

Transformative Game Design 1

Course material is also available in the form of an online course on the EDGE website

<https://erasmusedge.eu/>

If you notice any mistakes in the course materials, please let us know by reaching out to Sarah Lynne Bowman sarah.bowman@speldesign.uu.se

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Course information

Welcome! Start Here for Important Information from Your Instructors

Dear Game Design Students,

Welcome to Transformative Game Design 1! We are delighted that you are joining us on this journey into exploring design principles involved when creating role-playing games as vehicles for personal and social change. This course explores specific concepts and practices to consider when designing for transformative impacts.

Required Materials

All readings, videos, podcasts, and other materials are embedded in the course. You can find links under the relevant Units and specific Assignments.

The entire course, including Units 1-10 is contained under the heading [Modules, which is linked here](#).

Assignment Overview

This course is taught mostly **asynchronously**, meaning that your course materials and the majority of your interactions will take place here online. These assignments are **Discussions, Journals, Peer Reviews, and Major Assignments**. Rather than attending a scheduled lecture at a regular time, you will instead **complete the assignments required of you by 11:59pm** on the due date they are assigned. Note that you will use your own time zone, meaning that others may be posting at different times.

Course Schedule

Assignments are due on **Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays**. Make sure to review the [linked Course Calendar under Modules](#) and plan your time accordingly.

Discussion Posts

Essential to your work each week are your discussion posts, including (and especially) your responses to your peers. As this course is distance learning, active engagement with your peers in the discussion forum is the lifeblood in this course. Since we are all in different time zones, please post your initial discussions the night before the class day. Then, engage in the discussion forum by responding to two (2) of your peers in **Ask a Question, Answer a Question** format. See the **Discussion Forum Instructions** in Unit 1 for more information.

Video Conference Playtests

The exception is your Playtest and Feedback sessions, which you will need to schedule as a video conference with your peers based on your available schedule. Make sure that you sign up for a group based on your preferred schedule for these meetings under **People --> Groups**. You will need to attend **a minimum of two (2) synchronous meetings with your group** in order to take part in the necessary activities of the course, as playtesting and giving feedback to each of your group members are essential to Research Through Design. You can find more information about joining your group under "Sign up for Your Playtest and Feedback Group."

Game Design

In addition to your discussions and journals, you will also be **playing at least one (1) nanogame** with your group from the #Feminism anthology and then **designing the framing for one (1) nanogame** on a subject of your choice with a transformative goal in mind. You can use the nanogame you designed in Introduction to Transformative Game Design or a new design, but the framing is the important part for this course, i.e. the workshops and debriefs.

Importantly, you will not playtest your entire workshop, game, and debrief design for brevity's sake. Instead, you will **playtest one (1) workshop of your creation, one (1) scene from your game, and one (1) debrief question**. This playtest should not exceed 40 minutes to play, with an additional 10 minutes for feedback, for a total of **50 minutes maximum per playtest**. It is hugely important that you keep track of time in order to be respectful of the needs of your peers. Groups cannot exceed 4 members, so your nanogame should be designed to be played by **2-4 people** (including yourself if appropriate).

Writing Assignments

Based on your design, playtests and feedback sessions, you will complete **two Major Assignments**: one (1) **Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan**, and one (1) **academic paper, with your revised Game Design Document as an appendix**.

Deliverables

- **Discussion Boards Assignments:** You are expected to participate in all discussion assignments in the Units, including your initial posts and posts to the required number of peers throughout the week in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.
- **Reflection Journal Assignments:** You are also expected to complete Reflection Journals at the end of each Unit. Note that only your instructors and you can see your journals.
- **Major Assignment 1 -- Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan:** You will write a short description (400-700 words) for the parts of your game you plan to playtest, as well as your plan for receiving feedback.
- **Major Assignment 2 -- Framing Transformative Game Design:** You will compose an academic article using Research Through Design as a method based upon your process of designing, playtesting, and analyzing the results for the framing of your nanogame. You will submit a complete first draft for peer feedback, then revise your assignment based upon these comments for your final submission at the end of the course. You will also include your revised Game Design Document as an appendix.
- **Peer Feedback -- Transformative Game Design:** You will read the first complete draft of Major Assignment 2 for one to three (1-3) of your peers in your group and respond to the required feedback questions to help them improve their work. Peer review is essential to the examination process in academic work.
 - For consideration for a grade of **Pass** on your own Major Assignment 2, you must complete one (1) peer review for a member of your group.
 - For consideration for a grade of **Pass with Distinction** on your own Major Assignment 2, you may complete peer reviews for *all* members of your group (2 reviews for a group of 3 including yourself; 3 reviews for a group of 4).

Forms of Teaching

Teaching is comprised of:

- Video lectures by the instructors, guest lecturers, and other sources

- Articles and other resources

Technical Requirements

- You will need a computer, word processor software (such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs), video conferencing software (such as Zoom) and consistent Internet access

Writing Assistance

Uppsala University offers writing support through the [linked Language Workshop](#). We encourage you to make an appointment if you need additional writing support.

Disabilities

If you have disabilities and need accommodations, please contact the [Disabilities office linked here](#)

Plagiarism

The use of AI is strictly prohibited in this class and is considered plagiarism. You must write your and assignments posts in your own words based on your reflection on the course materials. You should use the Chicago Author-Date citations provided in the course materials whenever possible. You should not need to include additional sources, but if you do, you must construct your citations yourself rather than relying on machine technology.

Before taking your Orientation Quiz, please watch this important video on plagiarism, which can have serious consequences at Uppsala University:

<https://youtu.be/7bmpVGkwyKQ?si=SSTlK0Rtdxck5-ZM>

Contacting Your Instructors

Be sure to email Sarah at sarah.bowman@speldesign.uu.se if you are experiencing any difficulties or have questions. Please use your student email account.

Orientation Quiz

The course is divided into ten (10) Units, which you will find listed under the Course Content. Please review the Schedule and familiarize yourself with the Units. Then, take your Orientation Quiz.

[Click here to take your Orientation Quiz.](#)

Design Credits

This course was designed by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Josefin Westborg, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Josephine Baird. Curricular materials have been added by

members of the Erasmus+ EDGE Cooperation Partnership. It has been revised with feedback from Kaya Toft Thejls.

Graphic design by Liliia Chorna.

Schedule & Instructions 2025

Course Activities

All activities and homework assignments are **listed in the Course Calendar in sequential, chronological order**. **Modules** are also organized in sequential order. To find a specific assignment or due date scroll down or use CTRL-F and search.

All activities are compulsory unless marked **Optional** in the Course Calendar. You will need to **plan 20 hours a week for all activities**, e.g., the equivalent of a 50% job, so please plan your schedule accordingly. We have done our best to weigh the time it will take to complete your homework each week, including the relative complexity of the materials. Some days you will have more videos, whereas others you will have more readings.

- Submit all deliverables in the **corresponding links in the Units under Modules**.
- You must **complete all requirements of assignments**, including replies to your peers, for full credit.
- **Optional assignments will be marked accordingly** in the Course Calendar. They enable you to achieve a Pass with Distinction instead of a Pass so you can make decisions about your workload.
- **All assignments are due the end class on the day assigned, i.e. Mondays at 11:59pm in your time zone**. When possible, please post the night before to make sure your peers have time to read your posts.
- If your country has a holiday on a due date, complete your work on the next work day.
- All discussion posts require **replies to two peers**, which should be in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format, as described in the Unit instructions.
- Plagiarism and the use of generative AI for writing tasks is not permitted in any courses in the Transformative Game Design Master's and may result in disciplinary measures.

Rules for Absence & Compulsory Elements:

The course requires consistent engagement on **Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays**, especially in forum discussions. In order to pass this course, **you must achieve a Pass**

or Pass with Distinction on the majority of your assignments (see below). Instructors have the right to require specific assignments be completed to pass the course, e.g., Major Assignments. If you need to be absent, please notify your instructor(s) over email immediately to help you create a plan for your success.

Video meetings with your peers can take place at your convenience. If you are having trouble with scheduling sessions, please message us. All games must be playtested and feedback must be gathered and addressed for full credit.

Assignments, Deadlines and Attempts:

Each Assignment in this course has a re-exam offered 45 days after the original due date. Re-exams requires that you apply to be made part of the assessment. Contact your instructor over email for approval to turn in any late work.

If you fall behind in Transformative Game Design courses, you are permitted to turn in work late, but you may incur a grade penalty. If you must prioritize assignments, please focus on the time sensitive assignments that involve your peers, i.e. playtests, peer reviews, and discussion forums. Make sure to email your instructor(s) for guidance on getting back on track in the course.

Rules for Group Work:

Students are expected to join a group under People in the first week, communicate regularly with their group, and engage in all playtests by the required due dates. Refer to the Course Calendar to take note of these dates.

Group work is your responsibility to arrange. If for some reason playtesting is not possible with the group, please contact the instructor immediately to see if you can find a solution. We recommend joining the student-run course Discord to work out solutions before contacting the instructor. Abandoning group members without making other arrangements is not acceptable.

If the group experiences issues destructive for the learning environment, please contact the Course Responsible. Failing to be a functional part of a group may lead to removal from the group and failing the group assignment, if grading criteria pertain to performing within a group context.

Grading Criteria and Weighting:

For the grade **Pass**, students are required to achieve the grade Pass on the two Major Assignments. Please review the assignment instructions and Grading Rubric for details. Students may revise each paper twice.

- Students must also receive an overall average grade of Pass or Complete for all other assignments (Discussions, Journals, and Game Design Document). **In this course, an overall grade of Pass on these assignments is 70% in the Assignments Weighted Total.**
- Students must also take part in all playtests and provide one (1) peer review for a member of their playtest group, provided that member submits their assignment by the deadline.

For the grade **Pass with Distinction**, students are required to achieve the grade Pass with Distinction on the two Major Assignments. Please review the assignment instructions and Grading Rubric for details. Students may revise each paper twice.

- Students must also receive an overall average grade of Pass with Distinction or Complete for all other assignments (Discussions and Journals), including assignments marked as optional in the Course Calendar. **In this course, an overall grade of Pass with Distinction on these assignments is 85% in the Assignments Weighted Total.** A grade of Complete is also needed for the Game Design Document.
- Students must also take part in all playtests and provide peer reviews for all members of their playtest group, provided the members submit on time. (2 reviews in groups of 3 total including the reviewer; 3 reviews in groups of 4 total).

In exceptional circumstances, based on conduct within the online classroom or toward teachers, the instructor reserves the right to lower a student's grade as the course is progressing.

Supervision and Tutoring:

For help with course content, please email the instructor. For help with writing, please contact the online linked [Language Workshop](#). Note you should contact the Language Workshop earlier rather than later to be able to get help during peak periods.

Expected Entry Skills:

You are expected to be able to read, write, and communicate in English. Knowledge of games and design will be helpful, but not necessary.

