

Game Studies Analysis: Fortnite and Elden Ring

Self-Determined Major Final Project Proposal

Major: Film Studies

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the histories of my case studies. This project will take the form of a research paper that will help advance the field of Game Studies by offering a comparative analysis of *Fortnite* and *Elden Ring*, two distinctly produced but similarly popular and genre-defining games of the last 3 years.

Although I have selected specific games to analyze, I choose to study video games more broadly because of the way in which they are formed at the intersection of the design and consumption structures of a wide range of other mediums. Despite certain interactive and conceptual features typically understood as specific to game studies, video games also incorporate filmmaking techniques, literary narrative designs, interactivity between users akin to social media, and advertising. Created and consumed on the cutting edges of technological innovation, video games are the present modems for future technological realities of digital communication, entities, and education. Reflecting the heterogeneity of games, Game Studies are also increasingly cross disciplinary and growing in complexity. In addition, Game Studies are also moving beyond increasingly outdated categories that distinguish between art and commerce, technological determinism, and analyzing dangers of video games. Like video games themselves, Game Studies is a new but rapidly evolving field, which means that there is both room and need for new scholarship. I intend to draw upon and put into practice the various fields of media studies, media production, and art history I have studied thus far and use this knowledge to make larger claims about the advantages and pitfalls of allowing video games to be how our collective futures are imagined and produced.

I have chosen *Fortnite* and *Elden Ring* as my case studies because they constitute two of the most popular games produced in the past 5 years. While they have global success in common, they also represent opposite ends of the spectrum of contemporary video games. *Fortnite* is multiplayer, while *Elden Ring* is single player; *Fortnite* is organized around world

rely on the techniques of textual analysis I have developed in nearly all my classes across disciplines at Skidmore. When I move on to

and abstracted interaction of players through caricaturized avatars. This research-based analytic comparison will, finally, permit me to arrive at a critical assessment of where these games fit in the contemporary gaming ecology and chart their impact on large numbers of global players, on other game producers, and on game studies itself. My overall goal is to situate these games within the contemporary zeitgeist of global video gaming, draw critical attention to how video games remain at the forefront of imagining the future of digital life and make a scholarly contribution to game studies today.

Nick Montfort, ‘Interactive Fiction as “Story,” “Game,” “Storygame,” “Novel,” “World,” “Literature,” “Puzzle,” “Problem,” “Riddle,” and “Machine”’ and “Response by Brenda Laurel” (printed concurrently on the top and bottom halves of the same pages), from *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game* (2006) (eds. Noah Wadrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan), 310-316.

Nick Montfort’s essay picks up from Perlin’s essay as a study of interactive fiction—the wholly unique region between games and stories. Montfort stresses to not analyze games using such a binary of story vs. game as a starting po5 (t)-6 (o)-4r*(a)4 (r)-hsW

Gonzalo Frasca's chapter is a conceptual analysis of the communicative techniques utilized in video games that provide authors with forms of representation and communication unique to the medium. Frasca specifically argues that opposed to traditional media, video games are simulational in nature. Frasca explores how simulation can offer new forms of communication for authors but entails a new kind of auteurship more akin to legislation—crafting laws of a simulated world. Within simulated environments, Frasca discusses differences between what he calls *ludus* games and *paidia* games as an exploration of play, competitiveness, and the goals for why gamers game. Thus, this chapter is a conceptual discussion of the underlying motivations, design, and effects of video games which will serve as useful foundations to specify this analysis onto *Fortnite* and *Elden Ring*.

Juul, Jesper. "Fear of Failing?: The Many Meanings of Difficulty In Video Games." In: Mark J. P. Wolf & Bernard Perron (eds.): *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*. New York: Routledge 2009. pp. 237-252.

Jesper Juul's chapter sociologically explores how failure and difficulty underline player's attraction to and interactions with video games. Juul starts by differentiating types of punishments for player failures, both in terms of their design and effect on user experience. Juul then conducts a study using variable punishments of the same game to determine whether gamers want to fail while gaming, and whether they feel responsible for their failures. Ultimately, Juul's findings imply that gamers don't enjoy games that are too hard and too easy, and thus failure is central to the attraction of games. Furthermore, Juul argues that games must not be too hard or too easy. Although this study is limited to single-player games, this chapter provides useful foundations for analyzing how difficulty and failure are utilized within *Fortnite* and *Elden Ring* as varying in genre but both offer newfound opportunities for gamers to formulate their own difficulties and failures.

Myers, David ("The Video Game as Art") Action Play 4 (Fall 2008) In: Mark J. P. Wolf & Bernard Perron (eds.), *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, New York: Routledge (2008).

David Myers chapter takes a comprehensive look at the aesthetic experience of *Elden*

Myers' exploration of semiosis and representation of video games and how players interact with them provides pertinent, conceptual analysis of the types of interactions that drive the aesthetic experience of both *Fortnite* and *Elden Ring*. In conclusion, Myer's proposed framework will aid me in juxtaposing the aesthetic experiences of the two games I will be analyzing.

Apperley, T. H. (2006). Genre and game studies: Toward a critical approach to video game genres. *Simulation & Gaming*, 37(1), 6–23.

Thomas Apperley's essay discusses the use of genre in game studies and production and argues game theorists counter-intuitively place video games overly rigid genres that rely on prior media's vocabulary of representation and narrative. Apperly posits that video game genres are too predicated on aesthetic and visual representation of the in-game world, and that categorizing video games by their similarities and differences of engagement, interactionn-10 (ga)4 (m)-2 (e)4 (s) .004 . tow -31E1Fj-0.004 T()TJ0t (s) .(i)-2 (tu2 (ha)4w

studies but the need to strengthen its disciplinary self-image. Furthermore, this chapter provides useful footing within the scholarship to start my analysis.

Järvinen, Aki. "Understanding Video Games as Emotional Experiences." In: Bernard Perron and Mark J.P. Wolf (eds.), *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*. New York: Routledge (2009): pp. 85-108.

Aki Järvinen's chapter posits that psychology is often overlooked in game studies and thus explores how video games engage emotions of players. Järvinen provides useful articulation of varying types of emotions that occur when playing video games, like