Analysis Project
GAM 224, Prof. Robin Burke
Spring 2005
Grade value: 30%

What is it:
Each student will perform an in-depth analysis of a single game title resulting in a three game analysis papers: one each on the dimensions of Rules, Play and Culture. Each paper will be approximately 5 pages (1200 words). This assignment will require substantial play-time with the title, sufficient to master basic game play and to encounter most of the game's components. (Playing the game all the way through would be ideal but not practical for most titles.) The paper on culture will require research into the game's community presence: fan sites, FAQ files, etc.

Milestones:

• 4/11: Submit (using Course On-Line – http://dlweb.cti.depaul.edu/) your choice of game for your game analysis paper. Type the name of the game into the "comment" box that appears for "Analysis Project Milestone #1", you do not need to upload a document. Indicate if the game is not one owned by the CTI Game Lab.

• 5/2: "Rules" paper due (submit hard copy in class)

• 5/16: "Play" paper due (submit hard copy in class)

• 6/1: "Culture" paper due (submit hard copy in class)

Hints

• Be disciplined. Game play should only be about a quarter of the time you spend on this assignment, but it is easy to get "sucked in" by the game. If necessary, set a timer for 5-10 minutes, pause the game and take a break to take notes. Even if you are familiar with the game, do not rely on your memory – take notes during or immediately after game play.

• These are formal papers and must be adequately documented. (See Footnoting section below.) You must cite in your footnotes all references used, including FAQs or strategy guides you used to play the game. If your paper includes an idea that is not original to you, such as the impressions of a game reviewer, you must provide a citation even if you rephrase what was said. Papers that are not adequately documented will be returned ungraded for a rewrite.

• Your paper must have a thesis, a claim for which it is arguing, and an argument, statements supported by evidence that argue for the thesis. You cannot do this if you simply take the schemas from each chapter of the book and write something about each one. A paper that lacks a clear and supported thesis will be returned ungraded for a rewrite.

Example thesis statement ("Play" category):
"Chainsaw Chipmunks attempts in some ways to parody the fighting genre, but it is ultimately unsuccessful, due to excessive gore and lack of variety in opponents and tactics."
A paper written to support this thesis would be organized around these points.
**Rubric:**

* A = Exceptional
  - Reflects unusually thorough and comprehensive understanding of the game analysis schemas.
  - Analyzes, evaluates, and synthesizes evidence very effectively.
  - Presents a clearly articulated thesis and highly persuasive argument that is probing, creative and nuanced.
  - Reaches highly informed conclusions based on the evidence.
  - Includes all of the most relevant and significant supporting evidence.
  - Contains no factual inaccuracies.
  - Is very well focused and organized.
  - Is very well written and proofread with few to no errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, etc.
  - Is very well documented with no errors or omissions in citation.
  - Employs a mature vocabulary, is highly attentive to word choice, and uses metaphors effectively.

* B = Commendable
  - Reflects clear understanding of the game analysis schemas.
  - Analyzes, evaluates, and synthesizes evidence effectively.
  - Presents a clearly identifiable thesis and defensible argument.
  - Reaches informed conclusions based on the evidence.
  - Includes relevant and significant supporting evidence.
  - Contains only minor factual inaccuracies.
  - Is well focused and organized.
  - Is well written and proofread with few errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, etc.
  - Is well documented with few to no errors or omissions in citation.
  - Employs a relatively mature vocabulary, is attentive to word choice, and uses metaphors effectively.

* C = Competent
  - Reflects adequate understanding of the game analysis schemas.
  - Analyzes, evaluates, and synthesizes evidence somewhat effectively.
  - Presents a thesis and argument that are reasonable but unpersuasive, simplistic, superficial, or logically flawed.
  - Conclusions are reasonably well founded.
  - Includes some supporting evidence but not all of it relevant.
  - May have a major factual inaccuracy but most information is correct.
  - Demonstrates adequate focus and organization.
  - Is adequately written and proofread with some errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, etc.
  - Is adequately documented but may contain a minor errors or omissions in citation.
  - Employs a limited vocabulary and relatively unsophisticated narrative style.