Feedback:

In this course, you will receive brief feedback on discussion posts and journals. You will receive feedback on your Major Assignments, which generally be a paragraph of comments in addition to how you were assessed in relation to each of the grading criteria based upon an attached rubric.

Technical Requirements:

You are expected to have a functional computer running either MacOS or Windows (not tablets), for the duration of the course. You must have reliable internet access throughout the week and enough bandwidth to watch videos and run the Zoom video conferencing software in a quiet location.

Rules for generative AI:

This course does not allow the use of generative AI in developing any written work, including essays, discussion posts, journals, and game design documents. For example, you may use the built-in non-generative AI features of Microsoft Word, Google Docs, or your browser for spelling/grammar check, but not built-in AI tools like Copilot.

Changes since last year:

- Some assignments marked Optional for students seeking a Pass.

Course Calendar

Transformative Game Design 1: Course Schedule

- For detailed requirements for assignments, see the [Schedule & Instructions link](#).
- **All assignments are due the end class on the day assigned, i.e. Mondays at 11:59pm in your time zone.** When possible, please post the night before to make sure your peers have time to comment upon your posts.
- Discussions and Journals marked as **Optional** are recommended to skip if you want to go for a **Pass** instead of a **Pass with Distinction**. You will still be required to examine the homework materials leading up to those assignments.

Unit	Requirements
Week 1	
Unit 1	Monday: Introducing Yourself and Connecting with Your Peers Activities: - Choose a playtest group based on times available under groups. You can choose the same group as last time or join a different one. Please organize in groups of 4. - Post an introduction to your small group. - Organize a playtest session with your group. - Read "Glossary" from the Larp Design book and Stephen R. Balzac's "The Use of Structured Goal Setting in Simulation Design." - Complete Discussion 1: Introduction by 11:59pm in your time zone. - This post is your introduction to the entire class. - Reply to the initial posts of at least two of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format for every discussion post. - Complete Orientation Quiz by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Watch Bowman's "Traditional Tabletop Role-playing Game: Design Basics" and "Indie Tabletop Role-playing Games: Design Basics." - Familiarize yourself with Bowman's and Hugaas' "Transformative Role-play: Design, Implementation, and Integration." Optional: Read White, Arjoranta, Hitchens, Peterson, Torner, and Walton's "4 Tabletop Role-Playing Games."
Unit 1	Wednesday: Tabletop Role-playing Games -- Design Basics Activities: - Complete Discussion 2: Tabletop Role-playing Games -- Design Basics by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Watch Bowman's "Traditional Live Action Role-playing (Larp): Design Basics" and "Experimental Live Action Role-playing (Larp): Design Basics." - Read Stenros and Montola's "Basic Concepts in Larp Design." Optional: Read Harviainen, Bienia, Bowman, Brind, Hitchens, Kot, MacCallum-Stewart, Simkins, Stenros, and Sturrock's "5 Live Action Role-playing Games."
Unit 1	Friday: Live Action Role-playing Games (Larp) -- Design Basics Activities: Complete Discussion 3: Live Action Role-playing Games (Larp) -- Design Basics by 11:59pm in your time zone.

	Homework: • Review the selections from <i>#Feminism</i>. • Choose one (1) scenario to playtest with your group, preferably one none or few of your group members have played. Remember to select at least one (1) safety mechanic to use during the game. • Read Mo Holkar's "Workshop Practice: A Functional Workshop Structure Method." • Choose one (1) item to examine from the Workshop category in the Unit Overview. • Familiarize yourself with the resources available in the Workshop Handbook and Drama Notebook. • Review Taylor's "Brainstorming Technique: The 'Yes, and' Technique."
Week 2	
Unit 1 and 2	Monday: Workshop Design Brainstorming Activities: • Complete Discussion 4: Workshop Design Brainstorming by 11:59pm in your time zone. • Read Instructions for Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan Homework: • Watch Westborg's "Designing the Framing." • Review the Workshops section of Bowman et al.'s "Chapter 4: Practice: Designing for Transformative Goals" in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. • Begin work on Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan.
Unit 2	Wednesday: Return to #Feminism Activities: • Complete Playtest 1: Return to #Feminism by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Read Brown's "Creating a Culture of Trust through Safety and Calibration Larp Mechanics." • Choose one (1) item to examine from the Effects Studies section of the Recommended Materials list in Unit 2. • Review Nesbitt's explanation of "The Toulmin Method." • Continue work on Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan.
Unit 2 and 3	Friday: Designing Transformative Leisure Role-playing Games Activities: • Complete Discussion 5: Designing Transformative Leisure Role-playing Games by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework:

	- Choose one (1) item to examine from the Effects Studies list under Recommended Materials in Unit 3. - Read Brown's "Post-Play Activities for Larp: Methods and Challenges." - Familiarize yourself with the materials under "Reflecting for Self-Awareness" from the Reflector's Toolbox. Optional: Watch Bowman's "Safety in Role playing Games Part IV: After the Game." - Continue work on Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan.
Week 3	
Unit 3	Monday: Emotional Debriefing and You Activities: - Complete Reflection Journal 1: Emotional Debriefing and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Choose one (1) item to examine from each of the following three (3) lists under Recommended Materials for a total of three (3) items: Emotional Debriefing, Theory, and Design. Optional: Watch Bowman's "Safety in Role playing Games Part IV: After the Game." - Continue work on Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan.
Unit 3	Wednesday: Design Day Activities: - Work on Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan. Homework: - Watch Diakolambrianou's "Beyond the Couch: Psychotherapy and Live Action Role-playing." - Read Bartenstein's "Larp in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Making Larp a Standard Method." - Continue work on Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan.
Unit 3 and 4	Friday: Therapeutic Role-playing Game Design Activities: - Complete Discussion 6: Therapeutic Role-playing Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Read TeachThought Staff's "Bloom's Taxonomy is a Hierarchical Framework for Cognition and Learning Objectives." Familiarize yourself with the list of verbs provided. - Read Jesper Bruun's "Pre-larp Workshops as Learning Situations – Matching Intentions with Outcome."

	- Review Section 2 on Transformative Goals of “Chapter 2: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>. - Continue work on Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan.
Week 4	
Unit 4	Monday: Learning Objective, Workshop, and Educational Debrief Brainstorming Activities: Optional for PwD: Complete Discussion 7: Learning Objective, Workshop, and Educational Debrief Brainstorming by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Watch Miriam Lundqvist's “Making Mandatory Larps for Non Players.” - Read Michał Mochocki's “Edu-Larp as Revision of Subject-Matter Knowledge.” - Continue work on Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan.
Unit 4	Wednesday: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan Activities: - Submit Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan by 11:59pm in your time zone. - Schedule your Playtest 2: Playtest and Feedback Session with your group. - Read Instructions for Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design. Homework: - Watch Josefin Westborg's "Learning and Framing" and Sarah Lynne Bowman's "Mixing Desk of Edu-Larp." - Read David Crookall's "Engaging (in) Gameplay and (in) Debriefing," and Erik Aarebrot and Martin Nielsen's “Prisoner for a Day: Creating a Game Without Winners.” - Review slides for Sarah Lynne Bowman's "Mixing Desk of Edu-Larp." - Begin work on Game Design Document for Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design.
Unit 4	Friday: Educational Role-playing Game Design Activities: Complete Discussion 8: Educational Role-playing Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework:

	• Watch Josephine Baird's "Surveys, Interviews, and Consent" and Annika Waern's "How Can We Know What Actually Happened in a Larp." • Read Sarah Lynne Bowman's "Educational Live Action Role-playing Games: A Secondary Literature Review." • Continue work on Game Design Document for Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design.
Week 5	
Unit 4 and 5	Monday: Specifics of Researching Role-playing Games Activities: • Complete Discussion 9: Specifics of Researching Role-playing Games by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Watch Josefin Westborg's "Deeper Dive into Design" and Alessandro Giovannucci's "No More Hero: Larp as a Collective Journey." • Choose one (1) of the the following articles to read: ◦ Jesper Heebøll Arbjørn's "The Narrative Experience." ◦ Troels Barkholt-Spangsbo and Jesper Heebøll Arbjørn's "Emergent Stories and Directed Narratives." ◦ Simon Brind's "Narrative Design." • Choose one (1) of the the following articles to read: ◦ Danny Wilson's "Designing the Mechanics You Need." ◦ Johan Dahlberg and Jon Back's "Rules are Magic: What Larp Can Learn From Narrative RPGs." • Continue work on Game Design Document for Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design.
Unit 5	Wednesday: Specifics of Role-playing Game Design Activities: • Complete Discussion 10: Specifics of Role-playing Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Continue work on Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design.
Unit 5	Friday: Playtesting Framing Design Activities: • Complete Playtest 2: Playtest and Feedback Session by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Familiarize yourself with "Reflecting on Experience: A Range of Models That Can Be Used to Prompt and Structure Reflection on Experience" from the Reflector's Toolkit. • Continue work on Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design.

Week 6	
Unit 5 and 6	Monday: Reflection Models and You Activities: • Optional for PwD: Complete Reflection Journal 2: Reflection Models and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Examine one (1) item from the Recommended Materials list on tabletop role-playing games under the Unit 6 Overview. • Examine two (2) items from the Recommended Materials list on larp under the Unit 6 Overview from two (2) different creators under two (2) different categories, e.g. German larp, American freeform, Online larp, etc. • Continue work on Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design.
Unit 6	Wednesday: Styles and Cultures of Role-playing Game Design Activities: • Complete Discussion 11: Styles and Cultures of Role-playing Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Continue work on Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design.
Unit 6	Friday: Framing Transformative Game Design Draft Activities: • Submit First Complete Draft of Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design. • Review the Peer Review Instructions for Major Assignment 2. • Send your First Complete Draft over email to your playtest group for peer review. Homework: • Work on one (1) or more peer reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it's ready.
Week 7	
Unit 6	Monday: Peer Review Work Day Activities: • Work on one (1) or more peer reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it's ready.
Unit 6 and 7	Wednesday: Peer Review Work Day Activities: • Work on one (1) or more peer reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it's ready. Homework:

	• Watch the first 56 minutes of Caro Murphy's "Ritual: The Importance of Framing Transformational Experiences -- Caro Murphy." • Read Martin Nielsen's "Culture Calibration in Pre-larp Workshops." • Examine one (1) item from the Ritual Design category and one (1) item from the Symbolism category on the Recommended Materials list for a total of two (2) items. • Optional: Watch "Cultures by Design" by Eirik Fatland. (Use headphones for optimal sound). • Work on one (1) or more peer reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it's ready.
Unit 7	Friday: Culture, Ritual, and Symbolism Design Brainstorming Activities: • Complete Discussion 12: Culture, Ritual, and Symbolism Design Brainstorming by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Watch "Experimental Anthropology" by Kaisa Kangas. • Read Whitney Strix Beltrán's "Why Minority Settings in RPGs Matter," Ajit George's "The Beautiful Challenge of Bringing India to <i>D&D's Ravenloft</i>," and Shoshana Kessock's "Cultural Appropriation and Larp." • Work on one (1) or more peer reviews for Major Assignment 2, sending your feedback as soon as it's ready.
Week 8	
Unit 7 and 8	Monday: Cultural Role-playing and You Activities: • Complete Reflection Journal 3: Cultural Role-playing and You. • Submit one (1) or more Peer Reviews to your peers over email and under the Peer Review submission link. Homework: • Read Kaisa Kangas' "Playing the Stories of Others." • Examine at one (1) item from three (3) different creators in each of the following three sections under Recommended Materials in Unit Overview for a total of three (3) items: Politics and Cultures; Race and Ethnicity; and Gender and Sexuality. • Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Unit 8	Wednesday: Conflict in Role-playing Game Design Activities: • Complete Discussion 13: Conflict in Role-playing Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework:

	Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Unit 8 and 9	Friday: Writing Workshop Activities: - Visit the Language Workshop for academic writing assistance when appointments are available (if needed). Homework: - Read Elsa S. Henry's "Reimagining Disability in Role-Playing Games" and Shelly Jones' "Blinded by the Roll: The Critical Fail of Disability in D&D." - Watch the Ethical Use of Generative AI section (49:44-52:03) of Taisto Suominen's "Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs." - Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback (when available).
Week 9	
Unit 9	Monday: Representation and Tech Ethics in RPG Design Activities: - Complete Reflection Journal 4: Representation, Tech Ethics, and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback.
Unit 9	Wednesday: Writing Workshop Activities: - Visit the Language Workshop for academic writing assistance when appointments are available (if needed). Homework: - Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback.
Unit 10	Friday: Transformative Game Design and You Activities: - Complete Reflection Journal 5: Transformative Game Design and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: - Revise your Major Assignment 2 according to peer and instructor feedback.
Week 10	
Unit 10	Monday: Framing Transformative Game Design and You Activities: Submit Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone.

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Course schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor(s). Please note that schedule changes may occur during the semester.

Assessments & Deliverables

Note: You may not use AI tools in this class. We would much rather read a post with imperfect spelling and grammar or structure than a post that was constructed largely by a computer. An exception is spelling/grammar checker in Google Docs or Word.

Keep in mind also that the majority of your sources already cited in Chicago Author-Date format in each unit, so you should not need a tool for that either.

Deliverables:

- **Discussion Boards Assignments:** You are expected to participate in each discussion assignment, including your initial posts and posts to the required number of peers throughout the week in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.
- **Reflection Journal Assignments:** You are also expected to complete Reflection Journals at the end of each Unit. Note that only your instructors and you can see your journals.
- **Major Assignment 1 -- Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan:** These documents should contain all the instructions for your nano-game that facilitators and participants need to playtest, as well as your plans for playtesting and receiving feedback. Please read the linked instructions for [Major Assignment 1](#) for more details.
- **Major Assignment 2 -- Framing Transformative Game Design:** You will compose an academic article using Research Through Design as a method based upon your process of designing, playtesting, and analyzing the results of your nano-game. You will submit a complete first draft for peer and instructor feedback, then revise your assignment based upon these comments for your final submission at the end of the course. Your revised Game Design Document should be included as an Appendix at the end of the paper. Please read the linked instructions for [Major Assignment 2](#) for more details.
 - The Appendix of this document will also include a revised Game Design Document, which should contain all the instructions for your nano-game that facilitators and participants need to play your full game, including pre- and post-game framing activities.

- Your assignment should cite at least **one (1) source on Research Through Design** as a method, as well as **at least three (3) additional sources from the course** in [Chicago Author-Date format](#) or another citation style of your choice. Note that citations must be consistent and correct according to the style guide.
- **Peer Reviews Major Assignment 2 -- Framing Transformative Game**
Design: You will read the first complete draft of Major Assignment 2 for one to three (1-3) of your peers in your group and respond to the required feedback questions to help them improve their work. Peer review is essential to the examination process in academic work.
 - For consideration for a grade of **Pass** on your own Major Assignment 2, you must complete one (1) peer review for a member of your group.
 - For consideration for a grade of **Pass with Distinction** on your own Major Assignment 2, you may complete peer reviews for *all* members of your group (2 reviews for a group of 3 including yourself; 3 reviews for a group of 4).

Assessment: Deliverables will be graded based on completion of the required components on a Fail (U)/Pass (G)/Pass with Distinction basis.

Policy on Generative AI

Introduction – No use of generative AI (GAI) is permitted in this course. The use of GAI is considered a breach of academic honesty with the same penalties as plagiarism.

Rationale – Engaging with this course is primarily about your intellectual, emotional, and creative growth. Work generated by AI does not reflect your growth, nor does it prepare you for the critical thinking and communication skills required in the working world or as an engaged community member.

Your job as a student is to engage with course materials, develop your critical thinking skills, create games from your own imagination, personally reflect on the content from your unique perspective, and articulate your own thoughts through writing and presentation skills, cite credible scholarly sources where appropriate.

My job is to assess how well you have performed these tasks. I am interested and enthusiastic about hearing your unique perspective, not the “right answer.” The answers GAI provides are often highly inaccurate and shallow. Furthermore, they can contain ethically problematic statements that run counter to meeting our learning objectives and cultivating a supportive atmosphere in the classroom.

- **Penalties** – Using generative AI in any assignment may result in a failing grade and/or report to the university for academic dishonesty. Issues with grammar and structure are unlikely to lead to a failing grade on an assignment, but the use of GAI likely will. This is not an English course; do not worry too much about grammar or writing a “perfect” paper.
- **Prohibited** –
 - Students are not permitted to submit assignments created using generative AI for their written work or presentations.
 - Students can use the built in grammar/spelling checkers in web browsers, Google Docs, or Microsoft Word. However, students may not use built-in AI tools such as Google Gemini or Microsoft Co-pilot, nor may they use any other AI tool to generate text or alter spelling/grammar. Grammarly is no longer a permitted resource for this reason.
 - Students may not use generative AI for research. GAI is not considered a credible source, as it often “hallucinates” falsehoods as truth, does not cite where it finds them, or invents citations that do not exist.
 - Instead, students must consult original sources and cite them, such as sources from Google Scholar and the Uppsala Library.
 - Note that you will **likely not need to include any external sources** outside of the ones cited for you and included in the Overviews for each Unit. You may use those citations, as well as links to the sources we cite, e.g., (Montola 2010, in Diakolambrianou et al. 2024).

Learning Objectives and Success Criteria

On successful completion of Transformative Game Design 1, the student should be able to:

- **Show Knowledge of the Field:** Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
- **Use Game Play, Design, and Playtesting:** Design, play, iterate, and critique transformative analog games that have specific growth-related goals.
- **Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:** Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.

Please see below for specific Learning Objectives and Success Criteria for each type of assignment:

- **Discussion Boards Assignments:** You are expected to participate in each discussion assignment, including your initial posts and posts to the required number of peers throughout the week in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.
 - *Learning Objective 1 -- Show Knowledge of the Field:* Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
 - *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your initial posts answering all questions thoroughly. Reply to at least three (3) posts of your peers throughout the week in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

- **Reflection Journal Assignments:** You are also expected to complete Reflection Journals at the end of each Unit. Note that only your instructors and you can see your journals.
 - *Learning Objective 1 -- Show Knowledge of the Field:* Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
 - *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your journals answering all questions thoroughly.

- **Major Assignment 1 -- Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan:** These documents should contain the instructions for your nano-game that facilitators and participants need to playtest, including pre- and post- framing game activities, as well as your plans for playtesting and receiving feedback.

- *Learning Objective 1 -- Use Game Play, Design, and Playtesting:* Design, play, iterate, and critique transformative analog games that have specific growth-related goals.
 - *Learning Objective 2 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your Game Design Document and Playtest Plan in the required format.
- **Major Assignment 2 -- Framing Transformative Game Design:** You will compose an academic article using Research Through Design as a method based upon your process of designing, playtesting, and analyzing the results of your nano-game. You will submit a complete first draft for peer feedback, then revise your assignment based upon these comments for your final submission at the end of the course. Your assignment should cite at least **one (1) source on Research Through Design** as a method, as well as **at least three (3) additional sources from the course** in [Chicago Author-Date format](#) or another citation style of your choice. Note that citations must be consistent and correct according to the style guide.
 - *Learning Objective 1 -- Show Knowledge of the Field:* Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
 - *Learning Objective 2 -- Use Game Play, Design, and Playtesting:* Design, play, iterate, and critique transformative analog games that have specific growth-related goals.
 - *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your paper in the required format with each section. Include the minimum number of sources included and cited properly.

Peer Feedback -- Framing Transformative Game Design: You will read the first complete draft of Major Assignment 2 for 1-3 of your peers and respond to the required feedback questions to help them improve their work.

- *Learning Objective 1-- Show Knowledge of the Field:* Discuss topics, themes, and theories related to transformative analog game design, role-playing game studies, and other interdisciplinary fields.
- *Learning Objective 3 -- Perform Academic, Professional, and Reflective Writing:* Compose written texts and other communication materials on transformative analog game design in various formats for distinct audiences.
- *Success Criteria:* Complete responses to each required question on the prompt in response to the drafts of each member of your group.

Course Materials

All course materials are embedded as files in the course or linked. Make sure to review the Overviews for each Unit, as well as the linked materials in the instructions of each assignment.

[A complete list of Course Materials is linked here](#), including required, recommended, and further reading in the field.

Unit 1: Role-playing Game Design Basics

Overview: Role-playing Game Design Basics



Welcome to Transformative Game Design 1! This course explores foundational concepts and practices to consider when designing analog role-playing games for transformative impacts. In addition to lectures, discussions, and journals, you will also be playing at least one game, as well as designing a workshop and debrief for a nanogame you have designed.

The instructions are mostly the same from Introduction to Transformative Game Design, with these exceptions:

- You must playtest **the framing design** for your game and receive feedback from your peers on your game **once** during this course.
- Each group member's playtest should be a **maximum of 50 min** -- maximum of 40 min for workshop, game play, and debrief and 10 min total for feedback.
- You will also have another session where you will play a nano-game together, so plan for a minimum of two (2) sessions total.

Please familiarize yourself with the contents of the course including the syllabus, the calendar, and the units, then take your Orientation Quiz, which is linked in this Unit.

