

Transformative Role-Playing Game Design

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

Table of Contents

Course information

- Course Calendar

- Schedule & Instructions 2026

- Learning Objectives and Success Criteria

- Course Materials

- Policy on Generative AI

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Unit 1: Introduction to Role-playing Games

- Unit 1 Overview: Introduction to Role-playing Games

- Discussion Forum Instructions

- Discussion 1: Introduction to Role-playing Games

- Instructions for Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document

- Quiz 1: Role-playing Games

Unit 2: Introduction to Transformative Role-playing Game Design

- Unit 2 Overview: Introduction to Transformative Role-playing Game Design

- Reflection Journal 1: Transformative Game Design and You

- Quiz 2: Transformative Game Design

Unit 3: Transformative Role-playing Game Design in Practice

- Unit 3 Overview: Transformative Role-playing Game Design in Practice

- Discussion Forum Instructions

- Discussion 2: Setting Brainstorming

- Quiz 3: Transformative Game Design in Practice

Unit 4: Character, Culture and Mechanics Design

- Unit 4 Overview: Character, Culture, and Mechanics Design

- Discussion Forum Instructions

Discussion 3: Character and Relations Design

Quiz 4: Character, Culture and Mechanic Design

Unit 5: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual and Magic

Unit 5 Overview: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, and Magic

Discussion Forum Instructions

Discussion 4: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, and Magic

Quiz 5: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual and Magic

Unit 6: Culture and Conflict in RPGs

Unit 6 Overview: Culture and Conflict in RPGs

Discussion Forum Instructions

Discussion 5: Culture and Conflict

Quiz 6: Culture and Conflict

Unit 7: Designing Safety Structures

Unit 7 Overview: Designing Safety Structures

Reflection Journal 2: Designing Safety Structures

Quiz 7: Designing Safety Structures

Unit 8: Game Technologies and RPGs

Unit 8 Overview: Game Technologies and RPGs

Reflection Journal 3: Game Technologies and RPGs

Unit 9: Offering and Receiving Design Feedback

Unit 9 Overview: Offering and Receiving Design Feedback

Discussion Forum Instructions

Discussion 5: Transformative Nano-game Design Document Feedback

Quiz 8: Inclusion and Sensitive Content

Unit 10: Transformative Game Design and You

Unit 10 Overview: Transformative Game Design and You

Reflection Journal 4: Transformative Game Design and You

Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document

Course information

Course Calendar

- 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.

Unit	Requirements
Week 1	
Unit 1	Monday: Introduction to Role-playing Games Homework: • Read “Preface” and Bowman et al.’s “Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to Role-playing Games and Cousin Activities” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i> (pp. 19-47) in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i>, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind (14-17). • Optional: Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman’s “Introduction to Tabletop Role-playing Games” (43:34) and “Introduction to Action Role-playing Games (Larp)” (39:12).
Unit 1	Wednesday: Introduction to Role-playing Games Activities: • Complete Discussion 1: Introduction to Role-playing Games by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Unit 1	Friday: Introduction to Role-playing Games Activities: • Complete Quiz 1: Role-playing Games by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Week 2	
Unit 2	Monday: Introduction to Transformative Role-playing Game Design Homework: • Read all sections until the end of section “2.6 Populations Overview” in “Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i> (pp. 49-64). • Optional: Watch “Introduction to Transformative Game Design” (58:40).
Unit 2	Wednesday: Introduction to Transformative Role-playing Game Design Activities:

	- Complete Reflection Journal 1: Transformative Game Design and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. - Read instructions for Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document. You will write Major Assignment 1 toward the end of the course.
Unit 2	Friday: Introduction to Transformative Role-playing Game Design Activities: Complete Quiz 2: Transformative Game Design by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Week 3	
Unit 3	Monday: Transformative Role-playing Game Design in Practice Homework: Read all sections until the end of “4.5c, part ii: Narrative Design: Specific Scenes” in “Chapter 4: Practice: Transformative Role-playing Game Design and Research” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i> (pp. 140-161).
Unit 3	Wednesday: Setting Brainstorming Activities: Complete Discussion 2: Setting Brainstorming by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Unit 3	Friday: Transformative Role-playing Game Design in Practice Activities: Complete Quiz 3: Transformative Game Design in Practice by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Week 4	
Unit 4	Monday: Character, Culture, and Mechanics Design Homework: Read the remaining sections starting at “4.6c, part iii: Character Design” in “Chapter 4: Practice: Transformative Role-playing Game Design and Research” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i> (pp. 156-179).
Unit 4	Wednesday: Character and Relations Design Activities: Complete Discussion 3: Character and Relations Design by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Unit 4	Friday: Character, Culture, and Mechanics Design Activities: Complete Quiz 4: Character, Culture, and Mechanics Design by 11:59pm in your time zone.

