

### **Making Games Matter Call for Papers for *Computers and Composition***

Games are often seen as mere diversions even as, with smart phones, they play an increasingly ubiquitous role in our lives. For instance, even when we are not playing games, we often use apps and social media spaces that use game logics to gamify their use. While Ian Bogost (2011) has famously coined the term “exploitationware” to refer to the corporate use of badges and points to lure customers into using their products, arguing that accruing points is the least interesting part of any game, these gamified digital spaces and apps still play a rhetorically material force in our lives.

Games are multimodal systems that can make rhetorically powerful arguments about processes and other systems in embodied ways. Bogost (2007) has argued that game procedures, their mechanics, rules, narratives, and graphics materially position players into specific ideologically laden embodied subject positions. Consequently, Steve Holmes (2017) has argued that games create procedural habits that construct a specific materially embodied ethos for players.

However, how games rhetorically persuade through their embodied materiality has been largely unexplored by rhetoric and writing scholars until recently (Alexander, 2017; Holmes, 2017; Arduini, 2018; Euteneur, 2018; Jiang, 2020). Examining how materiality within gamification is so specialized that it has been largely ignored within rhetoric and writing (Frith, 2015). To be sure, many game studies scholars have explored gamification (McGonigal, 2011; Deterding, 2014) and some have even examined how in a post-Fordist information economy, games have been co-opted as a form of unpaid labor (Golumbia, 2009; Jagoda, 2013; Deterding, 2014), turning the world into a “gamespace” (Wark, 2007); several rhetoric and writing scholars have also exploded the dichotomy between play and work/learning within the classroom (Rouzie, 2005; Colby & Shultz Colby, 2008; Moberly, 2008), but none of these examinations pay attention to the materiality and embodiment of these classroom spaces.

When rhetorically examining games the meaning of the term “materiality” tends to be limited. First, materiality has been historically bracketed as nonrhetorical. Bogost (2007) limits rhetoric to symbolic argumentation, specifically discounting positive and negative algorithmic reinforcement as rhetorical. Secondly, if materiality is rhetorically proposed, materiality tends to be reduced in rhetoric to social or discursive functions (see Holmes, 2017). For example, in his seminal discussion of material rhetoric and videogames, McAllister’s (2004) *Game Work* employs a combination of Marxist historical materialism, Burke’s notion of agency, and Barry Brummett’s taxonomy of meaning-making to analyze videogames through Douglas Kellner’s “multiperspectival” approach to meaning. While McAllister’s multi-perspectival analysis of the game industry still offers tremendous insights to the present, this earlier work could not draw on the wealth of material rhetorics and posthuman perspectives on materiality that we now have and offers an invitation for scholars to update a more comprehensive analysis of material and embodiment rhetoric in videogames.

The lack of attention until recently to material embodiment within rhetoric and writing studies’ game scholarship is problematic as embodiment and materiality have received richer scholarly attention in the field at large. Drawing on queer and materialist feminist theories, scholars have long examined how the body is represented rhetorically within both written print texts (Welch, 1999) and multimodal texts online (Alexander, 1997; Blair & Takayoshi, 1997; Blair & Takayoshi, 1999; Welch, 1999; Alexander & Banks, 2004; Rhodes, 2004; Porter, 2009), Kristine Arola and Anne Wysocki (2012) going as far as to argue that the discipline should embrace a rhetorical pedagogy of embodiment. Materiality within rhetorical theory has enjoyed a great deal of attention in the past decade in ideas like ambient rhetoric (Rickert, 2013), object-oriented ontology (Harman, 2005; Bogost, 2012), object-oriented rhetoric (Boyle & Barnett, 2016; Barnett, 2016), actor-network theory (Latour, 2005; Lynch & Rivers, 2015), rhetorical realism (Sundvall, 2016), new materialist rhetorics (Gries, 2015) or wearable technologies (Jones and Gouge, 2016). As a sure sign of its establishment as a disciplinary *topoi*, substantive criticism of some of these theoretical approaches has also emerged especially from political standpoints (Sundvall, 2019), including claims that the material turn in rhetoric has neglected prior indigenous criticisms of material rhetorics (Arola, 2018; Clary-Lemon, 2019). Critiques and productive extensions may create a promising intersectional gap for rhetorical game scholars. For instance, the queer games movement has shown

how the materiality of controllers in empathy games can rhetorically shape perception (Marcotte, 2018; Pozo, 2018).

This CFP asks to expand what is already a promising theoretical and methodological inroad for rhetorical considerations of games by soliciting articles that place rhetorical conversations about games in dialogue with contemporary work on materiality and embodiment by rhetorical theorists, philosophers, and game studies scholars that may not have picked up much traction within our disciplinary conversations. We're interested in theoretical treatments and methodological studies that might answer research questions such as "How do we measure the rhetorical influence of materiality and embodiment on game play?"

Consequently, in making games matter, this special issue of *Computers and Composition* explores all games and gamified spaces and asks:

- In what ways does the materiality and/or embodiment of games and gamification function rhetorically to make socially relevant arguments?

In further exploring rhetorical materiality and embodiment within games, we ask:

- How do the different material multimodal affordances and constraints within games and gamification work rhetorically?
- How can the unique material affordances and constraints within games and gamification add to rhetorical theory?
- How can emergence within a game system (either through code, which is often considered a glitch, gamer play cultures, or both with player-created mods or exploits), construct rhetorical arguments?
- How do games and gamification rhetorically construct our ethos of daily habits and practices?
- How do games and gamification rhetorically construct, deterritorialize, and recompose our embodied affect?
- How are physical institutional spaces rhetorically structured to be gamified even without an app?
- How do the material objects surrounding games (consoles, keyboards, etc) create rhetorical material carpentry, especially as reshaping these objects can disrupt our cultural assumptions?
- How does the materiality of games affect their rhetorical uptake and circulation within various discourse communities and beyond?
- How does the materiality of games and gamification influence the ethics and/or politics that circulate within their player communities?
- How can challenging the western-centric material histories of rhetoric through indigenous, non-western histories expand understandings of the political work of games and gamification?

We invite **500-1000-word proposals** describing your theoretical and methodological framework for how you will analyze materiality rhetorically within a game, game community, or form of gamification.

- **Proposal Deadline: Oct. 1, 2020**
- **Proposal Decision: Nov. 1, 2020**
- **Full Draft: June 1, 2021**
- **Draft Peer Review: June 1 -- September 1, 2021**
- **Draft Revision: Oct. 1, 2021 – Feb. 1, 2022**
- **Editorial Review of Revisions: Feb. 1 -- March 15, 2022**
- **Copy-editing: March 15, 2022 -- April 15, 2022**
- **Publication: September 2022**

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