

Each afternoon you will have a short reading and written response, to be published on your blog. I will provide links to any readings which are not found in *How to Do Things with Videogames* as well as several writing prompts; choose one to respond to. You are always free to ignore the prompts and write on anything else the readings inspire in you. I always prefer an in depth response to the readings than shallow answers to my own prompts.

Week 1

1: Bogost Introduction and Bush's "[How we May Think](#)"

Today's readings are all about how the computer can function as media (and what we mean by media).

- a) **Research:** Bogost quotes extensively from media theorist Marshall McLuhan. Do further reading and respond to McLuhan's claim that "The Medium is the Message". How does this relate to computers?
- b) **Debate:** Bogost mentions the arguments of media theorists Clay Shirky (*Cognitive Surplus*) and Nicholas Carr (*The Shallows*). Choose one of their positions, and discuss it in relation to today's web. Incorporate the concerns Bush hoped to address with his Memex.
- c) **Reflect:** Vannevar Bush wrote in 1945. Where do you see his ideas in your own life? Which of his predictions came true, and which might still come true?

Technical: *Make* Ch 1-3.

Extension: Draw a picture of: yourself, a landscape, an object in the room

2: Bogost Ch 1 and 2

In Chapter 1 Bogost introduces one of his main concepts, *procedural rhetoric*.

- a) **Critique:** Play one of the games Bogost mentions ([September 12th](#), [Passage](#), [I Wish I were the Moon](#), [Darfur is Dying](#)). Write a response analysing its use of procedural rhetoric.
- b) **Debate:** Bogost argues for the existence and importance of procedural rhetoric. Are there aspects of videogames which are important to you that are not covered under procedural rhetoric? Argue for their inclusion in critical discussions of games.
- c) **Reflect:** Have you played any games which you think make good use of procedural rhetoric to communicate? Explain.

Technical: *Make* Ch 4.

Extension: Revise your drawing from yesterday (or start a new one) to make use of variables. Think carefully about where you want to give yourself "knobs".

3: Journal - Technical Checkin

- a) **Reflect:** How are you feeling about the programming part of the course so far? How does it relate to your prior mathematical, artistic or programming experiences? What has been most confusing?

- b) Continue with one of the prompts from the first two days readings, or choose one you didn't do.

Technical: *Make* Ch 5 (Skip the the touch screen sections)

Extension: Make Robot 3 “jump” when the spacebar is pressed and move with arrow keys. Make Robot 3 say a greeting when Enter is pressed. Make a wall that moving Robot 3 cannot pass.

4: Play with ELIZA [here](#) (or [here](#)); Read “[Three Play Effects: Eliza, Tale-Spin, and SimCity](#)” by NWF

- a) **Reflect:** Wardrip-Fruin proposes three “play effects” that occur in interactive media (including videogames and other simulation-based works). Use his language to discuss your own misunderstandings with some interactive media.
- b) **Critique:** Wardrip-Fruin mentions that other critics who engaged with Tale-Spin focused “on what its output looked like on the surface.” Relate this to Bogost’s concept or procedural rhetoric. Focus on one particular game.
- c) **Research:** We played one of the archetypal games that Wardrip-Fruin mentions. Do some research on the other two and relate your findings.

Technical: *Make* Ch 8 [Skipping Ch 6-7]

Extension: Make sketch 8-5 jump from floor to Ceiling. Make a pong clone. Make a brick-breaker clone.

5: Journal - First Week

- a) **Reflect** on your first week at SPCS. What has been your favorite part? What has surprised you? What are you most excited for in the rest of the program?

Technical: Depending on class poll/instructor discretion either Ch. 9 or skip ahead (or catch up if moving slowly)

Extension: Refactor a previous sketch to be more “modular” using functions. Choose a sketch that will benefit from duplication and reuse.

Week 2

1: Bogost Ch 7-8

- a) **Research:** Research the *Landlord’s Game*. What was changed to make *Monopoly*? How does this change the procedural rhetoric?
- b) **Critique:** Play [The McDonald’s Videogame](#). Do you think Bogost’s description is accurate? Do you think the game is effective in its rhetorical goals?
- c) **Reflect:** The majority of the games discussed in these chapters are reskins, taking the mechanics of an existing game and changing the graphical assets. What are the implications of this? Do the mismatches between procedural and graphical rhetorics hurt their effectiveness at communicating?

Technical: *Make* Ch 10

Extension: Add keyboard controls to the robot object. Give the robot a fuel supply which depletes as it moves and replenishes when it collides with “fuel canisters” (which you must make).

2: Bogost Ch 10

- a) **Reflect:** What small moment from your life do you wish you had a game snapshot of? How would you make it into a game? Provide a design description.
- b) **Debate:** What are the challenges for realizing Bogost’s vision of snapshot games?