Week 5	
Unit 5	Monday: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, and Magic Homework: Read until the end of “6.5 Narrative and postmodern magic“ in “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i> (pp. 223-235).
Unit 5	Wednesday: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, and Magic Activities: Complete Discussion 4: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, and Magic by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Unit 5	Friday: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, and Magic Activities: Complete Quiz 5: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, and Magic by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Week 6	
Unit 6	Monday: Culture and Conflict Homework: Read the rest of the chapter beginning with section “6.6 Culture in RPGs and Communities” in “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i> (235-263).
Unit 6	Wednesday: Culture and Conflict Activities: Complete Discussion 5: Culture and Conflict by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Unit 6	Friday: Culture and Conflict Activities: Complete Quiz 6: Culture and Conflict by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Week 7	
Unit 7	Monday: Designing Safety Structures Homework: - Read all sections until the end of “5.5c: Core Components of Safety” in “Chapter 5: Safety and Community Container Setting” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i> (pp. 180-201). Optional: Watch all five (5) Safety in Role-playing Games videos by Sarah Lynne Bowman: - I: Introduction (20:16) - II: Before the Game (27:21)

	▪ III: During the Game (23:02) ▪ IV: After the Game (12:42) ▪ V: Cultivating Safer Communities (13:55)
Unit 7	Wednesday: Designing Safety Structures Activities: • Complete Reflection Journal 2: Designing Safety Structures by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Unit 7	Friday: Designing Safety Structures Activities: • Complete Quiz 7: Designing Safety Structures by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Week 8	
Unit 8	Monday: Game Technologies and RPGs Homework: • Watch the first 28 minutes of Taisto Suominen's "Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs -- Taisto Suominen" until the end of the section on augmented reality.
Unit 8	Wednesday: Game Technologies and RPGs Activities: • Complete Reflection Journal 3: Game Technologies and RPGs by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Unit 8 and 9	Friday: Transformative Nano-game Design Document Writing Homework: • Work on Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document., informed by your brainstorming throughout the course.
Week 9	
Unit 9	Monday: Inclusion and Sensitive Content Homework: • Work on Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document., informed by your brainstorming throughout the course. • Read the rest of the sections starting from “5.5d: Community” in “Chapter 5: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” in <i>Transformative Role-playing Game Design</i> (pp. 201-222).
Unit 9	Wednesday: Offering and Receiving Design Feedback Activities: • Complete your first draft of Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document.

	◦ NOTE: Do not submit your first draft under the Major Assignment link. You will only submit your final draft at that link at the end of the course. • Complete Discussion 5: Transformative Nano-game Design Document Feedback by 11:59pm in your time zone.
Unit 9	Friday: Inclusion and Sensitive Content Activities: • Complete Quiz 8: Inclusion and Sensitive Content by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Revise your first draft of Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document based on feedback from your peers provided in Discussion 5.
Week 10	
Unit 10	Monday: Transformative Game Design Revisions Homework: • Revise your first draft of Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document based on feedback from your peers provided in Discussion 5.
Unit 10	Wednesday: Transformative Game Design and You Activities: • Complete Reflection Journal 4: Transformative Game Design and You by 11:59pm in your time zone. Homework: • Revise your first draft of Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document based on feedback from your peers provided in Discussion 5.
Unit 10	Friday: Transformative Game Design and You Activities: • Submit final draft of Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document by 11:59pm in your time zone.

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

Schedule & Instructions 2026

Course Activities

All activities and homework assignments are **listed in the Course Calendar in sequential order**.

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.

- Submit all deliverables in the **corresponding links in the Units under Modules**.
- You must **complete all requirements for assignments**, including replies to your peers, for full credit.
- **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.

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.

Grading Criteria and Weighting:

For the grade **Pass**, students are required to achieve the grade Pass on the Major Assignment. 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 Quizzes). **In this course, an overall grade of Pass on these assignments is 70% the Assignments Weighted Total.**

For the grade **Pass with Distinction**, students are required to achieve the grade Pass with Distinction on the Major Assignment. 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, Journals, and Quizzes). **In this course, an overall grade of Pass with Distinction on these assignments is 85% in the Assignments Weighted 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.

Learning Objectives and Success Criteria

After completing Transformative Role-playing Game Design, the students will be able to:

- **Learning Outcome 1:** demonstrate knowledge and understanding of transformative analog role-playing game design and relevant interdisciplinary theories
- **Learning Outcome 2:** demonstrate the ability to present and discuss information, problems and solutions in speech and writing on transformative analog role-playing game design in dialogue with the field of role-playing game studies
- **Learning Outcome 3:** identify, formulate and solve problems through transformative game design based on intended impacts
- **Learning Outcome 4:** demonstrate the ability to make assessments in transformative game design informed by relevant interdisciplinary, social and ethical issues.

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 Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your initial posts answering all questions thoroughly. Reply to at least two (2) 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 Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your journals answering all questions thoroughly.
- 1. **Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document:** You will write a **game design document** for your transformative game design project based on your brainstorming work in the Discussions and Reflection Journals throughout the semester.
 - Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4
 - *Success Criteria:* Complete your paper in the required format with each section.
- **Quizzes:** You will complete quizzes based on your readings, videos, and/or other materials.
 - Learning Outcome 1
 - *Success Criteria:* Answer quiz questions correctly.

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.

