International Conference on Games and Narrative

Games Institute, University of Waterloo, June 11-16, 2021

Keynote speakers will include Clara Fernández-Vara, Kishonna Gray, Elizabeth La Pensée, Souvik Mukherjee, Jan-Noël Thon, and Astrid Ensselin

Almost since their inception, videogames have used narrative. Sometimes the narrative element has been implicit, other times open, but games have exploited narrative techniques, employed narrative suspense, and relied on narrative characters with ever greater sophistication. There is, however, debate over the role narrative plays in videogames. Is gameplay fundamentally distinct from narrative? Do we always subtly try to narrativize our game experience? Does game narrative rely on the techniques of filmic and literary narrative? Does its creation of story worlds make its narrative form distinctive and original? How do the narratives employed in videogames reflect and shape our sense of gender, race, sexuality, and national identity?

These and other topics will be at the centre of the inaugural International Conference on Games and Narrative, a fully virtual conference to be hosted by the Games Institute at the University of Waterloo. The conference will provide an opportunity to examine the intersection between videogames and narrative through a variety of formats: online lectures, speaker panels, video essays, workshops, and live streaming gameplay with commentary and discussion. The entire conference will be available online, in formats designed for maximum accessibility.

We invite proposals for speaker panels devoted to a particular topic, individual papers, and workshops. Proposals may address any question concerning the intersection between videogames and narrative. Topics covered may include:

Narrative Structure in Video Games: problems associated with the narrative analysis of videogames, including time, space, perspective, focalization, and character. Papers and panels may focus on the analysis of a particular game or on a general problem in narrative theory

Narrative Co-creation in Games: issues around the relationship between designer, text, and player in game studies. This could include discussions of agency, fandom, performativity, representation, or identity.

Narratives and social difference: questions of how narrative forms reflect and shape social differences and divisions, including gender difference, forms of sexuality, racialized differences, ethnic and national identities, and class distinctions.

Gameplay and Narrative: reflections on the interplay between the ludic and the narrative, including close readings of specific examples where mechanics and narrative collide.

Game Worlds: analysis of the elements of worldbuilding, including environmental approaches to narrative or more general discussions of "place" in games.

Technology and Presence: topics on the relationship between technology and narrative, including examinations of Augmented Reality/X-Reality/Virtual Reality and Video Game Narratives, but also including the general technological ecology of games and narrative.

Proposals for Individual Papers and Video Essays

For paper and video essay submissions:

- provide a 250-word abstract outlining your paper, specifying whether it will take the form of a paper/presentation or video essay (Papers and Video Essays will be 15-20 minutes in length)
- do *not* include the author's name anywhere on the abstract (but do give the paper a title)
- provide a short author's statement, separate from the paper proposal, of 100-150 words with your name, institutional affiliation (if any) and a description of your research, publications, and presentations.
- submit the abstracts and the author's statement in Microsoft Word or .pdf format

Proposals for Panels

Panels will consist of 3-4 related papers. For panel submissions:

- provide a 500-word description of the panel as a whole, setting out its goals and themes, as well as titles and abstracts (150-250 words each) for each panelist's contribution.
- do *not* include names of the organizer or contributors to the panel in the description and paper abstracts (but do make sure the panel and the individual papers have titles)
- include, as a separate document, author statements of 100-150 words each for every participant (organizer and contributors) with name, institutional affiliation (if any) and a description of relevant research, publications, and presentations.
- submit the abstracts and the author's statement in Microsoft Word or .pdf format.

Proposals for Workshops

We strongly encourage applications from narrative designers or those with experience crafting game narratives for workshops on game narratives. Within our themes, a workshop could be critical (a group postmortem on a game's narrative design, or element of it), generative (creating and discussing game narrative), or tools-oriented (exploring tools for integrating/crafting game narrative). Workshops proposed should fit within a three-hour time slot. For workshop proposals:

- outline the workshop's goals and the activities planned in 1000 words or fewer
- include the name(s) of the workshop's planned participants and statements for each describing their relevant research and experience.
- should participants need software or other media to participate, this should be itemized in the proposal. Preparing to attend the workshop should not be a lengthy process for participants.

The deadline for all submissions is **January 31, 2021**. Decisions on papers, panels and workshops will be communicated in mid-March.

All submissions, in Word or .pdf format, should be emailed to icgan.submissions@uwaterloo.ca.