Technical: <http://creative-coding.decontextualize.com/making-games-with-p5-play/>

Extension: Make a simple game involving the *Make* robot as the central character

3: Bogost Ch 14

- a) **Critique:** Play [f10w](#). Respond to it and to Bogost’s critique of it. What is the goal of the player? What was the goal of the game designer?
- b) **Research:** Bogost references [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#) and his theory of Flow. What is this theory and how has it been used in videogame design?
- c) **Reflect:** Describe a time you entered a flow state while playing a game. What aspects of the game design encouraged this? Be specific.

Technical: <http://p5play.molleindustria.org/examples/index.html?fileName=breakout.js>

Extension: Choose a dynamic to enhance. Add mechanics iteratively to accomplish your goal.

4: Bogost Conclusion

- a) Respond to Bogost’s conclusions. Some ideas:
 - i) In the time since this book was published (2011) do you think his predictions have come true?
 - ii) Do you think the “media ecology” of games has expanded or contracted since then?
- b) Propose a new chapter of the book. What is something games can do that you think is missing from Bogost’s book. Give examples of games and write a small section in the style of the book.

Technical: Ensemble

5: Journal - Computer History Museum

- a) **Reflect:** on the field trip. What was the most surprising thing you learned? Why was it surprising to you?
- b) **Research:** Do further research on one interesting artifact or exhibit you saw at the museum.

- c) **Critique:** How did the Computer History Museum portray videogame history? How does this differ from the way our class has discussed videogames?

Week 3

1: Read Chaim Gingold "[Catastrophic Prototyping and Other Stories](#)"

- a) **Reflect:** Gingold mentions six "rules of prototyping". Relate them to your own project. What is your falsifiable question?

Technical: Project work

2: Journal - First Day of Production

- a) **Reflect:** Briefly, what problems have you and your partner run into so far?

Technical: Project work

3: Playtesting Notes:

- a) **Reflect:** What did you observe while playtesting your game? What was unexpected? What will you be changing tomorrow?
- b) Prepare your brief presentation for tomorrow morning

Technical: Project work

4: Journal - The End!

- a) **Reflect:** What did you learn? What was your favorite part of the course? What was your least favorite? What surprised you? What are you most proud of?

Misc Readings/Playings

Playing:

Conways Game of Life

[Parable of the Polygons](#)

[Unmanned](#)

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/11/13/weekinreview/deficits-graphic.html>

<http://syobonaction.com/>

<http://www.depressionquest.com/>

Reading:

How to Do Things with Videogames

<http://samplereality.com/gmu/hnrs353/guidelines/htdtwv-missing-chapter/>

<http://worrydream.com/ExplorableExplanations/>

<http://explorableexplanations.com/>

<http://blog.ncase.me/i-do-and-i-understand/>

<http://niemanstoryboard.org/stories/harnessing-the-power-of-video-games-for-journalism/>

<http://blog.ncase.me/systems-thinking-journalism-sketchy-notes/>

Technical Stuff

<http://natureofcode.com/book/>

<https://github.com/shiffman/The-Nature-of-Code-Examples-p5.js>

http://p5js.org/examples/examples/Objects_Objects.php

<http://creative-coding.decontextualize.com/>

<http://p5play.molleindustria.org>

Week 1:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9-10:20	Intro Lecture	Lecture - Procedural Rhetoric	Discussion: Proc. Rhet Lecture - Interactive Fiction	Activity: MDA	Discussion: NWF essay and sims Lecture: non-digital simulations
10:30-11:30	Technical setup (WP, p5, browser, text editor)	Lecture - Variables; Make Ch4	Activity: Twine	Make Ch8	Activity: non-digital sims
1-2	Reading, Blogging	Reading, Blogging	Short Blogging	Reading, Blogging	Short Blogging
2-3	Make Ch1-3	Make Ch4	Make Ch5	Make Ch8	Make Ch9

Week 2:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9-10:20	Paper Prototyping and playtesting	Discussion: Ch7, 8 Lecture - sprites, game engines, etc	Discussion: snapshots Lecture - simulations in p5.play	Discussion: flow (Guest?) Lecture- social simulation	Field Trip
10:30-11:30	.js OOP	P5.play intro	Lecture - simulations in p5.play	Ensemble in p5	Field Trip
1-2	Reading, Blogging	Reading, Blogging	Reading, Blogging	Reading, Blogging	Blogging
2-3	Make Ch10	P5.play intro	Playtest	Ensemble game	Project Brainstorm

Week 3: (Project Week)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	
9-10:20	Project work	Project work	Project work	Final Polish	
10:30-11:30	Project work	Project work	Project work	Final Presentation	
1-2	Reading, Blogging	Blogging	Blogging	Blogging	
2-3	Project work	Project work	Project work	Play games	