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).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Hi everyone,

We realize that online learning in this discussion format may be new to many of you. We have put together a Frequently Asked Questions that hopefully will help you. We have included the questions below for your convenience.

Note that the above video may not reflect the current FAQ. When in doubt, follow the written version.

Where do I find all the course information I need to do my homework?

Click [Course Calendar](#), which gives you your daily assignments due and homework, as well as [Modules](#), which gives you the sequence in which to do them. Make sure to thoroughly read the information under each Unit and watch the orientation videos provided for each Unit, which sometimes also serve as mini lecture introductions.

What are the textbooks for the course?

We have one textbook for the course, *The Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (Bowman, Diakolambrianou, and Brind, eds).

We also are developing a *Implementing Transformative Role-playing Games* textbook to companion it (to be completed June 2026). For direction on other key resources, see for example, *Larp Design* (Koljonen et al. eds. 2019), *The Routledge Handbook of Role-playing Game Studies* (Zagal and Deterding eds. 2024), the *International Journal of Role-playing*, *Analog Game Studies*, and the *Wyrd Con Companion Books*.

How long should posts and responses to peers be?

Please write **one (1) paragraph of 4-6 sentences** of length for each numbered prompt in the initial discussion forum. Most discussions have 3 clusters of questions, each of which you should answer. In that case, you will have 3 paragraphs.

For replies, please **compose five (5) substantive sentences** including at least one question to prompt discussion from your peers.

Many of you may want to post more than this requirement, **but please try to be brief and adhere to the sentence limits**. We absolutely love that you get excited about the content and sharing with one another! But keep in mind many of your peers may have jobs, kids, other studies, and health issues that may prevent them from extensive engagement in the forums.

Remember that you also have your **reflection journals**, which you can use as spaces to expand upon your thoughts from the Unit. You are welcome to exceed the sentence limits there.

How many posts are required for each discussion?

The minimum is three (3): one (1) for your initial post, and then two (2) responses to the posts of your peers. Note that replies to your own posts do not count toward this minimum. Of course, we recommend continuing the conversation past the initial replies -- hence the Ask a Question, Answer a Question format -- but we realize not everyone has the time to communicate all week.

Is it rude to abruptly end a conversation?

Not in an online course. We all have schedules to maintain and some of us have more free time than others. Get what you can from the discussions, but also make sure you are moving on to complete the next required activities for the course.

Can I turn in late work?

Yes -- but, you will be missing the most important component of this course, which is the active participation in the discussion forum. **The discussion forum is the lifeblood of the online classroom**. Please try to respect your peers by responding to their posts on time as much as possible.

The reading/videos/other materials are difficult! How should I manage my time?

This is always an ongoing question in academic courses. In our case, we have some texts that are popular and intended for a general audience and some that are academic. Either way, **the important thing is for you to get something meaningful from the texts that can help inform your work**. Do not worry about understanding every word or memorizing facts.

When in doubt, **skim the materials and focus on your designing and writing**, as that is a major component of your grade and our learning objectives for this class. Especially skim if we tell you to "familiarize yourself" rather than "read." You can always return to these materials later, for example if you need help with a specific question on a Quiz.

Also, Sarah uses the **Read Aloud function**, which she finds very helpful for listening to texts rather than reading them. This is great for when she has chores or other activities to do, which she can do while listening. Adobe Acrobat and most web browsers have this functionality. The best one she has found so far is the web browser Microsoft Edge, which allows you to choose which accent you would like to hear and has a great natural flow. Some sources, such as videos on YouTube, also let you play at a faster speed.

If you have documented accessibility needs, you may be able to request more sophisticated software from the university.

Where will the instructors engage with my work?

We give brief feedback on each discussion post, but the journals and your Major Assignments are where we will give you individualized comments based on the content you provide. Of course, we cannot respond to everything you write, but we are reading and are present. For Major Assignments, we will grade using a Rubric, which you can see attached to the assignment.

Where can I find more sources on X or Y topic?

For the purposes of these courses, we ask that you focus on the resources we include whenever possible. However, we have developed [a linked Archive with several bibliographies](#) on various topics relevant to Transformative Game Design that you may use in future research, including for your thesis at the end of the programme.

What is EDGE and how does it relate to this course?

EDGE is a joint Erasmus+ Higher Education Cooperation Partnership project between Uppsala University, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Dragons' Nest, Chaos League, and Avalon Larp Studio. The project is intended to augment the existing curriculum for this programme, including:

- **Curriculum Development:** New videos, modules, a Bachelor's elective course, complete versions of the 4 core Transformative Game Courses, and an archive including extensive bibliographies on many relevant topics.