* * *

Unit 1 Overview

In Unit 1, we will discuss role-playing game design basics for tabletop, freeform, and larp. Some of you may be highly familiar with this content, whereas for others, it will be new for you. Our hope is that this basic introduction will give you much of the vocabulary needed to understand the rest of the content in this course and future courses in the Transformative Game Design Master's. We also want you to consider these concepts in terms of transformative impacts and goal-setting, as game design can enhance or inhibit these processes depending upon the circumstances.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Traditional Tabletop Role-playing Game Design Basics
- Indie Tabletop Role-playing Game Design Basics
- Traditional Larp Design Basics
- Experimental Larp Design Basics
- Alibi
- Role-playing Game Mechanics
- Structured Goal Setting

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We are providing them as part of your education within this course. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Videos:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2022. "[Experimental Live Action Role-playing \(Larp\): Design Basics -- Sarah Lynne Bowman.](#)" Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 21.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2022. "[Indie Tabletop Role-playing Games: Design Basics -- Sarah Lynne Bowman.](#)" Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 16.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2022. "[Traditional Live Action Role-playing \(Larp\): Design Basics -- Sarah Lynne Bowman.](#)" Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 21.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2022. "[Traditional Tabletop Role-playing Game: Design Basics -- Sarah Lynne Bowman.](#)" Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 16.

Readings:

- Balzac, Stephen R. 2013. "The Use of Structured Goal Setting in Simulation Design." In *Wyrd Con Companion Book 2013*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman and Aaron Vanek, 18-21. Los Angeles, CA: Wyrd Con. (3 pages)
- Koljonen, Johanna, Jaakko Stenros, Anne Serup Grove, Aina, D. Skønsfjell, Elin Nielsen, eds. "Glossary." In *Larp Design: Creating Role-Play Experiences*, edited by Johanna Koljonen, Jaakko Stenros, Anne Serup Grove, Aina D. Skønsfjell, and Elin Nilsen, 411-419. Copenhagen, Denmark: Landsforeningen Bifrost. (8 pages)
- Stenros, Jaakko, and Markus Montola. 2019. "Basic Concepts in Larp Design." In (Download) *Larp Design: Creating Role-Play Experiences*, edited by Johanna Koljonen, Jaakko Stenros, Anne Serup Grove, Aina D. Skønsfjell, and Elin Nilsen, 16-21. Copenhagen, Denmark: Landsforeningen Bifrost.

Discussion Forum Instructions

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer based upon the content of their post. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.

- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Respond in this manner often throughout the next week for full participation.

Orientation Quiz

1. I can complete this course without meeting with a group and playtesting.
TRUE / FALSE
2. I am designing a new game in this course.
TRUE / FALSE
3. This course will teach me how to frame role-playing games in ways conducive to guiding players through transformative impacts.
TRUE / FALSE
4. I will play another #Feminism scenario with my group during this course, preferably one none of us has played.
TRUE / FALSE
5. This course emphasizes implementation rather than game design.
TRUE / FALSE
6. I will write a Game Design Document in this course that includes a completed workshop debrief for my nanogame.
TRUE / FALSE
7. There is no final research paper assignment.
TRUE / FALSE
8. Most weeks, I am required to submit discussion posts, replies to my peers, and journal entries on time.
TRUE / FALSE
9. This course focuses on game design in tabletop, freeform, and larp.

TRUE / FALSE

Sign up for Your Playtest and Feedback Group

For this class, you will join a group of 3-4 students based on your preferred schedule for video conference meetings. This group will be your Playtest and Feedback group for the course. Together, you will:

- 1) **Play one (1) of the five (5) recommended nanogames from #Feminism.** Please pick a scenario none of you (or few of you) have played if possible.
- 2) **Playtest the games designed by each group member and give them feedback once.** In other words, you will be iterating upon your game design based upon their feedback 1 time, so you will need 1 session for each game. We recommend booking several playtests in the same session if possible. Game play should not exceed 45 minutes and feedback should not exceed 15 minutes, for a total of one (1) hour maximum per game. Time yourselves.
- 3) **Provide feedback on each member of your groups' first complete draft of Major Assignment 2.**

To sign up for your playtest group:

- a) **Click on People.**
- b) **Join a group under one of the following tabs:** Flexible; Weekday Daytime CET (Central European Time); Weekday Evenings CET (Central European Time); Weekend Daytime CET (Central European Time); or Weekend Evenings CET (Central European Time).

-- Please join a group that is close to being full if possible, as a full group will make playtesting and feedback sessions more fruitful.

-- To figure out your time in CET, use the linked [International Meeting Planner](#). Keep in mind that the differences between time zones may shift throughout the semester based upon Summer Time vs. Winter Time.

-- We recommend for students in the Master's program in Visby to group together and meet physically if possible.

-- If your schedule is quite flexible, choose a slot in a Flexible group. If necessary, we may ask you to join a group with a more limited schedule. Some students have much more spare time than others to meet, so your flexibility might be of great assistance to them.

- c) **Post immediately in your group a short introduction and your available times. Use CET to make it easier for everyone to plan.**

- d) **Schedule your first meeting, which will be a playtest of one of the available #Feminism nanogames.** You can discuss in the group any scenarios you definitely want to play, as well as share ones you do want to play, but please agree on one of the games.

-- [Uppsala University supports the linked software Zoom](#), which we recommend for all students.

Please email us if you have questions or concerns.

Discussion 1: Introduce Yourself and Connect!

Let's get to know each other!

Please read the syllabus and review the course schedule. Read the "Glossary" from the *Larp Design* book and Stephen R. Balzac's "The Use of Structured Goal Setting in Simulation Design."

Then, answer the following questions in complete sentences and paragraph form:

1. What is your name and what pronouns should we use for you, e.g. they/them, she/hers, he/his, etc.?
2. Where in the world are you located currently? Feel free to include any other aspects of your cultural background you would like to share.
3. What is your educational background?
4. What is your career and current professional affiliations (if relevant)?
5. Choose one or more words from the Glossary that are important to your experience and/or are helping you better understand your role-playing game experiences. Explain why.
 - A. Alternatively, choose one or more words that are unfamiliar and you hope to explore further in this class. Why are these concepts of interest to you? Be specific.
6. Review Balzac's article on Structured Goal Setting. Have you engaged in structured goal setting in your own game design? If so, be specific.
 - A. If not, explain how the concepts presented might help you design games for transformative impacts.

* * *

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to **at least two (2) of your peers** using the **Ask a Question, Answer a Question** format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer based upon the content of their post. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Respond in this manner often throughout the next week for full participation.

Discussion 2: Tabletop Role-playing Games -- Design Basics

Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman's "[Traditional Tabletop Role-playing Game: Design Basics](#)" (41 minutes) and "[Indie Tabletop Role-playing Games: Design Basics](#)" (54 minutes).

Familiarize yourself with Sarah Lynne Bowman's and Kjell Hedgard Hugaas' "Transformative Role-play: Design, Implementation, and Integration."

Optional:

Read William J. White, Jonne Arjoranta, Michael Hitchens, Jon Peterson, Evan Torner, and Jonathan Walton's "4 Tabletop Role-Playing Games" (21 pages).

* * *

Then, answer the following questions (general guidelines 1 paragraph per question unless otherwise specified. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences):

1. Have you played any of the tabletop role-playing games mentioned in the materials this week or tabletop role-playing games similar to them?
 - A. If so, please describe an experience with **one (1)** of these games. Which parts did you find enjoyable? Were any parts not enjoyable? If so, why?
 - B. If not, which tabletop role-playing games would you be interested in exploring, if any? Why or why not? Be specific.

2. After familiarizing yourself with Bowman and Hugaas' article, choose **two (2) games** mentioned in the tabletop materials. Then, choose two (2) transformative impacts mentioned in the article. For each game, write one (1) paragraph including the following information, for a total of two (2) paragraphs:
 - A. Games provide affordances to perform specific actions. In role-playing games, alibi is a specific mechanism that provides affordances for certain types of behaviors. What types of alibi do you think each game affords for player behavior and exploration? Be specific.
 - B. Brainstorm how you might design a scenario or component for each game to facilitate a transformative impact, i.e. Game A with Impact A, Game B with Impact B.
 - C. Consider what conditions might be most helpful in encouraging these impacts to occur, i.e. the gaming environment, the player group, the facilitator's skills, the framing of the game, etc.
 - D. Consider what conditions might hinder these impacts occurring. Be specific.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Discussion 3: Live Action Role-playing Games (Larp) -- Design Basics

Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman's "[Traditional Live Action Role-playing \(Larp\): Design Basics -- Sarah Lynne Bowman](#)" (49 minutes) and "[Experimental Live Action Role-playing \(Larp\): Design Basics](#)" (57 minutes).

Read Stenros and Montola's "Basic Concepts in Larp Design" (5 pages).

Optional:

Read Harviainen, Bienia, Bowman, Brind, Hitchens, Kot, MacCallum-Stewart, Simkins, Stenros, Sturrock, and Xiong's "5 Live Action Role-playing Games" (17 pages).

* *

Then, answer the following questions (general guidelines 1 paragraph per question unless otherwise specified. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences):

1. Have you played any of the live action role-playing or freeform games mentioned in the materials this week or games similar to them?
 - A. If so, please describe an experience with **one (1)** of these games. Which parts did you find enjoyable? Were any parts not enjoyable? If so, why?

- B. If not, which larps or freeforms would you be interested in exploring, if any? Why or why not? Be specific.
2. After familiarizing yourself with Bowman and Hugaas' article, choose two (2) games mentioned in the larp and freeform materials. Then, choose two (2) transformative impacts mentioned in the article. For each game, write one (1) paragraph including the following information, for a total of two (2) paragraphs:
- A. Games provide affordances to perform specific actions. In role-playing games, alibi is a specific mechanism that provides affordances for certain types of behaviors. What types of alibi do you think each game affords for player behavior and exploration? Be specific.
 - B. Brainstorm how you might design a scenario or component for each game to facilitate a transformative impact, i.e. Game A with Impact A, Game B with Impact B.
 - C. Consider what conditions might be most helpful in encouraging these impacts to occur, i.e. the gaming environment, the player group, the facilitator's skills, the framing of the game, etc.
 - D. Consider what conditions might hinder these impacts occurring. Be specific.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 2: Transformative Leisure Role-playing Game Design

Overview: Transformative Leisure Role-playing Game Design



Welcome to our unit on Transformative Leisure Role-playing Game Design! These types of games are not necessarily played for an educational or therapeutic purpose, but they can be designed with specific goals in mind and players might find them transformative in a variety of different ways. We will also discuss workshops, which we recommend as

important pre-game framing activities when designing transformative role-playing games.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Workshops
- Workshop Design
- Effects Studies
- Safety and Calibration
- Alibi
- Empathy
- Perspective Taking

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We are providing them as part of your education within this course. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Videos:

- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "[Designing the Framing](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube. November 14.

Readings:

- Brown, Maury. 2016. "Creating a Culture of Trust through Safety and Calibration Larp Mechanics." Nordiclarp.org, September 9.
- Holkar, Mo. 2015. "Workshop Practice: A Functional Workshop Structure Method." In *The Knudepunkt 2015 Companion Book*, edited by Charles Bo Nielsen, 150-155. Copenhagen, Denmark: Rollespils Akademiet.

Discussion Forum Instructions

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.

- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer based upon the content of their post. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Respond in this manner often throughout the next week for full participation.

