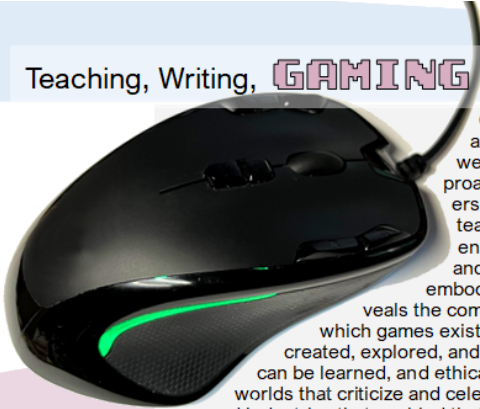


# At a Glance

## Teaching, Writing, Gaming

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### Teaching, Writing, **GAMING**



**Games are rhetorical.** In games, we read, write, and speak; we listen; we choose; we collaborate; we learn. Writers designing games learn new approaches to rhetorical and literate expression. If teachers consider the classroom or writing **as a game**, new teaching and learning possibilities emerge, ones that enable playfulness and pleasure, problem-solving and decision-making, thus emphasizing rhetorical, embodied experiences. Exploring **around games** reveals the complicated social, political, and economic domains in which games exist. Games are multimodal, rule-based systems to be created, explored, and analyzed; and in which practical writing strategies can be learned, and ethical subjectivities examined. Games represent worlds that criticize and celebrate our own, even while they reflect the cultures and industries that enabled their creation. While the scholarship of games-based pedagogy-writing-rhetoric continually evolves (rapidly!) there's a wealth of interactions between gaming and teaching available to explore. And it can be rather a lot of fun.

## **AROUND GAMES**

### **WRITING**

**Paratext:** gamers compose texts using words, sounds and videos in gaming forums and on streaming and social media platforms, in the form of reviews, walkthroughs, guides, mods, and fanfiction.

**Representation of games:** games appear in other media, in politics, in arguments, in the news ... in ways ripe for rhetorical analysis.

### **TEACHING**

**Rhetorical analysis:** investigating games as persuasive, traditionally and procedurally.

**Art:** games are multimodal, artistic artifacts used to express identity, emotion, and culture.

**Metagame:** games only operate in constructed, political spaces that enable them in the first place. In their "messy circles," the "ideological desire to distance leisure from labor, play from production, or games from life breaks down" (Boluk and Lemieux 15). (Contrast with "magic circle.")

**Ecosystems:** game spaces as "organic frameworks" that "feature both users and system agents

## **AS A GAME**

### **WRITING**

**Serio-ludic rhetoric:** writing projects that "combined playful with serious purposes and expression" (Rouzie 1), "pleasurable and sophisticated" (9).

**Magic circle:** emphasizing *play*, games exist in a "magic circle" separate from reality, as "temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart" (Huizinga 10). Playing in a magic circle can help students to *explore* writing, to envision themselves in the role of a writer, an author, an expert. (Contrast with "metagame.")

### **TEACHING**

**Gamification:** teaching writing through concepts of roleplaying and building identities, choices and optional pathways (hopefully *not* through badges).

**Emergent pedagogy:** stemming from emergent gaming (Juul 76), students are free to try various strategies while teachers adapt their approaches to accommodate.

**Social change:** examining the potential of games to represent, promote, even initiate social change.

(including non-player characters, the environments in which the actions take place, and the rules)" (Eyman 246).

# CHOOSE YOUR PATH, ADVENTURER. WILL YOU ... **GAME OVER**

- 1) ... gamify merely by adopting badges and points?
- 2) ... teach **AROUND GAMES, IN GAMES**, and **AS A GAME**?



## IN GAMES

### WRITING

**Literacy:** “explor[ing] the complexly rendered relationship between computer gaming environments and literate activity (Selfe & Hawisher 1) and assessing the influence of gaming on literacies.

**How to play:** by itself, how to play a game requires learning — which can also be part of the fun. Navigating interfaces, manipulating controls, issuing commands, interpreting data.

**Procedural rhetoric:** the “practice of using processes persuasively” (Bogost 28), persuasion facilitated through rule and system design.

**Multimodality:** writers use codes and algorithms in addition visual, aural, tactile, and/or textual elements when composing.

**Ergodic literature:** games are texts and narratives that require choices and consequences, creating “inaccessible strategies and paths not taken” (Aarseth 3).

### TEACHING

**Iterative design:** playtesting, prototyping, evaluating, and refining (Salen & Zimmerman 11) multiple iterations of texts.

**Design collaborations:** reading games reveal real – and virtual – world activity systems to writers.

**Semiotic domains:** games as experiential learning, collaboration, problem solving, and design spaces (Gee 45-46).

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