

# Final Games and Learning Portfolio

INTE 5320

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# Annotations

Throughout “games and learning” I was involved in many peer to peer conversations through [Hypothesis](#). This software allows public and private groups to annotate and create threads of thought based off of literature. Our class was heavily involved in the use of this platform to facilitate conversations regarding our weekly readings. The following is a reflection and summary of my own interactions with the Hypothesis threads, the readings, and the class itself.

The screenshot displays two side-by-side panels of Hypothesis annotations. The left panel shows a thread starting with a post by **justinmbale** on Jan 22, discussing the communal nature of gaming. Below it, a reply by **isarambre** on Jan 22 questions the definition of games versus puzzles. Further down, a reply by **remikalir** on Jan 23 clarifies that the discussion is about puzzles, not games. The right panel shows a post by **PaulaVK** on Jan 23, which includes a quote about real-time gaming and a discussion on engagement versus addiction. Below this, a reply by **justinmbale** on May 2 elaborates on the difference between engagement and addiction. At the bottom, a reply by **remikalir** on Jan 25 asks about the relationship between 'real time' and 'persistent gaming'.

**justinmbale** Jan 22  
INTE 4/5320 S18  
In a way gaming is by its essence communal. You need players to play or it is just a set of empty rules and instructions. You need people to create the game, and while creating the game are thinking about how other people will play and interact with it. At it's essence it is human behavior study.

**isarambre** Jan 22  
INTE 4/5320 S18  
Your point certainly is good but, what about the games for one person like solitary or sudoku, a giant 2000 pieces puzzle? arent these games? The rules are set, so who created these games? Why create games if you are going to play by yourself?

**remikalir** Jan 23  
INTE 4/5320 S18  
But these are puzzles, not games. I point I discuss in my introductory chapter we're reading this week.

**PaulaVK** Jan 23  
INTE 4/5320 S18  
*All of this is done in real time. While the player builds up his or her civilization, other players (or the computer representing other players) are building up theirs as well.*  
This type of persistent gaming makes such a huge difference in my opinion, it creates a sense of urgency and requires immediate action. It is more active gaming rather than passive, which leads to strong engagement I think.

participation

Hide replies (2)

**justinmbale** May 2  
INTE 4/5320 S18  
As I read your comment I was thinking ADDICTIVE. You really want to click the next turn. This got me thinking about engagement vs addiction. What is the difference? Isn't engagement getting someone addicted to something? Engagement leads to something positive while addiction is negative? Seems to be a thin line.....

participation

**remikalir** Jan 25  
INTE 4/5320 S18  
So there's a relationship between Gee's notion of "real time" and persist gaming? If so, what's - hypothetically - non-persistent gaming?

In the beginning my annotation conversations were focused on the very basics of gaming and learning. This included a heavy emphasis in trying to understand the terminology used around games and learning. Here you can see the beginning of this understanding in trying to clarify what actually is a game. There are also preliminary thoughts of what is engagement and the subtle differences between addiction. I

remember forming a basic understanding of what is meant by games and learning. Coming into the class I was thinking this was perhaps a class in game design, or along the lines of gamification. I quickly realized that we would be exploring games and learning from a different perspective. We would be tearing apart games, and learning, and analyzing which pieces work together and which do not.

rochhamp

Jan 29

INTE 4/5320 S18

*problem solving spaces that are meant to engage players.*

This is a fine balance depending on who you are. I played Skip-Bo with a group of students and did not think it offered much in the way of problem solving, however I have played board games where I have not been able to follow the explanation of the rules and have given up.

participation

Hide replies (2)

justinmbale

May 2

INTE 4/5320 S18

The question seems to boil down to - is this a matter of solving the problem of figuring out the game?, or is a space created that legitimately affords a unique learning opportunity? Being complex for complexities sake often leads to this experience you describe. Being complex and leading to a higher understanding is rewarding.

facilitation

remikalir

Feb 5

INTE 4/5320 S18

This is a really interesting distinction - between solving problems and figuring out the game... I think we'll be able to continue parsing this distinction throughout the semester.

justinmbale

May 2

INTE 4/5320 S18

I will take a chance at clarifying here. They are intertwined in a way, but there are subtle differences.