- **Textbooks:** The [linked Transformative Role-playing Game Design](#) and *Implementing Transformative Role-playing Games* textbooks (to be completed June 2026).
 - The textbook writers include: Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Josefin Westborg, Angie Bandhoesingh, Josephine Baird, Simon Brind, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Alessandro Giovannucci, Guus von Tilborg, Felipe García-Soriano, Halfdan Keller Justesen, Taisto Suominen, Sagalinn Tangen, and Josephine Rydberg.
- **Tech Toolkit:** Guidelines for integrating various types of technology into the analog role-playing experience, including pros, cons, and best practices. Link to the [Tech Toolkit here](#). The Toolkit also includes a larp scenario called *Meet Me Halfway* that experiments with different technologies, and a Larp in Tech workshop. Some of these guidelines will be sourced with permission from previous workshop attendees.
- **Transformative Game to Teach Design:** A two-day larp teaching principles in transformative game design through embodied play for metareflection. This larp will be run in September 2025 in Italy as part of the project and made available for others to localize and run June 2026.

[Click here for more information about EDGE.](#)

* * *

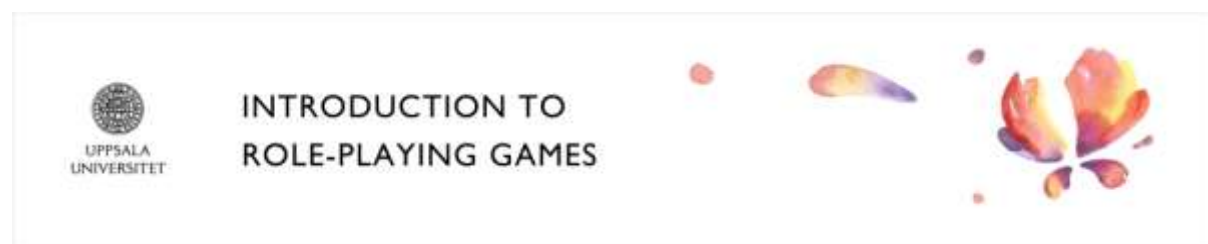
There will likely be more questions in the future, so we will let you know if more answers emerge.

We hope you find this information helpful!

-- Sarah --

Unit 1: Introduction to Role-playing Games

Unit 1 Overview: Introduction to Role-playing Games



Welcome to Introduction to Transformative Game Design! This course explores foundational concepts and practices to consider when designing for transformative impacts. In addition to lectures, discussions, and journals, you will be designing a game.

All class activities are asynchronous, meaning that you will submit your work on specific due dates, but there are no assigned class times where you must log in. These activities are discussion boards, journals, quizzes, and a major assignment.

Discussion forum engagement is the lifeblood of the 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 the Unit for more information.

Reflection journals are viewable only by your instructors. In Reflection journals, you will consider the work you have read, watched, and discussed all week and tie it to your personal thoughts and experiences.

Quizzes assess your comprehension of the central concepts present in the readings, videos, and other assigned homework.

Major Assignment 1 is a **game design document** of your game, which will help you practice writing facilitation instructions for your games in the future.

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.

Resources in Each Unit

Each Unit Overview will feature several important sources, so make sure you read the Overview first. These materials will be organized as follows:

- **Required materials:** These are materials you need to examine to complete your assignments in the Unit.
- **Choose (1) to examine:** These resources feature similar content as your required materials, e.g., a video containing similar content as your textbook chapter. As some student learn better by watching, listening, or reading, for example, these materials may be supportive of different modes of learning.
- **Additional materials on these topics (not required):** These are assigned materials on these topics from previous versions of the course in case you want to dive deeper into the content.

Unit 1 will provide basic information on role-playing games, including tabletop, larp, and freeform.

NOTE: You can find the textbook for this course, *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, linked under Modules.

Required materials:

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind. 2024. "Preface." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Transformative Play Research 1. Uppsala University Publications.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Angie Bandhosingh, Guus van Tilborg, Alessandro Giovannucci, and Taisto Suominen. 2024. "Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to Role-playing Games and Cousin Activities." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Transformative Play Research 1. Uppsala University Publications.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

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 based upon the content of their post. 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 to generate further discussion. 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.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 1: Introduction to Role-playing Games

Read "Preface" and Bowman et al's "Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to Role-playing Games and Cousin Activities" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Optional:

Watch Sarah Lynne Bowman's linked "[Introduction to Tabletop Role-playing Games](#)" (47 min) and "[Introduction to Live Action Role-playing Games \(Larp\)](#)." (33 min).

* * *

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

1. Provide your name and pronouns.
 - A. If you are not a Game Design student in Visby, please tell us about your educational background and/or career.
 - B. If you are a Game Design student in Visby, please state which year of the programme and your degree track.
2. Have you ever experienced tabletop role-playing games, as a player, designer, and/or facilitator?
 - A. If so, consider a game or experience that stands out for you. Why was it significant?
 - B. If not, what aspects of the materials did you find intriguing or surprising?
3. Have you ever experienced live action role-playing games (larps), as a player, designer, and/or facilitator?
 - A. If so, consider a game or experience that stands out for you. Why was it significant?
 - B. If not, what aspects of the materials did you find intriguing or surprising?
4. In this class, you will design a nano-game. Do you think your design will be more tabletop, larp, or freeform in its design? Be specific.

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

Instructions for Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document

For this assignment, you will submit your Game Design Document and Playtest Plan for your nano-game. Please read the [Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document](#) for more details.

