

CRITICAL LET'S PLAY / GAME COMMENTARY PROJECT

Overview

Let's Plays and their culture online are an integral part of game culture and its evolution, and as such have great potential for influencing how we understand and value games – even how we play. Our strategy is to develop LPs as a form of game-centric criticism, a means of expressing ideas about specific games and commenting on their value for new thinking. So, in addition to sharing a gameplay in an artful way we are also interested in pursuing expressive goals – commentary, critique, insight, inspiration. The “Critical” in CLPs refers to an expectation of self-awareness, reflection and interpretation on the part of the LPers. This does not mean that you must take a negative attitude toward the chosen game or focus on what you consider to be flaws (though this an option and can be very productive), but rather that you are actually attending to the game design and the gameplay experience, the invoked topics and relevant contexts of the game in your creation process, and reflecting on significance and implications. The general goal of these CLPs is to provide a media (probably video) experience that provides new insights into the chosen game and a thought-provoking perspective on its gameplay.

The CLP project has 3 parts:

1. Proposal – a group-written proposal of your groups' CLP (see below)
2. CLP Media Object – video, images+text, hypermedia
3. Reflection – an individually short written commentary reflecting on your CLP process and goals

1. Proposal

The project proposal is nothing fancy, but it needs to have these key elements clearly identified in the document:

A. Target Game - this is the name of the digital game you are choosing to think about and work on. Include a link to the most helpful information about the game for someone who has no prior knowledge. This can be the official game website, Wikipedia article, etc. (whatever you think is most helpful).

B. Statement of Interest - commentary on what intrigues you about the target game, animating interests, why you want to work on it, what you think it has to offer as a focus of interpretation through the project, etc.

C. Technical Details - comments on your design plans. Are you making a video of live gameplay? Editing segments of play? Are you going non-video LP: screenshot and text, hypertext with media objects? Are you going to have voiceover? Subtitles? No need for design details, or exact planning, just the basics.

D. Key Concept from Class - similar to choosing a game to focus on, a helpful constraint is to grow your interest alongside a key critical concept from the readings (including the game studies one-sheets) and lectures in the class. Is there a particular theme, concept, or argument that animates your thinking or provides a point of access to your target game?

E. Expressive Goal Ideas - note any preliminary ideas for an expressive goal for your project: What do you want to convey? What insight organizes your thinking about the target game. These need not be fully formed, but the more formed the better.

2. CLP Media Object

These projects can be in various forms depending on your technical skills and expressive goals. Choose the media form that best suits your goals (and, of course, one that falls in your comfort zone). The traditional form of LPs is gameplay-centric video with voiceover or textual supplement. However, as we saw earlier in the semester, they can be screenshot and text-based, too. You might also consider a video that uses still images and voice over, or music.

3. Reflection

Each person in your group must write a short reflection on the project, addressing the following:

- A. The role you played in the creation of the media object
- B. How successful you think the media object is given the expressive goal(s) that you identify
- C. Thoughts on the experience as a whole – what you learned *about games as a tool for thinking*

These reflections should be at least 700 words and demonstrate careful, attentive thinking about the project from a critical perspective. The most successful reflections will make an effort to connect to specific ideas from class readings, lecture, or discussions and generally provide a critical context for thinking about the project.