Discussion 4: Workshop Design Brainstorming

Read Mo Holkar's "Workshop Practice: A Functional Workshop Structure Method."

Choose **one (1) article** to read from the Workshop category in the Unit 2 Overview.

Review Taylor's "[Brainstorming Technique: The 'Yes, and' Technique](#)."

Familiarize yourself with the resources available in the [Workshop Handbook](#) and [Drama Notebook](#).

Then, answer the following questions.

1. Choose between either the *#Feminism* scenario you played in the last course or in this course. After looking at the materials we have provided such as the Workshop Handbook and the Drama Notebook, brainstorm a pre-game workshop for the scenario. The workshop should not be identical, but can be inspired by other exercises. Describe the workshop in 3-4 sentences.
2. Review Holkar's article. Under which category from Holkar's article do you think the workshop you designed fits? What is the purpose behind this workshop? Why is it particularly useful for this specific game?
3. Read at least one (1) other articles on the recommended list under the Workshop category. What main concepts from these other articles did you find intriguing or illuminating, whether with regard to your workshop design exercise or in general?

Finally, review Taylor's "Yes And video." Respond to at least two (2) of your peers. Remember to use "Yes, And..." when providing comments on the work of your peers, even when offering critique.

Instructions for Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan

In this assignment, you will create a Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan for your nano-game. The Playtest Scenario only contains the parts you will playtest with your group. Please review the linked instructions for [Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan](#).

Later in the course, you will submit your revised Game Design Document based on the results of this assignment as an appendix to [Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design](#).

Playtest 1: Return to #Feminism

Organize a video meeting with your playtest group.

1. Choose one (1) of the five (5) scenarios from *#Feminism* and playtest it together with your group by the due date at 11:59 in your time zone. Please pick a scenario none of you (or few of you) have played if possible.

Boss, Emily Care. 2017. "Ma, Can I Help You With That."

Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2017. "Curtain Call."

Beltrán, Strix. 2017. "Möbius."

Kemper, Jonaya. "Slumber Party."

Wei, Eva. 2017. "How to Be Ava White."

2. Watch [Safety Video 3](#) before the game. Select at least one (1) safety mechanic to integrate into the playtest. Try to use the other ideas and guidelines presented in the video in your playtest.
3. If your game only features 3 characters and your group had 4, either rotate characters or decide that one player facilitates and/or watches. When possible, give everyone a chance to play.
4. If your game has rules or guidance for touch or physical proximity, find an alternative technique that will be effective through video conferencing. Alternatively, you can verbalize, e.g. "I touch your shoulder. I move closer to you."
5. If the game requires you to use physical objects, either hold them up to the camera, or find a digital way to represent them, e.g., slips of paper can become a shared Google Doc.

6. For scenes requiring music, instead of playing through Zoom, which can be difficult sound-wise, we recommend everyone loading the songs on their own computer.
 1. For key songs that frame scenes, have everyone mute or use headphones until the song is complete. When everyone is done listening, resume the scene.
 2. For background songs, one option is to have one headphone speaker in one ear with the music on low for ambiance, then listen to co-players with the other.
 3. If music is not possible for accessibility reasons, consider it optional. We recommend players listen to the songs at another time if possible to get a sense of the fully designed experience.

Discussion 5: Designing Transformative Leisure Role-playing Games

Watch Westborg's "[Designing the Framing](#)" (13 min).

Read Brown's "Creating a Culture of Trust through Safety and Calibration Larp Mechanics."

Choose at least **one (1) article** to read from the Effects section of the Recommended Reading list in Unit 2.

Review Nesbitt's explanation of "The Toulmin Method."

Optional: Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman's "[Safety in Role playing Games II: Before the Game](#)."

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Based on the readings and videos this week, how is framing important when designing transformative leisure role-playing experiences? How does safety fit into that design work? Be specific.
2. Read your chosen article from the Effects section in Unit 2. Apply the Toulmin Method to establish the main claim, the reasoning, the evidence, and any objections and rebuttals presented (4-5 sentences maximum).
 - A. What specific transformative impacts were studied in this study?
 - B. Do you find this claim persuasive in the way the author is presenting it? Why or why not?

3. In one paragraph (4-6 sentences), brainstorm a game designed around these same transformative impacts that would be played in a transformative leisure setting, briefly describing the narrative, the setting, and the target group.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 3: Therapeutic Role-playing Game Design

Overview: Therapeutic Role-playing Game Design



Welcome to our unit on therapeutic role-playing game design! These types of games are designed for a therapeutic purpose or to help participants develop social skills under the direction of trained mental health professionals. We will also discuss emotional debriefing, which can be an important framing activity not only after therapeutic role-playing games, but also after any transformative game.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Emotional debriefing
- Post-play activities
- Safety design fundamentals
- Psychotherapy, drama therapy, and role-playing games
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and role-playing game design
- Reflecting for self-awareness

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We are providing them as part of your education within this course. Do not distribute PDFs.

Required materials:

Videos:

- Diakolambrianou, Elektra. 2022. "[Beyond the Couch: Psychotherapy and Live Action Role-playing – Elektra Diakolambrianou](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube.

Readings:

- Bartenstein, Lennart. 2022. "Larp in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Making Larp a Standard Method." Nordiclarp.org, April 22.
- Brown, Maury. 2018. "Post-Play Activities for Larp: Methods and Challenges." *Analog Game Studies* V, no. II (June 2).

Familiarize yourself with:

- The University of Edinburgh. 2019. "[Reflecting for Self-Awareness](#)." Reflector's Toolkit, March 18.

Optional:

- Bowman, Sarah Bowman. 2022. "[Safety in Role playing Games Part IV: After the Game --- Sarah Lynne Bowman](#)." Transformative Play Initiative, February 4.

Discussion Forum Instructions

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer based upon the content of their post. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.

- Respond in this manner often throughout the next week for full participation.

Reflection Journal 1: Emotional Debriefing and You

Examine **one (1) item** from the Recommended Materials list under Effects Studies in **Unit 3**.

Read Brown's "Post-Play Activities for Larp: Methods and Challenges."

Familiarize yourself with the materials under "Reflecting for Self-Awareness" from the Reflector's Toolbox.

Optional: Watch Bowman's "[Safety in Role playing Games Part IV: After the Game.](#)"

1. Read your chosen article from the Effects Studies section in **Unit 3**. Apply the Toulmin method to establish the main claim, the reasoning, the evidence, and any objections and rebuttals presented (4-5 sentences maximum).
 - A. Do you find this claim persuasive in the way the author is presenting it? Why or why not?
2. Reflect upon your experiences with role-playing games, including this course. **Discuss one (1) memory** of emotional processing after a game in whatever depth you prefer in 1-3 sentences.
 - A. How commonly do you experience emotional debriefing and shared reflection within your role-playing group(s)?
 - B. If you do not have such a memory, why might emotional processing and reflection be helpful in your own experience? Be specific.
3. Choose between either the *#Feminism* scenario you played in the last course or in this course. After reading Brown's article, brainstorm an emotional debrief after looking at the materials we have provided. Describe the structure of the debrief in 3-4 sentences. Include **one (1) emotional debriefing question** tailored for this scenario using an example from the Reflector's Toolkit as a baseline.

Discussion 6: Therapeutic Role-playing Game Design

Watch Diakolambrianou's "[Beyond the Couch: Psychotherapy and Live Action Role-playing.](#)"

Read Bartenstein's "Larp in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Making Larp a Standard Method."

1. After reviewing Diakolambrianou's video, describe three (3) ways in which psychotherapeutic concepts can help inform therapeutic role-playing game design. Be specific.
2. After reviewing Bartenstein's article, how does the author apply principles in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to larp design? Give examples.
3. In one paragraph (4-6 sentences), brainstorm a design of a therapeutic role-playing game using **one (1) of the concepts** described in these materials, including the narrative, the therapeutic goals, the framing, and the target group.
 - A. Would you need support from a mental health professional to run this game? If so, how would you include them in the process?

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 4: Educational Role-playing Game Design

Overview: Educational Role-playing Game Design



Welcome to our unit on educational role-playing game design! These types of games are designed for an educational purpose according to specific learning objectives, such as curricular materials or helping participants develop social skills under the direction of an educator. We will also discuss intellectual debriefing, a key framing activity in educational role-playing games of all kinds, which can also be useful for transformative games in general.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Learning and Framing
- The Mixing Desk of Edu-Larp
- Constructing Learning Objectives
- Workshop Design for Educational Outcomes
- Intellectual and Educational Debriefing

- RPGs and Subject Matter Revision

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We are providing them as part of your education within this course. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Videos:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2022. "[The Mixing Desk of Edu-Larp](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 21.
- Lundqvist, Miriam. 2015. "[Making Mandatory Larps for Non Players - Miriam Lundqvist](#)." Nordic Larp Talks, February 12.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "[Learning and Framing](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube.

Readings:

- Aarebrot, Erik, and Martin Nielsen. 2012. "Prisoner for a Day: Creating a Game Without Winners." In *Playing the Learning Game: A Practical Introduction to Educational Roleplaying*, edited by Martin Eckhoff Andresen, 24-29. Oslo, Norway: Fantasiforbundet.
 - **Content advisory:** Emotional abuse, forced labor, imprisonment, human rights violations
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2018. "The Mixing Desk of Edu-Larp." Workshop for Edu-Larp Conference 2018, Malmö, Sweden, May 14, 2018.
- Bruun, Jesper. 2011. "Pre-larp Workshops as Learning Situations – Matching Intentions with Outcome." In *Think Larp: Academic Writings from KP2011*, edited by Thomas Duus Henriksen, Christian Bierlich, Kasper Friis Hansen, and Valdemar Kølle, 194-215. Copenhagen, Denmark: Rollespilsakademiet.
- Crookall, David. 2014. "Engaging (in) Gameplay and (in) Debriefing." *Simulation & Gaming*, 45, no. 4-5: 416-27.
- Mochocki, Michał. 2013. "Edu-Larp as Revision of Subject-Matter Knowledge." *The International Journal of Role-Playing* 4: 55-75.
- TeachThought Staff. 2022. "Bloom's Taxonomy is a Hierarchical Framework for Cognition and Learning Objectives." TeachThought University.

Discussion Forum Instructions

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer based upon the content of their post. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Respond in this manner often throughout the next week for full participation.

Discussion 7: Learning Objective, Workshop, and Educational Debrief Brainstorming

Read Jesper Bruun's "Pre-larp Workshops as Learning Situations – Matching Intentions with Outcome" (21 pages).

Read TeachThought Staff's "Bloom's Taxonomy is a Hierarchical Framework for Cognition and Learning Objectives." Familiarize yourself with the list of verbs provided.