Quiz 1: Role-playing Games

Read “Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to Role-playing Games and Cousin Activities” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (pp. 19-47). Then, answer the following questions.

1. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, the **Story** Games tabletop design philosophy focuses on stripped down mechanics and distribution of creative agency among the players.

2. This textbook focuses on digital role-playing games like CRPGs and MMORPGs.

TRUE / **FALSE**

3. Fill in the blank

While the textbook focuses on role-playing games played in social contexts, single-player variants called **solo** games also exist.

4. Multiple answer

Examples of childhood pretend play include the following (multiple answers):

imaginary friends

identity play

transitional play

complex rule system

paracosms

5. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, while not technically role-playing games, psychodrama, simulation, and Theatre of the Oppressed are considered **cousin** forms run in educational and therapeutic contexts.

6. Multiple choice

The first official analog role-playing game was called _____.

Shadowrun

Apocalypse World

Call of Cthulhu

Dungeons & Dragons

7. Fill in the blank

Boffer combat weapons for larps are often made out of foam.

8. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, which of the following are considered forms of chamber larps? (multiple answers)

jubensha

360 degree illusion larps

Interactive fiction larps

Mind's Eye Theatre vampire larps

9. According to the textbook, collaborative larps focus on negotiations between players to achieve a mutually fulfilling game experience.

TRUE / FALSE

10. Multiple answers

According to the textbook, which of the following are categorized as experimental larp or freeform? (multiple answers)

Black box larp

Combat larp

Blockbuster larp

Nordic and American freeform

Unit 2: Introduction to Transformative Role-playing Game Design

Unit 2 Overview: Introduction to Transformative Role-playing Game Design



Welcome to our unit on Transformative Role-playing Game Design! For our purposes, transformative role-playing games involve play and framing exercise that have specific goals to impact participants. In this unit, we will discuss three different types of contexts: transformative leisure, therapeutic, and educational role-playing games. We will also discuss working with specific populations. Each of these contexts has unique aspects to consider in your design.

NOTE: You can find the textbook for this course, *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, linked under Modules.

Required materials:

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, and Josefin Westborg. In review. "Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 39-65. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

Reflection Journal 1: Transformative Game Design and You

Read "Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features" in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

Optional: Watch "[Introduction to Transformative Game Design -- Sarah Lynne Bowman](#)"

1. Which category best fits the work you currently do or plan to do: leisure, educational, or therapeutic? Why? If none of these categories fit, what category would you use to describe your work?
2. Have you ever experienced a form of transformation connected to playing a game? If so, please describe to the extent you feel comfortable sharing with your teacher.
3. Brainstorm **three (3) possible transformative goals** you could design for in your nano-game. You will choose one of these goals in future assignments.

Quiz 2: Transformative Game Design

Read all sections until the end of “2.6 Populations Overview” in “Chapter 2: Transformative Role-playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (pp.49-64).

1. Fill in the blank

Therapeutic role-playing games require support from a trained mental health professional or paraprofessional.

2. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, which of the following are considered transformative goals? (multiple answers)

Educational goals

Political aims

Entertainment aims

Social cohesion

Emotional processing

Aesthetic goals

3. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, role-playing games designed with transformative goals played in participants' free time are called transformative **leisure** games.

4. Role-playing games have not been used to work with older adult populations before.

TRUE / **FALSE**

5. Fill in the blank

A game activity is considered **mandatory** when participants are required to engage for educational or therapeutic purposes.

6. Multiple choice

_____ is when a certain percentage of players are experienced and can help model role-play for newcomers.

following the flock

alibi

social cohesion

herd competence

7. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, therapeutic role-playing games are **primarily** run for the following purposes? (multiple answer)

therapeutic processing

social skills training

recreation

learning new educational content

artistic expression

8. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, applied role-playing takes place in which of the following settings? (multiple answer)

professional training

crisis management

private homes

gaming conventions

health care

community outreach

personal development workshops

9. Fill in the blank

In the textbook, one definition of transformation is a **prolonged** and **sustained** state of change.

10. When role-playing games are tied to a school curriculum, they often need to be designed according to specific learning objectives.

TRUE / FALSE

Unit 3: Transformative Role-playing Game Design in Practice

Unit 3 Overview: Transformative Role-playing Game Design in Practice



Welcome to our unit on transformative RPG design in practice! In this unit, we will share our model of transformative role-playing games, which you will use to create Major Assignment 1, which is your nano-game for this course. In particular, you will focus on establishing a setting for your game this week, considering the information on storyworlds in your assigned materials.

NOTE: You can find the textbook for this course, *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, linked under Modules.

Required materials:

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Simon Brind, Alessandro Giovannucci, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, and Josefin Westborg. 2024. "Chapter 4: Designing for Transformative Goals." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Transformative Play Research 1. Uppsala University Publications.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

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 based upon the content of their post. 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 to generate further discussion. 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.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 2: Setting Brainstorming

Read all sections until the end of “4.5c, part ii: Narrative Design: Specific Scenes” in “Chapter 4: Designing for Transformative Goals” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*.