A game economy is formed in multiplayer online games where things are bought and sold, usually through some sort of auction house or built in tool of the game. Players place value (in digital game currency) on certain items based on supply and demand and how long it takes to procure these items. I.e a rabbit pelt took me 30 seconds to procure, it is worth a single gold. The ultimate sword of destiny takes 1000 hours to unlock and is worth 1 million gold.

A meta game is as gee states "the game beyond the game". Or some may prefer "the game within the game". It is a snap shot of how people are currently playing the game. This consists of a combination of items/tools/strategies/techniques/characters, usually crowd sourced, that operate as the given way people are choosing the play the game at that time. This usually means the combination of the things that are considered the best at that time, and is certainly always in flux. There are many differing strategies, and these battling strategies produce the meta game.

This resulting meta game will impact the game economy and vice versa. If people think the ultimate sword of destiny will make their party the strongest, its price will be reflected in the games economy. If the community figures out that there is a battle axe, when used in a certain combination, that beats the ultimate sword of destiny, then the swords price will tank, and the axe's price will skyrocket.

facilitation

Less

remikalir

Feb 12

INTE 4/5320 S18

This is a really helpful distinction. We can also draw a connection to Stevens and colleagues' ethnography and their description of play as situated "in world." There's a strong connection between the "meta game" and game play "in world."

The next major piece of understanding games and learning came through studying affinity spaces. These spaces around games provide tremendous learning opportunities. The annotation discussions around this time reflect these attempts to

understand affinity spaces. This was an aspect of games that I had not realized provided such learning potential. I also came to a realization that I have been participating in affinity spaces since I was young and did not even know it. The conversations revolved around making distinctions between various terms used within games and these spaces.

**briannetrout**  
Feb 10  
INTE 4/5320 S18

*as long as we work for the sake of play, or play for the sake of work*

Do you think the saying "love what you do and you never have to work a day in your life" applies?

facilitation

Hide replies (4)

**hfouse**  
Feb 17  
INTE 4/5320 S18

I read the part "we work for the sake of play" more like we work to pay for our enjoyment - and then they go on to say if we're not enjoying the experience (cherish each for the excellence we find in it), we're not really living life (living the false life). If we live the good life, then we are transforming how we perceive and experience our situations to work for us, finding joy and meaning in them. That is how I interpreted this section.

participation

**dms36963** 1 reply  
Feb 17  
INTE 4/5320 S18

**justinmbale**  
May 2  
INTE 4/5320 S18

The authors are framing play as the ultimate embodiment of eudaimonia. Under this framework, the activity must encompass its own end. You must play for the sake of playing and its own intrinsic reward. Conversely you must work for its own specific rewards. These are separate and if we treat work like play and play like work - we are missing out. The closer we can align our work with play(something we chose to do that brings joy) and can make our play like work (with focus, mastery, needs) the closer we will get to this realization of the "good life".

**delraeholt**  
Feb 10  
INTE 4/5320 S18

we a

Has anyone had experience with Scratch? My google research tells me: Scratch is a free visual programming language and online community used by millions of children around the world.

facilitation

Hide replies (6)

**lauraseward**  
Feb 17  
INTE 4/5320 S18

Through Scratch, users can learn coding in a fun, guided way.

**delraeholt** 1 reply  
Feb 18  
INTE 4/5320 S18

**smroloff**  
Feb 22  
INTE 4/5320 S18

My son started using scratch when he was about 8 and as he has had interest and projects he wanted to develop he has continued to play with it. It is pretty simple to use and understand.

**justinmbale**  
May 2  
INTE 4/5320 S18

If you are interested in what Scratch looks like in action, [here is one I created a while back](#). You should just have to hit play. If you click the "see inside" button you can see the code blocks used to build it.

participation

**delraeholt**  
Feb 25  
INTE 4/5320 S18

Wonderful! I will definitely check this out.

