



# Socially Responsible Game Education

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MARCH 2-6, 2015 · EXPO: MARCH 4-6, 2015



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*courses*

game artificial intelligence  
rapid idea prototyping  
game programming



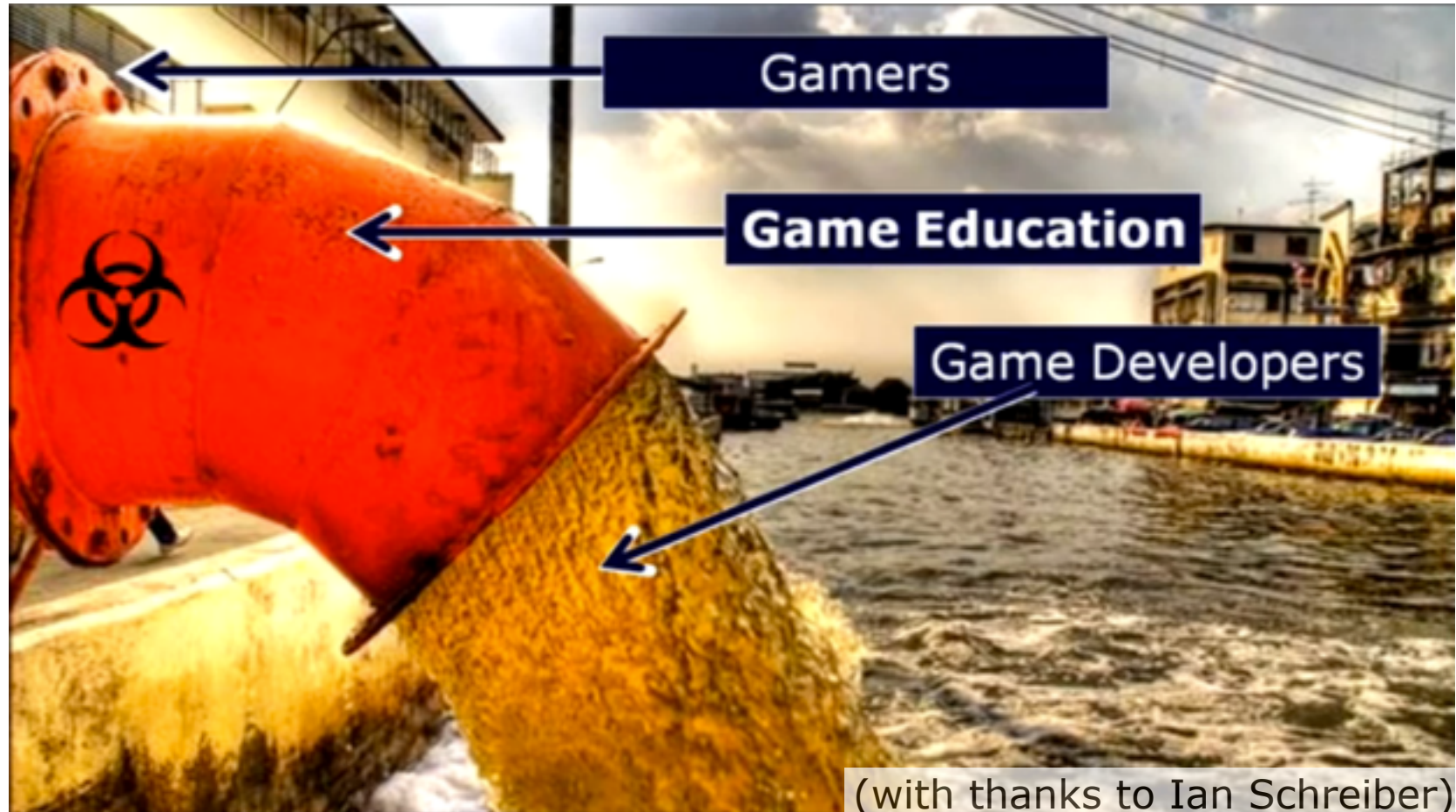


# Jane Pinckard

Lecturer  
University of Southern California

*courses*  
game design workshop  
critical theory and games





(with thanks to Ian Schreiber)





# Our Role as Educators



# Values

- Improving diversity in our student body.
- Exposing students to diverse perspectives.
- Equipping students with ability to communicate effectively about issues in diversity.
- Providing a safe atmosphere for students from diverse backgrounds.



Our responsibility to inclusivity in education goes beyond the need to improve representation.



Exposing students to diverse perspectives expands their potential as makers, creators, programmers, critics, and artists.





Equipping students with tools to articulate their values prepares them to engage with colleagues respectfully.



Every student deserves to feel that they can be open with any faculty member in the department about concerns.



# Agenda

- A primer on key terms.
- What is our mission with inclusivity?
- Strategies in the curriculum.
- Considering your syllabus.
- Tactics in the classroom.
- Open discussion: where do we go from here?