* * *

Then, answer the following questions:

1. In one sentence, share your **chosen transformative goal** that you will design your nano-game to address.
2. Brainstorm **two (2) different potential settings**, or *storyworlds*, for your nano-game that could be helpful for this chosen goal. One of them should be a

realistic setting, i.e., grounded in our world, and one should be more fantastical, such as fantasy, science fiction, steampunk, or post-apocalyptic setting.

3. Describe the benefits and drawbacks of these two (2) settings with regard to your goals. Be specific.

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

Quiz 3: Transformative Game Design in Practice

Read all sections until the end of “4.5c, part ii: Narrative Design: Specific Scenes” in “Chapter 4: Practice Transformative Role-playing Game Design and Research” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (pp. 140-161).

1. Fill in the blank

according to the textbook, **framing** activities such as workshops and debriefing are key components of transformative role-playing games.

2. Multiple answer

What kinds of activities typically happen in a workshop? (multiple answer)

emotionally processing the experience

stating the goals of the game

practicing mechanics or meta-techniques

introducing safety techniques

warm-up activities

building characters and relations

playing the scenario

negotiating boundaries

3. Fill in the blank

Juhanna Pettersson refers to the player as engines of **desire**, indicating that thoughtful design considers what most motivates them.

4. Fill in the blank

A popular tool that allows designers to make choices about different aspects of the game experience is the **Mixing Desk** of Larp

5. Multiple choice

Safety structures are most important to include in which phase of play?

Before the game

During the game

After the game

All of the above

6. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, which of the following are components of the shared fictional world of a role-playing game? (multiple answer)

the storyworld

the metaphysics of the story

the rules

the safety mechanics

specific scenes and plots

the characters

the character relations

7. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, **worldbuilding** is the practice of creatively designing the storyworld of a role-playing game.

8. Multiple answer

Which of the following types of scenes are discussed in the textbook?

opening / closing / transitional scenes

set piece scenes / nodal scenes

cool scenes

tragic scenes

comedic scenes

pivotal scenes

9. The degree of competition vs. cooperation in play is important to consider when designing educational games.

TRUE / FALSE

10. Fill in the blank

Explaining information about the setting to players during a workshop is an example of a **briefing**.

Unit 4: Character, Culture and Mechanics Design

Unit 4 Overview: Character, Culture, and Mechanics Design



Welcome to our unit on character, culture, and mechanics design! In this unit, we will provide some techniques and additional considerations when adding these facets to your game.

NOTE: You can find the textbook for this course, *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, linked under Modules.

Required materials:

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Simon Brind, Alessandro Giovannucci, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, and Josefin Westborg. 2024. "Chapter 4: Designing for Transformative Goals." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Transformative Play Research 1. Uppsala University Publications.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

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 based upon the content of their post. 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 to generate further discussion. 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.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 3: Character and Relations Design

Read the remaining sections starting at “4.6c, part iii: Character Design” in “Chapter 4: Practice: Transformative Role-playing Game Design and Research” in Transformative Role-playing Game Design (pp. 156-179).

Then, answer the following questions:

1. In one sentence, share your **chosen transformative goal** that you will design your nano-game to address.
2. **Choose (1) setting** from your brainstorming in Discussion 2 that you will use for your nano-game. Provide a brief description of the setting here. (It should be very simple, as players will not have time to absorb an extensive storyworld).
3. Brainstorm **three (3) characters** who could be present in the storyworld of your nano-game.
 - Who are these characters? What do they want in this scenario? What fears do they have?

- How do these characters relate to each other? How should they interact?
- How will this type of interaction contribute to your transformative goal? Be specific.

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

Quiz 4: Character, Culture and Mechanic Design

Read the remaining sections starting at “4.6c, part iii: Character Design” in “Chapter 4: Practice: Transformative Role-playing Game Design and Research” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (pp. 156-179).

1. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, a **character** is a playable fictional construct through which the player enters the storyworld.

2. Multiple choice

Which of the following qualities is **not** described in the textbook as important to good character design?

Powerful

Readable

Playable

Assimilable

Coherent

Consistent

Symmetrical

3. Character relations are **not** important to consider in effective larp design.

TRUE / **FALSE**

4. Fill in the blank

In sociology, human social dynamics consist of a tendency to categorize people into **in-groups** and **out-groups**.

5. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, **culture** refers to a set of customs, norms and behaviors of a group of people.

