

*****Extended Deadline*****

The editors have received several requests for extra time: balancing teaching, designing, and researching during the COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge with which we fully empathize. It is also an opportunity to invite others to participate, and we welcome additional proposals. Updated proposal deadline, **November 1, 2021**.

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Call for Proposals
Tabletop Teaching: Board Games and Social Justice

We invite contributions to *Tabletop Teaching: Board Games and Social Justice*, an edited collection breaking new ground in the field of gaming studies and bringing together scholars and board game designers. We encourage proposals from under-represented groups in game studies and from outside the United States to submit. **Because of several requests for an extension, we are extending the proposal deadline to November 1.**

Proposals Due: November 1, 2021.

Manuscripts Due: February 4, 2022.

Exploring Social Justice with Board Games

Prior to the pandemic, the popularity of board games surged. Offerings from traditional juggernauts (Hasbro, Mattel) remained strong, while the popularity of “Hobby Games” exploded, fueled by innovations in crowd-sourced funding. Game designers explored new subjects and mechanics, from short session card games like *Marrying Mr. Darcy* and *The Grizzled* to chrome-heavy time sinks like *Scythe*. They also investigated new ways of combining in-person tactile gaming with digital applications. Target began selling not only established Euro hits like the *Ticket to Ride* and *Settlers of Catan* franchises but also the best-selling, time-intensive *Gloomhaven*. While the pandemic forced players to find creative ways to play together through existing tools like Vassal or new ones like Zoom, the board games industry is weathering the pandemic better than many entertainment sectors.

The pandemic also added fuel to activism against systemic racism, especially in relation to police brutality, treatment of migrants, and public display of white supremacist symbols. This collection focuses on how tabletop games shape conversations both inside and outside of the classroom about citizenship, social justice, and how they influence players’ understandings of historical and contemporary debates. As a form that is highly participatory and situational, board games in general—and sometimes individual titles—can play a role in those debates in progressive and reactionary ways. We are, therefore, keenly interested in how games move people to real-world action.

We use “social justice” in the most expansive way possible. While much of the current conversation, especially in the US, focuses on systemic racism, racism overlaps other systemic challenges: misogyny, discrimination against LGBTQ communities, religious intolerance,

environmental challenges, and ongoing assaults on worker's rights, to name just a few. This collection will have one eye firmly fixed on the present (What are we doing now?) and one eye on the future (What more do we need to do?).

Tabletop Teaching

While Shultz Colby published a study examining ways rhetoric and writing teachers use board games and Colby, Shultz Colby, and Johnson published a collection in which board games were assessed in the ways they can teach audiences and act as safe spaces to enact interpersonally difficult conversations, there has been surprisingly little scholarship concerning how board games foster critical conversations about social justice.

Our collection also aims to bridge games studies scholarship and videogame design, bringing together the insights and needs of designers and scholars.

We are also interested in employing open-source platforms to broaden both content and audience. We desire to work with a progressive scholarly publisher already employing a robust open source platform and more conventional forms of publication. Many innovative open source platforms will facilitate development of the collection as a conversation: for example, once the selection of proposals is complete, we are interested in peer reviewing manuscripts among the contributors.

Suggested Areas of Inquiry

Below, while we define possible areas of interest for game designers and academic researchers, we acknowledge that the distinction is to an extent arbitrary: some game studies scholars are also game designers, and the design of many games often involves considerable research.

For Academic Researchers

- We welcome proposals that challenge the entire premise of this collection (that tabletop games can be an effective classroom strategy for fostering social justice initiatives).
- What can teachers do with games whose gameplay is, in essence, designed to celebrate (or at least uncritically embrace) colonialism or capitalism or militarism?
- What strategies are there for “teaching against the grain,” as it were? For example, is there any conceivable way to make *The Game of Life* anything other than a piece of dire consumerist propaganda?
- Recently, we have started to see the emergence of games that have adopted a deliberately anti-colonialist framework (e.g. *Spirit Island*). How successful are these games, what more needs to be done in this area?
- How can games be incorporated into the classroom in a way that doesn't gloss over issues of entitlement—for example, most hobby games are not cheap—when it comes to playing games in the first place?
- What kinds of game mechanics foster more inclusive design? (For example, “Powered by Apocalypse” has been utilized to develop games centered more on relationships than hitpoints.)

- How do the demographics of the tabletop player community impact game design and issues of privilege and inclusivity when we incorporate games into our classrooms?

For Game Designers

- We welcome any game design documents that explore any aspect of social justice.
- What kinds of obstacles do designers face when trying to challenge existing design paradigms? Are there particular types of content that it is difficult to design around?
- If you have tried to design games that take a more activist stance or address questions of social justice, what kinds of resistance have you received from players? Publishers? Other designers?
- What is necessary to foster a positive design community where a broad range of design work can be supported?
- Are there problems with existing funding models for game design that try to speak to alternative communities or agendas (e.g. Kickstarter, Patreon) and are there other types of funding models that could be employed?

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