Review Section 2 on Transformative Goals of "Chapter 2: Theory, Central Concepts, and Inspirational Materials" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Then, answer the following questions:

- 1) Choose between either the *#Feminism* scenario you played in the last course or in this course. After looking at the materials we have provided this week, create an explicit learning objective for the scenario. Actionable learning objectives start with a verb from Bloom's Taxonomy, which focus on active states rather than passive states.
- 2) Brainstorm a pre-game workshop for the scenario designed to emphasize the intentions of the learning objective. The workshop should not be identical to an existing one, but can be inspired by other exercises. Describe the workshop in 3-4 sentences.

3) Brainstorm a post-game educational debrief that emphasizes your learning objective. Specify which questions you would ask, then explain how they might help players achieve the learning objective.

4) Have you designed educational role-playing games following these framing steps before? If so, do you think the game(s) were effective? Why?

A. If not, how might you include educational framing in future designs? Consider a specific example, whether hypothetical or from your experience.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Submission of Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan

Submit your Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan for your nano-game. The Playtest Scenario only contains the parts you will playtest with your group.

[Click here to see a worked example of a Playtest Plan](#) from Josefin Westborg.

In terms of design of your scenario, you may use your previous design from **Major Assignment 2: Game Design Document and Playtest Plan** in **Introduction to Transformative Game Design** as a baseline or create a new game. Either way, you will only focus on **one key scene** that your group will playtest in each session.

Later in the course, you will submit your complete **a Game Design Document** with all of the components as an Appendix for Major Assignment 2. [Please review the linked instructions for Major Assignment 2](#), since Major Assignment 2 builds upon Major Assignment 1.

Word count: 400-700 words.

1. **Research Question:** Include a research question for your framing design. What problem are you trying to solve or question do you hope to get answered through this Research Through Design process?
2. Your Playtest Scenario should contain all the instructions that facilitators and participants need to playtest.
 - A. A short description the nano-game as a whole (2-3 sentences)
 - B. **One (1) workshop activity** you plan to include. This activity should focus specifically on preparing players to engage in the scene they will play in unique ways and be sufficiently different from any workshops you included in a previous version of the game. You will playtest the new

workshop and evaluate its effectiveness in guiding players toward your chosen transformative impacts through play.

- C. **One (1) scene** from your game that participants should role-play. You will tie your workshop to this scene for your playtest. Try to choose a "core scene" with content key to the transformative impacts you hope to encourage.
- D. **One (1) debrief question** that each player should answer during the playtest. You can choose emotional, intellectual, or educational debrief questions based upon the goals of your game. Refer to the "[Reflecting on Self-Awareness](#)" and "[Reflecting on Experience](#)" from the Reflection Toolkit for some examples of baseline structures for questions. Your debrief questions should be specific to your desired transformative impacts.

3. Outline a Playtest Plan, including:

- A. The timeframe for the structure of your playtest (see below).
- B. How you plan to collect feedback, such as taking notes and recordings. Remember that the debrief is a separate phase from feedback.
- C. The feedback questions you plan to ask your peers after the playtest.

Remember not to assign "homework" in the form of post-game questionnaires after the playtest. Gather all information during the playtest session.

Please adhere to following timeframe structure for each nanogame playtest as closely as possible:

1. Give a basic brief of the game and hand out the characters (no more than 10 minutes)
2. Play one (1) workshop activity designed for your nano-game for a part of the game that players might find challenging (no more than 10 minutes)
3. Play one (1) scene (no more than 10 minutes)
4. Ask 1 emotional, intellectual, or educational debrief question for each player to answer (5-10 minutes)
5. Feedback (no more than 10 min)

= 30-50 min max

Remember that each playtest and feedback session should not exceed 50 minutes:
40 minutes maximum for the playtest making sure you save 10 min for post-game

feedback from all participants. Use a timer. Be respectful of your peers' time so that all games get playtested thoroughly.

Importantly, your debrief is a separate phase from feedback. Your debrief should focus upon the experience of the players in the game, emotionally and/or intellectually. Feedback should always come after debriefing, as processing and reflection are crucial to the transformation process.

Finally, please share your Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan immediately with your Playtest group when complete. Your peers should have the time and opportunity to opt-out as needed. Please contact your teachers if this happens.

Schedule Playtest 2: Playtest and Feedback Session

Schedule [Playtest 2: Playtest and Feedback Session according to these linked instructions](#). Playtest 2 **should take place after** you submit [Major Assignment 1: Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan](#). Check the Course Calendar for dates.

Important: Please do not playtest without completing your playtest scenario in MA1, as you are testing that procedure specifically.

Your playtest should take no more than **one (1) hour per game** including workshop, game play, debriefing, and feedback. You may need multiple playtests depending on time constraints, so plan accordingly.

Instructions for Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design

In this assignment, you will analyze the game design process using Research Through Design and integrating concepts from the course. Please read [Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design](#) for more details.

Note: You will submit a [First Complete Draft](#) of this assignment and send it to your peers for review. Then, you will submit the final draft integrating peer feedback.

Discussion 8: Educational Role-playing Game Design

Watch Josefin Westborg's "[Learning and Framing](#)" (30 min) and Sarah Lynne Bowman's "[Mixing Desk of Edu-Larp](#)" (12 min).

Read Michał Mochocki's "Edu-Larp as Revision of Subject-Matter Knowledge" (20 pages), David Crookall's "Engaging (in) Gameplay and (in) Debriefing" (12 pages), and

Erik Aarebrot and Martin Nielsen's "Prisoner for a Day: Creating a Game Without Winners" (5 pages).

"Prisoner for a Day" Content Advisory: Emotional abuse, forced labor, imprisonment, human rights violations

Review slides for Sarah Lynne Bowman's "Mixing Desk of Edu-Larp" (3 pages),

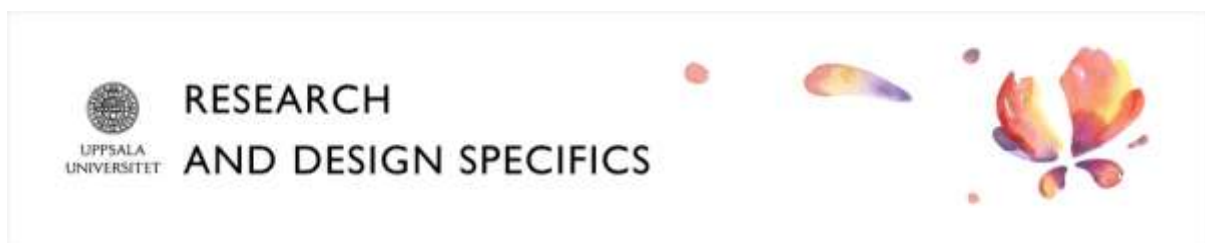
Then, answer the following questions:

- 1) In what situations do you think might intellectual or educational debriefing be necessary to achieve certain learning objectives after an RPG? Use specific examples, hypothetically or from your experience.
- 2) What faders on the Mixing Desk of Edu-Larp were surprising to you or had you never considered before, if any? What faders would you add to the Mixing Desk, if any? In both cases, explain why these faders might be useful to consider in educational RPG design.
- 3) Choose two (2) faders from the Mixing Desk of Edu-Larp. Describe how these faders might be relevant to your nanogame design, even if your game design is not educational in nature.
 - A. What decisions did you make with regard to these faders, whether consciously or unconsciously?
 - B. How might moving these faders affect your design? Be specific.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 5: Research and Design Specifics

Overview: Research and Design Specifics



Welcome to our unit on Research and Design Specifics! We will discuss ways to design and iterate role-playing games, but also how to take that process a step further, including important considerations when conducting academic research. Furthermore, you will focus on designing the workshop and debrief for your nanogame during this

unit. **Make sure to finalize your expanded game design document with these aspects included by the end of the unit.**

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Literature Reviews
- Basics of Human Subject Research: Surveys and Interviews
- Basics of Human Subject Research: Consent
- General RPG Design Techniques
- Narrative Design in RPGs
- Character Design in RPGs

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We are providing them as part of your education within this course. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required materials:

Videos:

- Baird, Josephine. 2022. "[Surveys, Interviews, and Consent](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, July 25.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne. 2014. "Educational Live Action Role-playing Games: A Secondary Literature Review." In *Wyrd Con Companion Book 2014*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, 112-131. Los Angeles, CA: Wyrd Con.
- Giovannucci, Alessandro. 2021. "[No More Hero: Larp as a Collective Journey - Alessandro Giovannucci](#)." Nordic Larp Talks. YouTube, October 12.
- Waern, Annika. 2013. "[How Can We Know What Actually Happened in a Larp](#)." Nordic Larp Talks. YouTube, April 18.
- Westborg, Josefin. 2022. "[Deeper Dive into Design](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube.

Familiarize yourself with:

- The University of Edinburgh. 2021. "Reflecting on Experience: A Range of Models That Can Be Used to Prompt and Structure Reflection on Experience." Reflector's Toolkit, March 22.

Choose one (1) of the following (see instructions for each category):

- Arbjørn, Jesper Heebøll. "The Narrative Experience." Nordiclarp.org, February 28.
- Barkholt-Spangsbo, Troels, and Jesper Heebøll Arbjørn. 2019. "Emergent Stories and Directed Narratives." In *Larp Design: Creating Role-play Experiences*, edited

by Johanna Koljonen, Jaakko Stenros, Anne Serup Grove, Aina D. Skjønshjell and Elin Nilsen, 121-130. Copenhagen, Denmark: Landsforeningen Bifrost.

- Brind, Simon. 2019. "Narrative Design." In *Larp Design: Creating Role-play Experiences*, edited by Johanna Koljonen, Jaakko Stenros, Anne Serup Grove, Aina D. Skjønshjell and Elin Nilsen, 110-120. Copenhagen, Denmark: Landsforeningen Bifrost.
- Dahlberg, Johan, and Jon Back. 2021. "Rules are Magic: What Larp Can Learn From Narrative RPGs." Nordiclarp.org, May 31.
- Justesen, Halfdan Kelle, Martine Svanevik, and Sagalinn Tangen. 2025. "[Narrative Design for Transformation -- Halfdan Keller Justesen, Martine Svanevik, & Sagalinn Tangen](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, February 22.
- Wilson, Danny. 2019. "Designing the Mechanics You Need." In *Larp Design: Creating Role-play Experiences*, edited by Johanna Koljonen, Jaakko Stenros, Anne Serup Grove, Aina D. Skjønshjell and Elin Nilsen, 238-250. Copenhagen, Denmark: Landsforeningen Bifrost.

Discussion Forum Instructions

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer based upon the content of their post. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Respond in this manner often throughout the next week for full participation.

Discussion 9: Specifics of Researching Role-playing Games

Watch Josephine Baird's "[Surveys, Interviews, and Consent](#)" (22 min) and Annika Waern's "[How Can We Know What Actually Happened in a Larp](#)" (7 min).

Read Sarah Lynne Bowman's "Educational Live Action Role-playing Games: A Secondary Literature Review" (20 pages).

Then, answer the following questions. Try not to worry about getting the answer "right" if you are new to research. Instead, answer based on your current understanding or instincts.