6. Multiple answer

Which of the following are recommended by the textbook as affiliations in character design? (multiple answer)

Family

Friends

Work

Lovers

Enemies

7. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, which of the following challenges are important to consider in culture design? (multiple answer)

inclusion

taboos

appropriation

artistic creations

8. In this course, the type of documentation you will prepare for your game is called a player's handbook.

TRUE / **FALSE**

9. Too many rules and mechanics can cause cognitive overload and overwhelm the players.

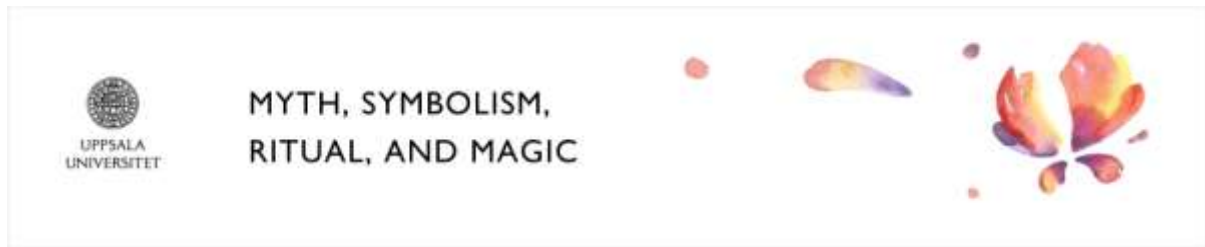
TRUE / FALSE

10. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, considering a spectrum of needs and the impact of your choices on different minds and bodies is called **accessibility** design.

Unit 5: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual and Magic

Unit 5 Overview: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, and Magic



Welcome to our unit on myth, symbolism, ritual, and magic! In this unit, we will discuss some of the factors that can make role-playing games such powerful and transformative experiences, including the use of mythic structures, symbolic images, and ritual activities within games and also in the act of play itself. Magic can not only be a feature of games, but psychologically speaking, experiences within the game themselves can become a form of "magic" in allowing people to realize they can transform themselves.

NOTE: You can find the textbook for this course, *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, linked under Modules.

Required materials:

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Simon Brind, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Guus Quinten van Tilborg, Josephine Baird, Alessandro Giovannucci. 2024. "Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, Magic, Narrative, Culture, and Conflict." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Transformative Play Research 1. Uppsala University Publications.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

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 based upon the content of their post. 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 to generate further discussion. 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.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 4: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, and Magic

Read until the end of “6.5 Narrative and postmodern magic” in “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” Transformative Role-playing Game Design (pp. 223-235).

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Briefly describe your scenario, including the setting, characters, your chosen transformative goals.
2. Will your scenario involve myth or symbolism in some way?
 - A. If so, describe these aspects.
 - B. If not, why not?
3. Brainstorm a ritual that could be included in your nano-game. The ritual should be relevant to your transformative goals. What will the characters do in the ritual? Be specific.

Note: You do not have to include the ritual in your final design unless you find it helpful.

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

Quiz 5: Myth, Symbolism, Ritual and Magic

Read until the end of “6.5 Narrative and postmodern magic” in “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (pp.223-235).

1. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, which of the following are common types of myths? (multiple answer)

hero's / heroine's journeys

apotheosis

maturation

creation

urban

medical

2. According to Mike Pohjola, in role-playing games, players *pretend to believe* rather than suspending disbelief.

TRUE / FALSE

3. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, engaging playfully with narratives as living myths while knowing they are fictional is a form of **ironic imagination**.

4. Matching

According to Craig Page's theory, what are the definitions of the following terms as paraphrased in the textbook?

The World Myth – **the broader fiction within which the game takes place**

The Heroic Myth – **the character's journey within which the players explore their character and themselves**

The Player Myth – **the stories players tell after the game about their own characters and other characters**

5. Multiple answer

Carl Jung has used which of the following components when describing the process of psychological development? (multiple answer)

archetypes

active imagination

individuation

collective unconscious

wish fulfillment

the Oedipal complex

6. Role-playing games do not provide space for players to explore counternarratives to the dominant paradigm

TRUE / **FALSE**

7. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, which of the following are the core phases of **all** rituals?

preparation

liminal

return

birth

death

marriage

8. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, **narrative** therapy emphasizes people's personal stories and the meaning around them.

9. Players can explore and challenge their core beliefs through engagement in role-playing games.

TRUE / FALSE

10. Multiple answer

In the textbook, which of the following concepts are discussed as methods for people to affect their experience of reality through belief, ritual, and/or action?

manifestation

psychomagic

poetic arts

narrative identity

Unit 6: Culture and Conflict in RPGs

Unit 6 Overview: Culture and Conflict in RPGs



Welcome to our unit on culture and conflict in RPGs! In this unit, we deepen our understanding of culture, thinking about it as something surrounding games and also embedded within them. We will also explore conflict as part of RPG design and how it can be useful for certain transformative goals. We will also provide some best practices for integrating these factors in inclusive and responsible ways.

NOTE: You can find the textbook for this course, *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, linked under Modules.

Required materials:

Readings:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Simon Brind, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, Guus Quinten van Tilborg, Josephine Baird, Alessandro Giovannucci. 2024. "Myth, Symbolism, Ritual, Magic, Narrative, Culture, and Conflict." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Transformative Play Research 1. Uppsala University Publications.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

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 based upon the content of their post. 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 to generate further discussion. 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.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 5: Culture and Conflict

Read the rest of the chapter beginning with section “6.6 Culture in RPGs and Communities” in “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (235-263).

* * *

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Based on the materials this week, what are some potential benefits and drawbacks of role-playing games and their respective communities with regard to conflict? Be specific.