These conversations continued with a dive into gamification and a clarification of exactly what is meant by the term. These readings and conversations were very impactful on



my overall understanding of games and learning. Many of my own opinions and theories were formulated through breaking down what gamification is and what was intended to be. It was particularly insightful reading about how these tactics on their own are rarely successful in the education realm. In my own personal experience I harbored these same feelings and was reaffirmed. Experiences need to be intrinsically rewarding, badges and leaderboards on their own are not enough. In another thread I felt like I was able to offer some additional value to the class by sharing a Scratch example I had created. The class was wondering about the program based on what we were reading and I was able to contribute in a direct manner.

smroloff

Mar 5

INTE 4/5320 S18

He needed to grow up.

The last part of this is a beautiful eloquent rant. I appreciate the writing for the attempt at raw honesty and persuasion. However, like most rants, it's a little short on solution. "growing up" is not a viable solution to a pervasive systemic issue... though I appreciate the sentiment.

participation

Hide replies (2)

justinmbale

May 2

INTE 4/5320 S18

What is not given freely by choice is the genetic, internal, desire to breed that every organism in the universe is born with. If you are born with a desire to procreate, yet are rejected by everyone it can lead to these types of feelings. We have 7 billion people on the earth, I can see why the trend is to get more picky. It should get more picky. To blindly throw all men into some bucket that "isn't worth a damn" is just false and actually perpetuates all of things he is decrying. Men are wired a certain way (a way that by the way has kept us here this long). This wiring may be now out of date and seem no longer necessary but it has gotten us this far. You are here right now because of this wiring. Saying we need to grow up is so off the mark it actually infuriates me. We need to evolve, there is a difference. Evolution comes as a species, not a few dudes "growing up". We need to understand that there area a lot of people on this planet now and procreation is not the end all be all of existence. It is no longer something that has to be achieved to be a "real man" or a "real woman". That our contributions to society come in ways that aren't merely passing your genetic makeup down the line.

Isn't this the general argument with free speech? You have to ask yourself which way you want it though. Do you want to allow people to say whatever, inevitably leading to people saying offensive things to other people, or do you dictate people not use certain words and we all become thought police. As a nation we pretty much decided that we like the former over the latter a while back. Are we now reaching a tipping point where we start legislating how people talk to one another? Obviously these posts are offensive, but they actually give me hope because there is not much activity in them. I can see what some specific peoples opinions and thoughts are and figure out if they align with my own. I can also realize that this is a niche opinion. What would be truly sad if these were main level ideas promoted by the site and had thousands of upvotes and your friends were telling you you need to join them because they are very insightful. It does make me sad that some people have these feelings, but personally I am glad to live in a place where people can speak their minds, and I can make my own decisions on how big of idiots they are for myself.

participation

Hide replies (2)

rochhamp

Mar 14

INTE 4/5320 S18

I agree. I was thinking the same when reading through this. Would you want to live somewhere you can't post what you want? Everyone has strong beliefs and opinions that will upset someone, and while the harassment has gone too far in these examples, the question still remains.

participation

sbowden

Mar 14

INTE 4/5320 S18

This is something that I am split on as well. I'm not aware of how often and how many people are on these subreddits, but I wonder if they get called out or if it makes a difference. Free speech is something I think we need to be very sensitive to, and the line between banning something and not banning it falls on the creators of the service. If they have that much power, it could be even more damaging. I think we need to be aware that this speech exists and educate about how to confront it. People who are hateful should not be allowed to think it's ok, but banning it doesn't seem to be the answer.