# Feminism: A Primer

Image: Val3ntea, via [EverydayFeminism.com](http://EverydayFeminism.com)



# Feminism: broad and intersectional



Privilege is the act of enjoying a set of advantages imparted by identity and social status.





Diversity is an inherently valuable goal.



Inclusivity is the intention of including others who would otherwise be excluded.



# Terms

- Feminism: broad and intersectional.
- Privilege: unintentionally being advantaged by society.
- Diversity: an inherently valuable goal.
- Inclusivity: the intention to include those who would otherwise be excluded.



# Socially Responsible Education

What are our responsibilities as educators?



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# Supportive Environment

- Students from diverse backgrounds should feel safe and supported.
- It is not the responsibility of those students to educate their peers or be the representative voice for the group.



# Raising Awareness

- As educators, we should be teaching our students about many different perspectives.
- Sometimes that means doing extra work to source and understand the under-represented perspectives.





# Offering Strategies

- We can offer a set of strategies and guidelines for students to learn how to discuss and create games in the context of social justice.



# Building Discourse

- Students should have a safe place to explore issues.
- Students should learn how to develop and defend their opinions.



“I don’t want to get political...”



# In the Curriculum



# Discussing with Faculty Colleagues

- Share opinions, raise awareness, formulate strategies
- Look to other departments!



# Dedicated Courses

- Critical Theory
- Games & Society





In the Syllabus



# Readings and Games

- Do Artifacts Have Politics?, *Langdon Winner*
- Redshirt, *The Tiniest Shark*
- A Game Design Vocabulary, *Anna Anthropy and Naomi Clark*
- Artificial Knowing: Gender and the Thinking Machine, *Alison Adam*



# Readings and Games

- Depression Quest, *Zoe Quinn*
- Gone Home, *The Fullbright Company*
- Train, *Brenda Romero*
- Death of the Player, *Mattie Brice*
- Maps as examples of the power of design to control meanings.



# Statement on Safe Space

*It is important that we all work together to help foster an environment in which students feel safe asking questions, posing their opinions, and sharing their work for critique. If at any time you feel this environment is being threatened—by anybody, including the professor—speak up and make your concerns heard. If you do not feel comfortable speaking about it in person, you may leave private feedback, anonymously if you wish, on Piazza. If you feel uncomfortable broaching this topic with the professor in any way or for any reason, you should feel free to voice your concerns to the Dean's office.*



# Diversity Statement

*Understand Social and Cultural Impact – Students learn to consider their projects in a complex social and cultural context, including what kinds of individuals and communities are represented and what point of view the work expresses. This class grounds the student in learning to explore diverse viewpoints, and will discuss racial, religious, gender and sexual orientation issues in the context of games and interactive media.*



# In the Classroom



# How to talk about feminism if you are a man

- These frameworks are for everyone to use.
- Accept and embrace that you'll make mistakes.
- Learn more. Listen. Understand,
- Seek to empower your students.



# Modeling behavior

- Be careful and conscious of your language
- Intercede politely but firmly, use it as a teaching moment





# GDW: Team Communication

- How to create a safe space for your student team.
- How to make sure all team members feel like their contributions are valuable.
- How to manage conflicts between team members.



# Game Design Workshop: Inclusive Design

- Watch a lecture on inclusive design.
- Have a discussion about what it means.
- Incorporate some of those ideas in lab.



# Inclusive Design

- Who feels included by my game?
- Who doesn't feel included by my game?
- Who wouldn't even be able to play my game?
- "Do I feel that the game designers had someone like me in mind?"



# Critical Theory

- Module on feminist theory, feminist approaches to cultural criticism.
- Marxism and its impact on literary theory.
- Queer theory, gender identities, gender performance.



# Game Prototyping

- Genre exploration
- Make games in a genre you don't like
- Make something you would enjoy



# Game Prototyping

- Discussion about social and casual games
- Organic evolution into discussion of ethics in games



# Critique games they DO like

- Many games have problems. (Maybe pieces of art have problems!)
- It's okay to love problematic things.
- Well-loved things can and should be critiqued and analyzed (and you can still love them)



# Game Artificial Intelligence

- Representation of gender
- Character creation
- Meaning in procedural systems





# Game Programming

- Semester project: partnership with external clients
- Required to make inclusive games that reach and are playable by diverse audience
- Bringing in guest lectures

“...while all artists  
are not chess  
players, all chess  
players are artists.”  
—*Marcel Duchamp*





# Using Playcentric Design

- Who is my player?
- What is their experience?
- What is their point of view?
- Empathy is the most important practice for a game designer.



# Playtesting

- All player experiences are valid.
- Design change can lead unintentionally to meaning change.



# Addressing Events

- Find a way to discuss important events in a safe and supportive context.
- Your students may be targets and not know whether they have your support.
- Your students may be participating in toxic behavior and not realize it.



What can we do?



# Open Discussion

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