- 1) What methods have you gathered for feedback from players so far, e.g., surveys, interviews, observational data? Without divulging specific details about your participants, discuss how an ethical review process might enhance your research consent practices. Be specific.
- 2) After reading Bowman's article, what do you think the purpose of a literature review might be? What types of data do you think literature reviews include? What types of data do you think are excluded from literature reviews? Use specific examples from the text.
- 3) If you were to conduct a more extensive literature review on your game concept, what topics might you include? Be specific.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Discussion 10: Specifics of Role-playing Game Design

Watch Josefin Westborg's "[Deeper Dive into Design](#)" (39 min) and Alessandro Giovannucci's "[No More Hero: Larp as a Collective Journey](#)" (12 min).

Choose **one (1)** of the the following articles to read:

- Jesper Heebøll Arbjørn's "The Narrative Experience."
- Troels Barkholt-Spangsbo's and Jesper Heebøll Arbjørn's "Emergent Stories and Directed Narratives" (9 pages)
- Simon Brind's "Narrative Design" (11 pages)

Choose **one (1)** of the the following materials to examine:

- Halfdan Keller Justesen, Martine Svanevik, and Sagalinn Tangen's "[Narrative Design for Transformation](#)" from (0:00:00-01:13:00).
- Johan Dahlberg and Jon Back's "Rules are Magic: What Larp Can Learn From Narrative RPGs"

- Danny Wilson's "Designing the Mechanics You Need" (12 pages)

Then, answer the following questions:

1) Describe one (1) concept that you learned about narrative design in RPGs from the materials this week. How might these concepts impact RPG design in your view?

2) Reflecting on these materials, do you think analog RPGs are a unique medium with regard to narrative and storytelling? Why or why not? Provide examples from your experience to support your view.

3) When do you think it might be appropriate and/or desirable to include fate play or, as some call it when narratives have reduced player agency, "railroading" when designing for transformative impacts? Use a hypothetical example or one from your experience.

- A. When might this practice be inappropriate in terms of its impacts on player agency? Be specific and use an example, whether hypothetically or from your experience.

4) Based on your readings this week, consider one (1) mechanic or metatechnique that might support the evolution an interesting narrative in your nanogame. Brainstorm how you would integrate this mechanic or metatechnique in your current design.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Playtest 2: Playtest and Feedback Session

Schedule your first Playtest and Feedback Session with your group.

- 1. Remember that your playtest and feedback session should not exceed 50 minutes: 40 minutes maximum for the playtest making sure you save 10 min for feedback from all participants.**
- Please adhere to the following structure for your Nanogame Playtest as closely as possible:
 1. Give a basic brief of the game and hand out the characters (no more than 10 minutes)
 2. Play the one workshop activity designed for your nanogame for a part of the game that players might find challenging (no more than 10 minutes)
 3. Play one scene (no more than 10 minutes)
 4. Ask 1 emotional, intellectual, or educational debrief question for each player to answer (5-10 minutes)

5. Feedback (no more than 10 min)

= 30-50 min max

3. Make sure that each student's workshop, scene, and debrief gets playtested. This may require more than one video call.
4. Come to your playtests prepared with your playtest plan and questions for feedback from your playtesters.

Reflection Journal 2: Reflection Models and You

Familiarize yourself with "Reflecting on Experience: A Range of Models That Can Be Used to Prompt and Structure Reflection on Experience" from the Reflector's Toolkit.

Then, answer the following questions:

- 1) Choose a model of reflecting on experience from your reading. Specify which model you are using and list its relevant stages of reflection (1-2 sentences).
- 2) Consider the #Feminism game you played in either the previous course or this course. Alternatively, you can choose a game you playtested by one of your peers. Provide a brief description of that experience (3-4 sentences).
- 3) Reflect upon your own experience **as a player** over time from before playing the game to now with regard to the transformative impact you think the game was designed to have. Apply the model you chose to your own experience.
 - A. What stages in the model did you undergo?
 - B. What types of reflection do you think you experienced as a result?
 - C. What factors helped you engage in reflection on the themes of the game at each of these stages, if any?
- 4) Review the reflection questions listed under the model. If you were to design a debrief based on this model, which questions would you use?
 - A. How would you adapt them to fit this role-playing experience?
 - B. Would you use other questions instead? Be specific.

Unit 6: Styles and Cultures of Design

Overview: Styles and Cultures of Design



Welcome to our unit on styles and cultures of role-playing game design! As we have discussed before, role-playing games emerge from specific design and play communities. These groups create their own cultures and styles, which get reproduced in games and are reflected in the discourses around them. As these communities are numerous, in this unit, you will have an opportunity to Choose Your Own Adventure in terms of which design and play communities you wish to explore. You will summarize the work that you read and present it to the group in your discussion posts. As your peers may not read the same articles as you do, you will describe thoroughly what you have learned for everyone's benefit.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Styles and Cultures of Design in Tabletop
- Styles and Cultures of Design in Freeform
- Styles and Cultures of Design in Larp

Discussion Forum Instructions

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer based upon the content of their post. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.

- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Respond in this manner often throughout the next week for full participation.

Discussion 11: Styles and Cultures of Role-playing Game Design

Examine **one (1) item** from the Recommended Materials list on tabletop role-playing games under the Unit 6 Overview.

Examine **two (2) items** from the Recommended Materials list on larp under the Unit 6 Overview from **two (2) different creators** under **two (2) different categories**, e.g. German larp, American freeform, Online larp, etc.

1. For each article, provide one (1) paragraph that answers the following questions:

- Provide the names of the creator(s), the item, and the category under which this item is listed.
- Briefly describe one (1) or more games mentioned in the item in 4-6 sentences total, e.g., narrative, mechanics, any topics on the Mixing Desk you noticed.
 - If specific games are not mentioned, describe general design practices.
- What is the significance of these design aspects according to the creator?
- Based on context clues or your own knowledge, how do you think these design aspects represent the play cultures from which they emerge? Be specific and feel free to speculate if you are unsure.

Your post should feature **three (3) paragraphs, one (1)** for each article you read.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Submission of First Complete Draft of Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design

Please submit your first complete draft of Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design **here at this link**. You will also send this draft to one or more of your peers

in your group for review over email, Discord, or another preferred channel of communication. Then, you will integrate their feedback in your final draft. Please read [Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design](#) for more details.

Note: You will only include **Appendix III: List of Recommendations from Peer(s) and Instructors and Revisions** in your Final Draft submission. This Appendix will be based on recommendations related to the academic writing in this First Complete Draft, not earlier work, as you will discuss earlier feedback in the body of the paper.

Peer Review Instructions for Major Assignment 2

Please read the [Peer Review Instructions for Major Assignment 2 linked here](#).

Unit 7: Ritual, Symbolism, and Culture in Game Design

Overview: Ritual, Symbolism, and Culture in Game Design



Welcome to Unit 7 on Ritual, Symbolism, and Culture in Game Design! In this Unit, we will deepen into specific practices for designing rituals, narratives, and symbolism in role-playing games. Additionally, we will consider how these elements can be employed in specific ways to encourage transformative impacts.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Ritual Design
- Integrating Symbolism to Achieve Design Goals
- Designing New Cultures for RPGs
- Integrating Existing Cultures into RPGs

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We are providing them as part of your education within this course. Do not distribute PDFs.

★ ★ ★

Required materials:

Videos:

- Kangas, Kaisa. 2015. "[Experimental Anthropology – Kaisa Kangas](#)." Nordic Larp Talks. YouTube, February 12.
- Murphy, Caro. 2023. "[Ritual: The Importance of Framing Transformational Experiences -- Caro Murphy](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, October 4.

Readings:

- Beltrán, Whitney Strix. 2015. "Why Minority Settings in RPGs Matter." Tor.com, April 27.
- George, Ajit. 2021. "Ajit George: The Beautiful Challenge Of Bringing India To D&D's Ravenloft." Chuck Wendig: Terrible Minds, November 18.
- Kessock, Shoshana. 2014. "Cultural Appropriation and Larp." In *The Cutting Edge of Nordic Larp*, edited by Jon Back, 125-134. Denmark: Knutpunkt.
- Nielsen, Martin. 2014. "Culture Calibration in Pre-larp Workshops." Nordiclarp.org, April 22.

Discussion Forum Instructions

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer based upon the content of their post. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Respond in this manner often throughout the next week for full participation.

Discussion 12: Culture, Ritual, and Symbolism Design Brainstorming

Read Martin Nielsen's "Culture Calibration in Pre-larp Workshops."

Examine **one (1) item** from the Ritual Design category and **one (1) item** from the Symbolism category on the Recommended Materials list for a total of **two (2) items**.

Optional: Watch Eirik Fatland's "[Cultures by Design](#)" (24 min). (Use headphones for optimal sound).

1. Based on what you have learned so far, brainstorm ways in which you would design a role-playing game integrating aspects of a culture or subculture **to which you belong** in a role-playing game (1-2 sentences).
 - A. Would the cultural aspects be highly realistic and grounded in this world? Or would you use fantasy, science fiction, or some other genre? (1-2 sentences).
 - B. Based on Nielsen's article, how might you utilize pre-larp workshops to help with cultural calibration? (1-2 sentences).
 - C. If you were to design an in-game ritual based on this culture, what would it be like? Be specific. (3-4 sentences).
 - D. What symbolism would be interesting to include? Be specific. (1-2 sentences).
 - E. What transformative impacts might be possible for players to experience when engaging with this culture through play? Be specific. (1-2 sentences).
 - F. What pitfalls would you try to avoid? Be specific. (1-2 sentences).

Your post **should not exceed four (4) paragraphs** in length (4-6 sentences per paragraph).

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in "Yes, and..." and Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Reflection Journal 3: Cultural Role-playing and You

Watch "[Experimental Anthropology](#)" by Kaisa Kangas (8 min).

Read Whitney Beltrán's "Why Minority Settings in RPGs Matter" and Ajit George's "The Beautiful Challenge Of Bringing India To D&D's Ravenloft" and Shoshana Kessock's "Cultural Appropriation and Larp" (19 pages).

Then, answer the following questions:

1. What sorts of cultures have you played in role-playing games before? Describe what playing these cultures was like.
 - A. If you do not have experienced role-playing cultures, what cultures have you played in other games? Be specific
2. According to Beltrán and George, **describe three (3) strategies** designers can use to integrate minority or non-Western settings in role-playing games.
3. Considering Kangas' video and Kessock's article, what risks do you think might emerge in terms of cultural appropriation when designing cultures in larps? Be specific.
4. Do you have any concerns or fears around including existing cultures in role-playing games as a designer? If so, please describe.
 - A. Consider ways you might address these concerns and move forward with the design process (if possible).

Submission of Peer Reviews for Major Assignment 2

In this class, you will be peer reviewing the work of **one to three (1-3) members** of your playtest group. Your peer review should focus on your peer's **academic writing in Major Assignment 2** rather than feedback on their game design, which you have already provided in the playtest.

