

Analysis Assignment

Videogame Theory & Analysis Course

Monday Night Game Lab

Each Monday night in lab, up to five students will present moments in their games to the rest of the class. These presentations should meet and often exceed the expectations laid out below. Undergraduate students will be expected to complete this assignment three times throughout the semester; graduate students will present more often.

Goals and Expectations

This analysis assignment is meant to give you practice and experience with presenting your theories, analyses, and ideas to a friendly audience. It is my hope that as you read and consider the materials we discuss during the week, you will begin to connect those ideas to your experiences with your game. If there are particularly interesting moments, ideas, concepts, happenings, etc. with your game that you think are relevant to class discussions, readings, and course materials, you are encouraged to sign up for a Monday night analysis. You will then bring your game (or recorded moment in the game) to class and present your analysis in lab.

Analyses can be either a close reading of a particular moment in a game or else a broader (but focused) discussion of a particular game rule, narrative structure, character model, social phenomenon, etc. that you consider relevant and meaningful. For example, you may wish to present the WoW community's reactions and dealings with Chinese farmers; or the way that Halo's tutorial level expertly teaches players the game's "design grammar" (Gee) in a safe way; or perhaps you want to show KoToR's innovations with game ethics. Whatever your choice, you are free (indeed, encouraged) to discuss it with me first so that I can help you focus the presentation.

Logistics and Parameters

You are responsible for recording and preparing the moment in your game that you are analyzing. For help, ask friends, colleagues, others in the class.

You are required to provide a handout to go along with your presentation. The handout can be in the form of a short paper, a multimedia video, a transcript of an in-game discussion or interaction, an outline of a longer paper you'll write for your midterm and/or final project, etc. Presentations should take about 20-30 minutes.

Presentations should reference and connect to readings in the course.

Presentations are conducted individually, but you may consult others in your preparation and collaborate with others who are playing your same game or have experience with your topic. Presentations are not necessarily arguments for your particular approach to your game; instead, they should take the form of analyses, connecting theory to the text or experience you're examining. Tell us what you notice, what you observe, what's interesting to you and for what reasons. Criticism and arguments will begin to form later in the semester, but toward the beginning, we're just looking for focused, detailed observations, themes, and connections between reading and gameplay.

Evaluation Criteria

Analyses will be evaluated according to the following:

- ❑ Your ability to connect an idea or concept brought up in class and/or through the theories presented in the reading and show how your game reflects, complicates, enhances, or demonstrates a topic from game studies.
- ❑ Your detail with regard to the moment or topic of your presentation. These should be tight, focused, in-depth analyses of particular moments or game phenomena. I'll be looking for evidence that you've thought critically about the game moment/phenomenon you've chosen to present.
- ❑ Clarity and polish of the presentation and handout.

I will provide you with written feedback and a final grade on your presentation. Students are encouraged to consult with me prior to and following an analysis, as each of these presentations should be considered a possible springboard toward future work in the course.

It is my hope that as you work through your analyses presentations you'll use them as an opportunity to brainstorm and think through ideas for your final project. I imagine that you will use these presentations as an opportunity to apply what knowledge you've gained from reading and discussing the game theory we read. Evaluations will ultimately based on how well you show your ability to connect your reading to your gameplay experiences.