Final Games and Learning Portfolio

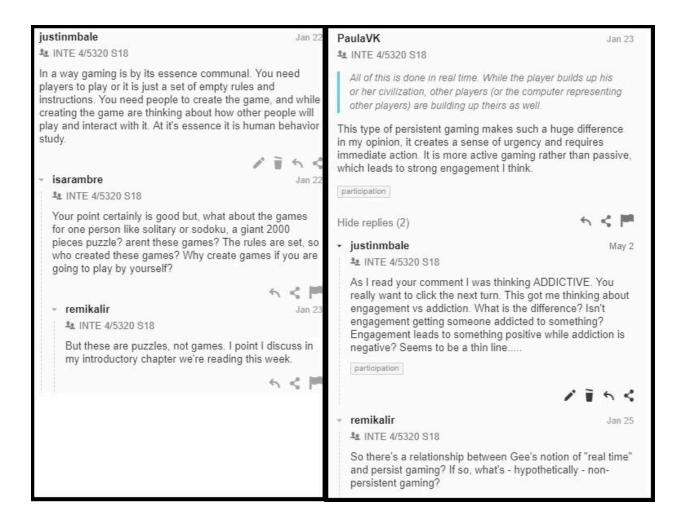
INTE 5320

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Annotations

Throughout "games and learning" I was involved in many peer to peer conversations through <u>Hypothesis</u>. 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.



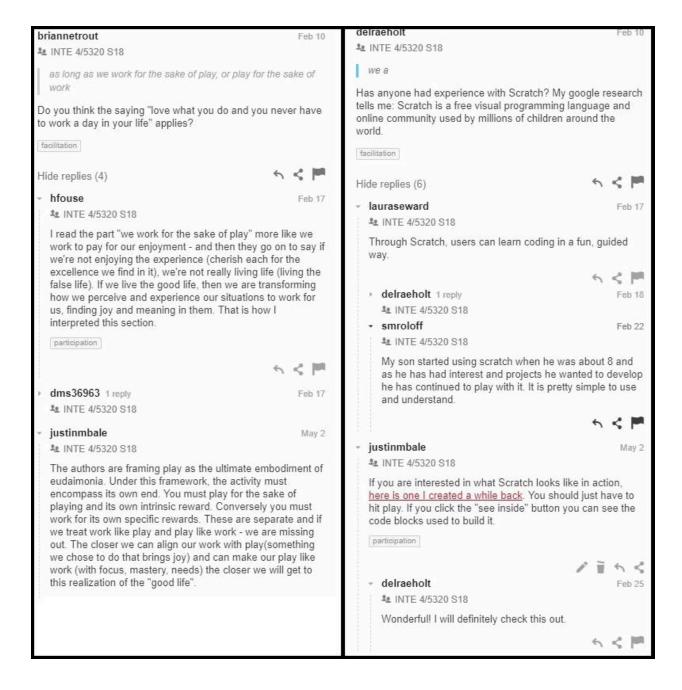
In the beginning my annotation conversations were focused on the very basics of gaming and learning. This included a heavy emphasis in trying to understand the terminology used around games and learning. Here you can see the beginning of this understanding in trying to clarify what actually is a game. 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.



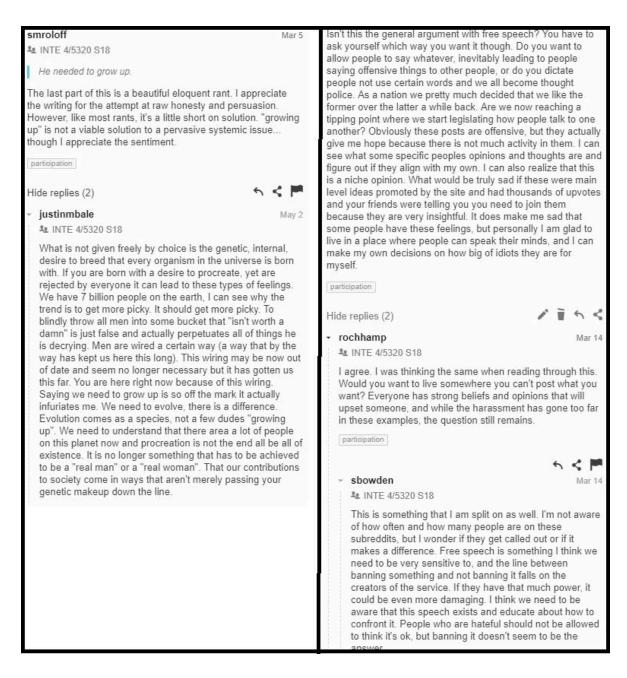
The next major piece of understanding games and learning came through studying affinity spaces. These spaces around games provide tremendous learning opportunities. The annotation discussions around this time reflect these attempts to

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.

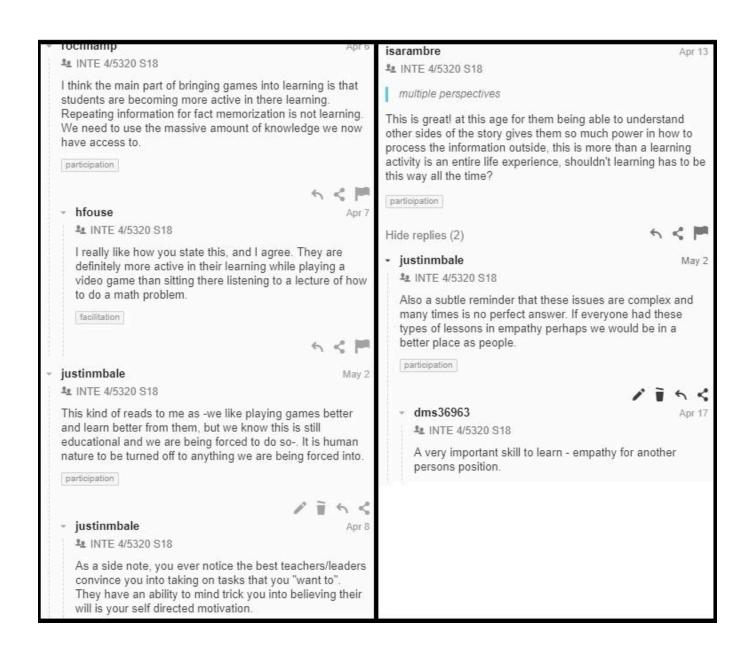


These conversations continued with a dive into gamification and a clarification of exactly what is meant by the term. These readings and conversations were very impactful on

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.



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.



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

Laura Rose Forman	Nicolette VanDelinder
Hethyr Fouse	David Sampson

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

BriAnne Trout	Shanna Bowden	DelRae Holt
<u>Dustin Pettit</u>	Oliver Batchelor	Debbie Webley-Smith

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.