Games and Learning Design: Lesson 2

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Introduction

- **Defining a game**
  - We separated into groups of two and generated four definitions
  - Review definitions
  - Comparing our game definitions to previous versions

- **Discussing 2 readings**
  - Huizinga
  - Caillois

- **Playing Games**
Last week’s goal, reviewed

- Construct a shared definition of a **game** through play, conversation, and research
- What makes a game a **game**?
Group 1 definition

- Some type of logical **system** with a beginning and end, constructed under a set of rules that dictates interactions between the system and player(s), often motivated through some type of reward.
A system with a **goal**/purpose accomplished through following a set rules or parameters by one or more participants
Group 3 definition

- A free space of strategic or tactical movement within a more rigid rule structure
Group 4 definition

- A rule-based series of interactions employing a strategy to achieve a reward
Past definition #1

A series of tasks of varying levels of difficulty requiring one or more players to develop a series of strategies to accomplish objectives based on at least one pre-determined rule. The winner (or conclusion) is determined by successfully fulfilling the objectives.
The use of a physical/mental skill-set to participate in a challenge, competition, and/or form of entertainment that provides feedback or stimulus for fun/pleasure.
Consensus definition

- Place definition here
The one true definition

- Our single definition
- One definition to rule them all…. Well, maybe just a good understanding of where we all stand will help the conversation as we move along.
## Salen & Zimmerman game table

- Proceeds according to rules that limit players (not Costikyan)
- Conflict (Partlett, Crawford, Sutton-Smith)
- Goal-oriented/outcome-oriented (Partlett, Abt, Costikyan, Sutton-Smith)
- Activity, process, or event (Abt, Suits, Sutton-Smith)
- Involves decision-making (Abt, Crawford, Costikyan)
- Not serious and absorbing (Huizinga)
- Never associated with material gain (Huizinga, Caillois)
- Artificial/safe/outside ordinary life (Huizinga, Caillois, Crawford)
- Creates special social groups (Huizinga)
- Voluntary (Caillois, Suits, Sutton-Smith)
- Uncertain (Caillois)
- Make believe/representational (Caillois, Crawford)
- Inefficient (Suits)
- System of parts/resources (Crawford, Costikyan)
- A form of art (Costikyan)
Usefulness

- Why does a definition of game matter in designing learning games?
  - Understanding game characteristics to understand how to shape them for learning outcomes
  - Knowing what a game is helps to evaluate games versus other activities
  - Understanding game characteristics leads to understanding game impact
  - Understanding game characteristics leads to understanding game impact (motivation, completion, increased participation, collaboration, efficacy in learning, engagement and time on-task)
  - Game engagement may be a powerful metaphor for how we want effective learning design to operate.
Readings: Huizinga

- **Play** is:
  - A voluntary activity
  - It is free (it’s not “real”)
  - It is distinct from “real life”
  - It creates order
  - Defies authority and discipline
  - Not serious

- **Illusion** = “in-play” (from *inlusio*, *illudere*, or *inludere*)
  - “We have to conclude, therefore, that civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come *from* play like a baby detaching itself from the womb: it arises *in* and *as* play, and never leaves it” (Huizinga, 1955, *Homo ludens: a study of play-element in culture*, Beacon P.)
Caillois I

Games are:

- **Free**: playing is voluntary
- **Separate**: circumscribed in time and space
- **Uncertain**: the results are unknown, and the activity of playing the game matters
- **Unproductive**: games create no goods, wealth, or new elements of any kind. They end with the same situation as when they begin, not effecting the outside world.
- Governed by **rules**: normal rules of society are suspended and replaced with the game’s rules
- **Make-believe**: players are aware that it is not real life, but an alternate reality or unreal space
Four play forms:

- **Agon**, or competition (e.g., chess or Olympic Games)
- **Alea**, or chance (e.g., a slot machine or other gambling games)
- **Mimicry**, or mimesis, or role playing (e.g., Dungeons & Dragons)
- **Ilinx**, or vertigo (e.g., children spinning till they fall down). “… which consist of an attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind. In all cases, it is a question of surrendering to a kind of spasm, or shock which destroys reality with sovereign brusqueness.”
Wrap up

- **Three things** for next class
- Read Chick, Suits, and Costikyan in Salen and Zimmerman (2006)
- Games as “objects of inquiry”
- Our educational context