

HP6: Rules-Reading, and 4 Game Critiques

A. Rules-Reading Assignment

Due: Mon Oct 14

Read the rules to the boardgame *Primordial Soup*, found in your class INFO folder. Be ready for a quiz on the due-date.

External Resources: see the [Primordial Soup page at BGG](#) for images or other resources if necessary.

B. 3 Computer-Game Critiques

Due: Mon Oct 21

Imagine you are a game-publisher to whom four games have been submitted for possible publication. It is your task to provide a critique for each, in order to help the top decision-makers decide how publishing resources should be spent.

Assignment: Write up a game design critique for the short, free games listed below.

Note that a critique is not so much a review (although it can contain review elements such as evaluations of gameplay, “fun-ness” and playability) but rather a placing of the game into an appropriate context within which it may be judged. For example, the following three-step process may be useful in generating a reasonable game critique:

1. Describe the game’s formal elements (i.e. the properties we’ve been discussing in the Powerpoint lectures these past two weeks). For example, what are the resources that players have at their disposal? Do not interpret at this point, but simply state what is there.
2. Describe the results of the formal elements when put in motion (i.e. *Dynamics* -- interactions which ultimately make up the player’s experience). How do the elements interact? Is it effective? Is it fun?
3. Try to understand why the designer chose those elements and not others. Why this particular player structure, and why that set of resources? What kind of player is this game made attractive to? What might you change to attract a different kind of gamer – and especially, what changes could be made to make this game attractive to you, in particular?
4. Finally, compare the games to each other, highlighting their relative strengths and faults, and any points of commonality.

Three Free Games:

- a. The Writer Will Do Something: <http://mrwasteland.itch.io/twwds>
(Play Tip: click on the words!)
- b. ZType: <http://phoboslab.org/ztype/>
- c. Unsolicited: (FLASH game) <http://dukope.com/play.php?g=uns>

d. ~~World of Goo (download the free demo)~~ **do Part C (below) instead**

~~https://store.steampowered.com/app/22000/World_of_Goo/~~

~~<http://2dboy.com/games.php>~~ (no longer has free demo download link?)

*FLASH games may not run well in Chrome -- I run them in Firefox

Further questions to consider:

- Should this really be considered a game? Support your claim.
- What is/are the challenge(s)?
- Do you feel you have control over the arc of the narrative as the game is played? Are there meaningful decisions to be made? What are they?
- Is this game an example of *procedural rhetoric*? If so, what point is it trying to make?
- To whom is this game targeted? Who will find this fun? What are the "fun" elements for this audience?

Each critique should be about one page in length.

C. **Amoebas.EXE Critique**

Due: Mon Oct 21

With a *second* player from class, play the "Amoebas.EXE" game twice, as though you are a game publisher to whom this prototype has been sent for consideration for eventual publication and distribution. Add this report to your own critiques from B above to turn in on the same due date.

Amoeba Puddle

Copy the following Windows file from the course INFO/Primordial_Soup/AmPuddle folder to a Windows computer:

EXE file: ***amoebas.exe***

Generate a Game Design Critique for each game as though you were the videogame publisher to whom this was submitted. Address the following questions in your report:

1. This is essentially a boardgame. Does/Would it benefit from being given a computer implementation?
2. What are the main elements to this game? What are its good points? Its tragic mis-steps?
3. What are the game-resources in this title?
4. What Mechanics are present in this game?
5. What strategies are available to players? Describe one or two of the best you find. Do any seem unbeatable? Address the replayability of this design.
6. What other Dynamics emerge from game mechanics?

7. To what extent does the ordering of the phases in each turn affect (or potentially enhance) gameplay?
8. Who is the audience for this game?
9. And most importantly, will you be able to make money by publishing it?

You may include appropriately-sized and -cropped screenshots to illustrate your points.

Turn in a printed copy of your 4-game (B-C) critique document in-class on the due-date.