your prototype for an audience on campus. We'll call this event "Open the Arcade" for now, and we'll invite people from across UVic and Victoria to attend. Looking forward to it!

PLAY: Your prototype!
LOG: *Polish, play, and test your prototype. Prep and rehearse a presentation about it.* Your group presentation should last ~10 minutes, and you should make your prototype available for your audience to play. With the prototype and presentation, you should also include a "one-sheet," which I'll describe during seminar. Before the big day, I recommend rehearsing and timing your presentations in your groups. Not everyone in your group needs to present (e.g., perhaps some people present while others cook up the presentation materials and fine-tune the prototype); however, you might want to avoid letting one person speak for the entire time. In your presentation materials, feel free to use video, audio, and images in addition to text. And if you'd like me to review your presentation materials in advance, then just say. I'm happy to provide feedback as long as you submit material 48 hours prior to the presentation day.

SOMETHING'S DUE: Your log and presentation materials are due this week. Your log should include all of your entries from this term. Your presentation materials should include your one-sheet, slides, and anything else you used in the presentation itself.

WEEK 15 (DEC 14): TO BE CONTINUED . . .
Anyone can make a game if you make them try. -- Amanda Phillips, "Gaming the System"

The game is not done, but the term is coming to an end. Between Week 13 and Week 15, feel free to drop a line with any questions you have about your prototype and user's manual. During this time, I also encourage you to playtest your prototype with people who are not in our seminar.

SOMETHING'S DUE: Your prototype, user's manual, and statement are due this week. Feel free to submit the prototype and statement via email; however, you'll probably need to submit the manual in person or via my department box. Thanks again!

~ THE END ~