Throughout the gamergate readings I was forced to challenge many of my own assumptions and beliefs. I felt strongly against most of what I was reading mainly because it felt like an attack on geeky men. In the end being forced to look at these issues through fresh eyes did shake up my understanding. I felt like there were many contradictions throughout the gamergate readings and tried to express this through the comments. In the end being forced to look at these issues through fresh eyes did shake up my understanding. There are access and fair use issues that exist which prevent people from playing games and joining gaming spaces.




tochinamp

Apr 6

INTE 4/5320 S18

I think the main part of bringing games into learning is that students are becoming more active in there learning. Repeating information for fact memorization is not learning. We need to use the massive amount of knowledge we now have access to.

participation






hfouse

Apr 7

INTE 4/5320 S18

I really like how you state this, and I agree. They are definitely more active in their learning while playing a video game than sitting there listening to a lecture of how to do a math problem.

facilitation







justinmbale

May 2

INTE 4/5320 S18

This kind of reads to me as -we like playing games better and learn better from them, but we know this is still educational and we are being forced to do so-. It is human nature to be turned off to anything we are being forced into.

participation



justinmbale

Apr 8

INTE 4/5320 S18

As a side note, you ever notice the best teachers/leaders convince you into taking on tasks that you "want to". They have an ability to mind trick you into believing their will is your self directed motivation.

isarambre




Apr 13

INTE 4/5320 S18

multiple perspectives

This is great! at this age for them being able to understand other sides of the story gives them so much power in how to process the information outside, this is more than a learning activity is an entire life experience, shouldn't learning has to be this way all the time?

participation



Hide replies (2)





justinmbale

May 2

INTE 4/5320 S18

Also a subtle reminder that these issues are complex and many times is no perfect answer. If everyone had these types of lessons in empathy perhaps we would be in a better place as people.

participation



dms36963

Apr 17

INTE 4/5320 S18

A very important skill to learn - empathy for another persons position.

Lastly my understanding of games and learning was expanded by being exposed to various playful teaching techniques. There are many ways to make learning more playful. This includes entire courses being run as games, making courses more playful, and using emerging mobile technology to create augmented reality(AR) environments. In my opinion the AR class examples represent one of the greatest areas of teaching exploration. I am taking a personal exploration into these technologies as soon as I have free time. Expanding my understanding of what is possible through playful learning will go a long way when designing and teaching future courses.

## Summary

My understanding of games and learning has increased dramatically over this course. It started with an understanding of what games and learning are by defining the terminology. Another contributing piece came through the exploration of affinity spaces. These spaces provide tremendous opportunities to learn and develop skills outside of games. A look into gamification and discussions around this term have allowed me to solidify my own theories about games and learning. I had a preconceived notion of gamification and what was wrong with it. Our readings have strengthened my stance that learning experiences need to be intrinsically rewarding. Badges and leaderboards are not enough on their own, people have to want to keep progressing. Through reading the gamergate material I was forced to challenge many of my own assumptions and beliefs. While I felt strongly against most of what I was reading, it did shake up my understanding of games and learning. Not everyone has equitable access to games and the spaces around them. The last way in which my understanding has changed through these reading discussions was through exploring playful teaching techniques. These range from classes designed as games themselves to augmented reality phone applications. In many ways this may be the most important lesson. There are interesting and emerging methods of blending learning and play. It is up to us as educators to be brave enough to test them.

## Play Journals

[Magic: The Gathering](#)

I have chosen the following two play journals as representative of my understanding of games and learning. I initially made the decision to write about Magic: The Gathering because to me it exemplifies the purest example of a learning game. I have stayed engaged with the game for twenty years and have learned the most from playing it. Not only have I learned a lot from playing magic cards, I feel that this writing embodies the core sentiment of this course. This first journal takes a very in depth look at the game and everything I have learned from it.

### [Forming and Educational Gaming Theory](#)

The second journal does not actually document playing of games, it has been created almost as a summary of everything I have learned in this class. It takes lessons learned from this class combined with my own personal experiences with educational games to create an educational gaming theory. The idea was to summarize everything I have learned throughout this course in a concise manner that I can use in the future when creating educational games and content.

