

Midterm Assignment
Videogame Theory & Analysis
DUE: To MIT server site by 11am 10/12/06

In the last writing assignment, you wrote a short paper on some social aspect of your game, attempting to make connections for the character of your game's community to how the game is designed and structured to allow for that community. In this midterm essay, I would like you to expand on one theme, thread, or idea from that previous paper and, using the readings for class, write an essay that makes a strong and consistent argument for how you view your game.

Goals and Expectations

This writing assignment is meant to give you practice and experience with arguing for your theories, analyses, and ideas with regard to your game. It is my hope that as you wrote your previous essay, other ideas occurred to you as you wrote, and certain themes and ideas popped up along the way. Some of them you may have expanded on, others you didn't. At this point you may not even know what, if anything, was interesting about your previous essay. If not, I'd urge you to communicate with me and we can put our heads together and come up with a plan for your midterm essay. On the other hand, many of you experienced an abundance of thoughts and ideas while you wrote but were forced to condense your essay.

In short, what I'd like you to do is write a 10-15 page midterm essay that "pulls a thread" from your previous essay and makes it tighter, longer, and stronger. Hone an argument, expand on an idea, make a point stronger, cite more evidence from the readings. Look at your first essay as a first draft for a series of other ideas and thoughts, or use this as an opportunity to turn a corner, writing instead about a totally different idea or connection you made between your game and what we've been reading about and discussing in this class.

Again, if you need help with this assignment, if you're not sure what's interesting about your last essay, or if you just want to bounce ideas around, please get in touch with Kristina or myself during the next few days to discuss it. I will be out of town but available by IM or email; Kristina is here in person to chat. And, I'd urge you to drop by the Writing Center in the basement of Stata. You'd be shocked how helpful it can be to have a stranger read your work and tell you what's interesting about it. Just bring in your last essay and ask them to tell you what resonates.

Structure and Submission

Please type your paper, double-space it, 1" margins, and submit it in MS Word format (I will be typing my responses with the commenting feature in Word). Title your essay. LABEL THE FILE WITH YOUR LAST NAME, THE WORD "MIDTERM" AND THE DATE OF SUBMISSION. Turn it in to MIT server. I cannot promise I'll get to your essay for grading if you email it to me. It's just too hard for me to make sure it doesn't get buried in my inbox!

Cite all sources. You are urged to use as many sources from in-class readings as you see fit. Outside readings are allowed and encouraged as well; please see me or Kristina for references if you'd like help.

Evaluation Criteria

Essays will be evaluated according to the following:

- ❑ Your ability to argue for and sustain a point throughout the essay, citing sources and using evidence from the game to support your ideas. Your ability to focus and center your argument and anticipate counter-arguments. This is a thesis-driven essay: have a point.
- ❑ Your use of sources and references from readings and gameplay instances as backup for your core and supporting arguments. Use of proper MLA or APA citation formats (yes, I'm a stickler for this! See the Writing Center for help or go to <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html> for detailed web-based assistance.
- ❑ The depth and originality of ideas.
- ❑ The economy and polish of prose.

This essay counts for 15% of your final grade and will be graded on an A-F scale. Both Kristina and myself will be evaluating the essays and I will make the final grade decision.

A word about tardiness: I will place a deadline on MIT server for these essays. Any midterm that is turned in past that deadline will automatically receive a penalty (i.e., if you get a B on the essay, I'll knock it down to a B- for being late). If you turn the essay in more than twelve hours past the deadline, you'll receive a full-letter penalty (a B would turn into a C), and so on. Sorry to be harsh about this but I'm on a schedule too! ☺

If you have unforeseen circumstances and need a major extension, please see me immediately. I'd rather you turn in a good late essay than a crappy on-time one.