* D = Limited Evidence of Achievement
  - Reflects poor understanding of the game analysis schemas.
  - Ineffectively analyzes, evaluates, and synthesizes evidence.
  - Thesis and argument are unclear and/or very superficial.
  - Reaches incomplete or inaccurate conclusions based on the evidence.
  - Omits most of the relevant evidence and includes information that is largely inaccurate.
  - Demonstrates inadequate focus and organization.
  - Is poorly written and proofread with many errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, etc.
  - Is poorly documented with many and/or serious errors and omissions in citation.
  - Employs a limited vocabulary and unsophisticated narrative style.

* F = Minimal Evidence of Achievement
  - Work that does not adequately meet ANY of the standards set forth above, or which is exceptionally inadequate in its thesis, ideas, evidence, writing, or documentation. In particular, an essay that merely summarizes the game's characteristics with respect to the analytic schemas.
Footnoting: What, Why, When and How
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What:
A footnote is a note, comment, and/or bibliographic citation that literally appears at the foot of a page and refers to a specific part of the text on the page. A footnote is sometimes also referred to as a reference. A footnote is said to cite a source.

Why:
Footnotes are essential for two major reasons:
1. By means of footnotes, the student acknowledges and identifies all the works of other people used to produce an essay. All sources need to be identified. Such attribution is particularly important in questions of copyright infringement and plagiarism.
2. Second, footnoting is essential because it provides the reader with an opportunity to assess and to verify the accuracy and the authority of any statements, assertions, ideas, or concepts that appear in an essay. In this sense, documentation serves as both proof and evidence. It also provides the reader with a convenient means of finding more information about your topic.

When:
You should footnote any fact or opinion that you read in one of your sources, whether you first discovered the idea there or you have assimilated it so thoroughly that it seems to be your own. Some exceptions to the rule are facts that are common knowledge (for example, that computers use binary logic), facts that can be verified easily and do not differ from one source to another (for example, that Katamari Damacy was released in 2004), and well-known sayings or proverbs. Acknowledgement of credit through documentation does not diminish the originality of your work. Your contribution consists of imposing your own order on your materials and drawing an original conclusion from them. Documentation allows your reader to see the materials you used to reach your conclusions, to check your interpretations of sources, to place your work in the tradition of inquiry, and to locate further information on your topic.
A footnote that identifies the source of material is required in four situations:
- direct quotations, even excerpts
- paraphrased or summarized presentation of original or unique ideas (indirect quotes)
- quantifiable data (facts and statistics)
- visual material, both content and design

In addition, you should footnote:
- a fact that is not well known, even within a discipline.
- a fact that is contradictory to other facts or suppositions.
- a fact that is obscure or difficult for the reader to verify.
- verify specific pieces of information that bear directly upon important points or arguments.
- verify facts brought in from other disciplines.
- any opinions and ideas not your own.

How:

In this class, we will employ the Humanities style of footnoting as spelled out in the Chicago Manual of Style. Some specific examples follow. Additional advice can be found at the University of Wisconsin website: http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html and from the DePaul University Writing Center.

Let’s say that you want to include a quote from a book:

"An RPG can tell a much more complex and involved story than an action/adventure game, and in turn an action/adventure can tell a more substantial story than an arcade shooter."\(^2\)

Whenever you use a source for the first time, you always need to include a full citation. But if later in the essay you use other material from a previously cited work – perhaps you paraphrase Rouse's description of a game's "focus" as the most crucial part of the design – you can simplify the citation.\(^3\)

If you draw on your lecture notes, you also need to cite the source.\(^4\) Likewise, if you take material from an article, you need to cite it, introducing the author or authors in your narrative as the source of the information you are including:

As game scholar Gonzalo Frasca notes "most games force players to simply walk or run to their objective. GTA3’s great achievement was to allow the player to do what most people with lousy jobs do: turn their dull activities into a game."\(^5\)

If you need to refer to a game itself:

The character Chris Johnson gets out of jail to find himself in trouble again back home in San Andreas, a thinly-disguised California.\(^6\)

Finally, if you think you should include some material drawn from an online review:

A simulation strategy always leaves open the possibility of a glitch that will allow players to gain unrealistic advantage through omissions in the simulation code. For example, the ability to rob the same house over and over again in GTA: San Andreas.\(^7\)

\(^2\) Richard Rouse III, Game Design Theory and Practice, 2nd ed. (Plano, TX: Wordware Publishing). Ch. 3.
\(^3\) Rouse, Ch. 5.
\(^4\) Robin Burke, Lecture, DePaul University, 7 February 2005.
\(^6\) Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas Rockstar Games, 2004, Playstation 2.