### Peer Feedback

<a href="#"><u>Laura Rose Forman</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Nicolette VanDelinder</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Hethyr Fouse</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>David Sampson</u></a>

These reviews expanded my understanding of games and learning by exposing me to a variety of different games that I have never seen before. Viewing these games through the lense of my classmates eyes has provided insight into their learning processes. I have been able to peer into their experiences and what they have learned from playing. One particular journal that stands out was Laura Rose's who documented a very interesting game titled "bring your own book" that I had never heard of before. I thought she did a fantastic job of highlighting the unique learning experience created by this game. In many ways her experience highlights the unique learning opportunity created through games and play. She was also very responsive to my questions and through this process I think we were able to both solidify our understanding. This experience and journal commentary has lead to a greater understanding of games and play in my own life. I also believe this is a great example of a high quality exchange between myself and peers. While some reviews were more impactful than others, I believe I was



able to offer some unique perspective to each. Most of my peers also took the opportunity to respond to my comments and feedback which has contributed to our overall understanding of learning.

## Affinity Space

[Madden 3 v 3 Affinity Space Project](#)

[Reflection Video](#)

In my experience affinity spaces create relationships with a purpose. The key difference is the guiding interest and passion. Where other relationships may be forged by personality or blood, these are defined by self guided interests. Relationships are formed for the purpose of getting better and push each other to do so. We have enhanced our knowledge of the game and transformed the game experience itself. My exploration into affinity spaces has proven just how valuable they might be to learning. Friends and relationships are built through people finding each other in like spaces. Fostering individual interests and providing purpose go a long way in unique learning experiences. Affinity spaces are gateways to relationships with a purpose. Find their interests, and give them purpose!

## Peer Feedback

<a href="#">BriAnne Trout</a>	<a href="#">Shanna Bowden</a>	<a href="#">DelRae Holt</a>
<a href="#">Dustin Pettit</a>	<a href="#">Oliver Batchelor</a>	<a href="#">Debbie Webley-Smith</a>

These affinity space explorations offered a great opportunity to take a deep dive into places we might not normally see and understand. These spaces create unique learning experiences and everyone of my classmates did an excellent job of breaking them down. While some of the spaces might not be considered true affinity spaces, the process of exploring and coming to these conclusions have lead to a greater understanding of games and learning as a whole. I really enjoyed viewing each of their

journeys through these spaces and the main takeaways. I also learned a great deal from my own affinity space experience. I have been a member of spaces like this all my life but never realized how much I was learning (and teaching) by participating in them. As I move throughout my own teaching career I will attempt to incorporate as many of these affinity space features in my classes as I can. The biggest takeaway I have with affinity spaces as they relate to teaching is that interest driven motivation is a very powerful tool. Instead of discouraging students from their interests, try finding a way to incorporate them. Again, find their interests, give them purpose!

## Proposal

Over the last few months I have taken a deep dive into games and learning. How people learn from games, what they learn from games, and the best methods for doing so. This has been a self driven interest of my own for some time. How does one create educational games? Is it possible to make games that are still fun, but that you can also learn something along the way? In response to these questions I have formulated [my own educational gaming theory](#) to guide just this sort of task. I am currently designing a video game based on these principles. I will use and expand upon this framework as I create games and learning experiences in the future. I believe you can make any existing learning experience more playful.

I teach after school technology courses online through the Silicon STEM Academy. With this theory in mind I have recently made a small change to my classes with the idea of making this learning experience more playful. Watching other people type code across a screen is not always the most interesting passage of time. To create a sense of engagement, competition, creativity, and personal interest I offered my students a challenge. “The next student who is willing to share their working code to the class gets to pick my background image”. This simple “game” was to offer some additional motivation to help their classmates. While not revolutionary, turning our nightly activities into a game immediately generated more interest in the lesson. Normally I would have to prompt students for answers, under these circumstances they were trying to jump each other in line. This enthusiasm seems to increase each time we do it as now the students are aware of the power involved. They get to make me look as silly as they want for a class. This simple example speaks to my larger goal of making all future learning experiences more playful.