

Unit Four Writing Assignment

Write a review of a computer or video game. The game can be recent or old. It can be for adults or kids. It can be for Windows or GameCube, etc. Pretty much any computer or video game is appropriate material.

Length: While there is no length requirement, I imagine that a thorough and appropriate response to this assignment will be three or four (double-spaced) pages.

Content: Your chief aim is to say whether or not this is a good game. But you should recognize that this evaluation is not a simple one, as “good” can mean many different things. Include consideration of who is the intended audience for the game. Who would likely enjoy playing it? How does it compare to other games in the same genre? In what ways does it break new ground and in what ways is it just a repetition of familiar tropes? What are its chief pleasures? Does it involve lots of thinking or is it a “twitch” game, all about hitting the right keys? Does it make good use of the controls, or is it clumsy or limited? A good review goes beyond this evaluation, offering a lively and engaging description of the game, as well as a context or history. And the best reviews penetrate to the essence of the games they analyze, not just offering a thumbs-up or -down but providing an insight into what makes this game what it is.

You are encouraged to include in your review a consideration of your game, and gaming generally, from a broader perspective, along the lines of the readings by Douglas and Friedman. What does your game tell its players? What sorts of attitudes or beliefs does it instill? What buried politics or presuppositions does it make? What kinds of freedoms does it offer the player and what sorts of constraints does it impose?

Research: To prepare your review, check out some other reviews of computer and video games on the Internet and in print. *The New York Times* publishes game reviews and commentary, as do many other non-specialist publications. There are hundreds of websites devoted to reviewing games. If you have trouble locating examples, please let me know and I’ll steer you in the right direction.

Audience: Your audience for this assignment consists of MIT students and faculty. Do not assume that your reader is an avid gamer, but you may assume that she is at least familiar with the usual gaming platforms and has played a few games herself, at least casually.

Due date: Please email me a copy of your review—as an attachment—on Thursday, December 8, before class. We may look at some of these together in class, so also bring a paper copy to class that day for peer review.