For peer review, read the paper, answer the following questions, and send them to your peer.

1. What did you learn from this paper? Be specific.
2. What are three (3) strengths of this paper?
3. What did you find surprising or intriguing about the concepts presented? Be specific.
4. What areas were underexplored or left you wanting to know more?
5. Are there any required components missing? Be specific.
6. What are at least three (3) concrete, constructive suggestions that you have for your peer regarding their work?

* * *

Remember, for consideration for a grade of **Pass** on your own Major Assignment 2, you must complete one (1) peer review for a member of your group.

For consideration for a grade of **Pass with Distinction** on your own Major Assignment 2, you may complete peer reviews for *all* members of your group who submitted their assignment by the deadline (2 reviews for a group of 3 including yourself; 3 reviews for a group of 4).

If one or more peers did not submit their assignment by the deadline, please focus only on the draft(s) available.

Unit 8: Role-playing Game Design and Conflict

Overview: Role-playing Game Design and Conflict



Welcome to our Unit 8 on role-playing game design and conflict! As with our first class, this unit will cover both conflicts surrounding certain facets of game design within gaming communities, as well as the way conflicts with societies are portrayed, addressed, or reimagined through design.

In this Unit, we will cover the relationship between game design and conflict regarding:

- Politics and Cultures
- Race and Ethnicity
- Gender and Sexuality

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We are providing them as part of your education within this course. Do not distribute PDFs.

* * *

Required Materials:

- Kangas, Kaisa. 2017. "Playing the Stories of Others." In *Once Upon a Nordic Larp... Twenty Years of Playing Stories*, edited by Martine Svanevik, Linn Carin Andreassen, Simon Brind, Elin Nilsen, and Grethe Sofie Bulterud Strand, 152-158. Oslo, Norway: Knutepunkt.

Discussion Forum Instructions

For all discussion forum assignments, reply to at least two (2) of your peers using the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

- Reply to your peers with at least five (5) substantive sentences. Sentences like "Hello" and "Good post" do not count toward this length requirement.
- When possible, seek out students who have not yet received a response.
- One of these sentences should ask a question of each peer based upon the content of their post. This question should be related to the substance of their post.
- Check the discussion forum throughout the week.
- When your peers respond to your posts, answer their questions, then ask a question in return to further the conversation.
- Similarly, when you ask a question, monitor the thread for responses, answer their question, and ask another question in return, etc.
- When responding to your peers, search for posts that do not yet have replies rather than focusing on specific people.
- Respond in this manner often throughout the next week for full participation.

Discussion 13: Conflict in Role-playing Game Design

Read Kaisa Kangas' "Playing the Stories of Others."

Examine **one (1) item** from **one (1) different creators** in each of the **three (3) following categories** under Recommended Materials in the Unit Overview: Politics and Culture; Gender and Sexuality; and Race and Ethnicity.

* * *

1. For each item, including Kangas' article, provide one (1) paragraph that answers the following questions. If specific games are not mentioned, consider a game that also engages with this theme, whether existing or hypothetical from your imagination.

- A. Provide the names of the creator(s), the item, and the style and/or cultures of game design discussed (if available). Briefly describe **one (1) or more games and mechanics discussed**, as well as any themes or social issues addressed, in 1-2 sentences total.
- B. What aspects of game design are discussed in this item and how does the creator describe them throughout the item?

- C. According to the creator, how does game design reflect important social issues, whether purposefully or unconsciously? Be specific.
- D. Consider how the ideas expressed in the item and/or present in the game might affect your own game design. Be specific.

Your post should feature **three (3) paragraphs** -- **one (1)** for each article you read.

Finally, respond to at least two (2) of your peers in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format.

Unit 9: Representation and Tech Ethics in RPG Design

Overview: Representation and Tech Ethics in RPG Design



Welcome to Unit 9 on Representation and Tech Ethics in RPG Design! In this unit, we will primarily focus on the way disabilities are represented in role-playing game design. While our materials this week will focus on tabletop, the same issues described are present in many traditional larps.

We will discuss topics pertaining to accessibility in facilitation and community development in later courses.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Representations of disability in tabletop
- The impact of representation on inclusion
- Ethics and Generative AI

Note: Some of the materials below may not be available outside of this course. We are providing them as part of your education within this course. Do not distribute PDFs.

Required materials:

- Henry, Elsa S. 2015. "Reimagining Disability in Role-Playing Games." *Analog Game Studies* II, no. II (February 2).

- Jones, Shelly. 2018. "Blinded by the Roll: The Critical Fail of Disability in D&D." *Analog Game Studies* V, no. I (March 5).
- Suominen, Taisto. 2024. "[Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs -- Taisto Suominen](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, May 14.

Reflection Journal 4: Representation, Tech Ethics, and You

Read Elsa S. Henry's "Reimagining Disability in Role-Playing Games" and Shelly Jones' "Blinded by the Roll: The Critical Fail of Disability in D&D."

Watch the Ethical Use of Generative AI section (49:44-52:03) of Taisto Suominen's "[Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs](#)."

Then, answer the following questions:

1. What arguments do the authors make regarding the way disability is represented in role-playing games? Be specific, using examples from both articles.
2. Please discuss any accessibility challenges you have experienced or noticed others experiencing in games. Be specific. Please only share information you feel comfortable with your instructors reading.
3. Describe at least **one (1) point** Suominen makes in the video related to Ethics and AI that you think is important to consider with regard to generating content for role-playing games.
4. Consider your own game design practices.
 - A. What accessibility concerns do you think might arise for certain populations?
 - B. How do you think you might be able to address accessibility in future design practices?
 - C. How might you address the point you discussed above from Suominen's lecture in your future game design practices? Be specific.

Unit 10: Framing Transformative Game Design

Overview: Framing Transformative Game Design



Welcome to our last unit on your reflections and analysis of the transformative game design process, including framing practices such as workshops and debriefing. In this unit, you will reflect upon the course as a whole, as well as your design and playtest experiences. You will also submit your Final Draft of Major Assignment 2.

Reflection Journal 5: Transformative Game Design and You

Answer the following questions:

1. What has your experience in this class been like?
2. What were the most interesting aspects of this course for you, if any? Be specific.
3. What were the most challenging parts of this course for you, if any? Be specific.
4. How have you grown as a designer during this course, if at all? Be specific.
5. How have you grown as an academic during this course, if at all? Be specific.
6. If you plan to proceed with Transformative Game Design 2 and Cultivating Transformational Communities, what are you most hoping to learn?
7. Any other comments?

Submit Final Draft of Major Assignment 2: Framing Transformative Game Design

Major Assignment 2 is a culmination of all the work you have done in the course. Think of your previous assignments as stepping stones to this paper.

In **Major Assignment 1**, you designed a workshop and debrief based on a research question and theoretical concepts, then tested this design with a small part of your scenario in a playtest. **Major Assignment 2** describes this process, first including

information from Major Assignment 1, then explaining how the experiment unfolded, analyzing your playtests, feedback, and subsequent iteration.

Word count: 1200-2000 words single-spaced in Times New Roman font (not including References and Appendices).

This paper will integrate the following sections:

1. Introduction:

- A. **Brief summary of nano-game:** In **one (1) paragraph**, include a brief summary of the current version of your nano-game.
- B. **Research Question:** Include a research question for your framing design. What problem are you trying to solve or question do you hope to get answered through this Research Through Design process?
- C. **Brief summary of your workshop:** In **one (1) paragraph**, discuss the one (1) workshop activity you have playtested and your safety structures. Describe how your workshop activity was designed to help players learn how to engage with your game and prepare them for play.
- D. **Brief summary of your debrief:** In **one (1) paragraph**, discuss your process of designing the debrief. Is the question geared toward and emotional, intellectual, and/or educational debrief? What are your specific goals or learning objectives? How are they reflected in the debrief question?

2. Theoretical framework: Reflect upon your game design according to **no more than three (3) concepts:**

- A. **Use only sources from this course:** You can integrate any concepts from the materials in this course. You must have at least **one unique (1) source** cited for each concept from a different creator.
 - Do not cite multiple ideas from the same creator.
 - You are not permitted to use sources outside of this courses materials. Note that the *Transformative Role-playing Game Design* textbook is not on the literature list of this course.
- B. **Focus on details rather than generalities:** Avoid choosing larger concepts like "debriefing." Instead focus on **three (3) specific** concepts within larger distinct theories or practices that you can define from your sources, for example choosing a specific category of debriefing described in an article in the course.

- C. **Apply concepts to design practice:** Discuss specific ways in which these concepts are useful in understanding your game design choices. Be specific about how the concepts might help explain, for example, your chosen mechanics, workshop design, debrief questions, etc.
3. **Method:** Describe your process of Research Through Design, citing and engaging with one (1) or more of [these linked sources](#). This section should include a brief summary of your Playtest Plan and feedback gathering method(s).
 4. **Results:** Describe how your game experiment unfolded in your playtest, the feedback you received, and how you iterated on your design accordingly after the playtest session.
 5. **Discussion:** Analyze the game design process, returning back to your chosen concepts and any other relevant sources. Was your research question answered?
 6. **Conclusion:** Evaluate how you would proceed with future research, design, and playtesting of this nanogame should you choose to continue this work. This section can also include personal reflections, takeaways, and ideas for future research and design beyond this particular project.

In addition, include:

1. **References:** References should be organized in alphabetical order.
2. **Appendix I:** Playtest Scenario and Playtest Plan
3. **Appendix II:** Revised Game Design Document
 - Your Game Design Document should contain all the instructions for your nano-game that facilitators and participants need to play. You can choose whether or not to integrate a version of your newly designed framing. You may start with the Game Design Document from Introduction to Transformative Game Design as a baseline or create a new game. **These instructions should not exceed 1300 words Times New Roman 12 point font.**
4. **Appendix III:** List of Recommendations from Peer(s) and Instructors and Revisions
 - Include a point-for-point list indicating how and where in the text you addressed each point of feedback on your First Complete Draft of Major Assignment 2 you received from your peer reviewer(s) and your instructor. If you decided not to integrate one or more recommendations, please provide a persuasive reason why. In this way, you are iterating not only on your game design, but on your academic work.

Notes:

- The Appendices and References do not count toward your word count.
- You may not use generative AI on this assignment or any others. We are interested in your own design thoughts, not a machine's.
- Cite in Chicago Author-Date format. We recommend using the citations we provide for you in the Module Overviews and textbook References, which mostly reflect Chicago Author-Date 6th edition.
- Including concepts from sources external to **this course** will result in an **automatic fail on the paper**. Do not include more than **three (3) concepts**.
- You may use materials from **Major Assignment 1**, but make sure to compose your text in an academic analytic tone rather than as game instructions.
- While your paper will focus on testing your new framing (Appendix I), you will also submit a revised version of your **Game Design Document** as Appendix II. The revised version should reflect any changes you made as a result of feedback from your peers or instructor.