2. Is internal or external conflict present in your scenario?
 - A. If so, please describe. What function does this conflict serve in regard to your transformative goal?
 - B. If not, why?
3. Consider a practice within a culture or subculture to which you belong. In one paragraph, brainstorm a design sketch of a short role-playing game based on this cultural practice. How would the characters engage with this practice or discuss it? In what social context? Be specific.

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

Quiz 6: Culture and Conflict

Read the rest of the chapter beginning with “6.6 Culture in RPGs and Communities” in “Chapter 6: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (pp. 235-263)

1. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, which of the following types of culture are **most** relevant to role-playing games? (multiple answer)

fictional and real cultures and subcultures portrayed in games

wider cultures and subcultures to which players belong

game design cultures and styles

play cultures

discourse cultures: leisure theory, art, academia, journalism

religious cultures

academic cultures

2. Multiple answer

Which of the following is **not** discussed in the textbook as an important component of culture design? (multiple answer)

mechanics design

worldbuilding

character design

safety design

3. Fill in the blank

According to Henry Jenkins, in **participatory** culture, interaction with a medium, such as a role-playing game, can transcend the mere consumption of a cultural artifact.

4. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, which of the following are examples of design cultures and styles that have **most** influenced the development of roleplaying games?

wargaming and simulation

gothicpunk and personal horror

The Forge and Story Game diaspora

Nordic larp and adjacent communities

MMORPG guilds

the Board Game Renaissance

5. Matching

According to the textbook, what are the paraphrased definitions of these terms?

immersion – **focus on immersing into the thoughts and feelings of one's character**

narrativism – **focus on immersing into the story and plots**

gamism – **focus on immersing into rules and tactics**

simulation – **focus on simulating a realistic scenario and character actions**

6. Fill in the blank

According to the textbook, **internal** conflict takes place within a character's own psychology, whereas **external** conflict occurs between the character and one or more other parties.

7. Fill in the blank

According to John Paul Lederach, conflict **transformation** refers to an orientation that views conflict as a “life-giving” opportunity for growth.

8. Fill in the blank

Player vs. **environment** refers to a focus on game conflicts external to the player-characters.

9. James Mendez Hodes views negative stereotypes as the least harmful form of representation of marginalized groups.

TRUE / FALSE

10. Othering is the way in which a dominant group defines others as abnormal compared to themselves, often comparing them to an unrealistic mythical norm.

TRUE / FALSE

Unit 7: Designing Safety Structures

Unit 7 Overview: Designing Safety Structures



Welcome to our unit on Safety and Identity in RPGs! In this unit, we will deepen into concepts related to safety design. Several issues that can arise with regard to psychological safety during games. Examples include schisms in role-playing communities; issues with online communication; issues arising from intimate and/or romantic relationships; creative agenda disputes, i.e. when players have different styles of play they most enjoy; power struggles between players and facilitators; and bleed-in and bleed-out that has not been processed effectively (see Chapter 2). Serious psychological safety issues can also arise related to issues of inclusion and accessibility; players experiencing crisis states; and sensitive content.

Such problems can lead to emotional flooding, when a participant is cognitively incapable of processing further information due to psychological overwhelm; dysregulation, when a participant's psychological well-being falls out of balance; activation and/or triggering, when a situation activates a survival response in a person, e.g. fight, flight, fleeing, or fawning; and harm, when a person or a situation inflicts psychological damage on another person, whether purposefully or accidentally. However, in some cases such problems can be avoided or addressed directly, leading players to re-establish psychological safety within the group more quickly. Therefore, we

will explore different strategies for promoting and maintaining psychological safety before, during, and after role-playing games.

* * *

Required materials:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Josephine Baird, Angie Bandhoesingh, and Josefin Westborg. 2024. "Chapter 5: Safety and Community Container Setting." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 147-185. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

Reflection Journal 2: Designing Safety Structures

Choose **one (1)** of the following:

- Watch all **five (5)** Safety in Role-playing Games videos by Sarah Lynne Bowman
 - [I: Introduction](#) (20:16)
 - [II: Before the Game](#) (27:21)
 - [III: During the Game](#) (23:02)
 - [IV: After the Game](#) (12:42)
 - [V: Cultivating Safer Communities](#) (13:55); or
- Read all sections until the end of “5.5c: Core Components of Safety” in “Chapter 5: Safety and Community Container Setting” in *Transformative Role-playing Game Design* (pp. 180-201).

* * *

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Have you ever experienced or witnessed any of the psychological difficulties mentioned in chapter within a gaming community or related subculture? Please share only what you feel comfortable communicating with your teachers.
 - A. If not, why do you think that might be? Be specific.
2. Describe a situation in which a player might experience one of these psychological difficulties during your nano-game.
3. Choose one (1) safety strategy from the chapter you have not yet incorporated into play. How might such a strategy aid a player in this situation?

Quiz 7: Designing Safety Structures

Read all sections until the end of “5.5c: Core Components of Safety” in “Chapter 4: Practice: Transformative Role-playing Game Design and Research” in Transformative Role-playing Game Design (pp. 180-201).

1. Fill in the blank

Examples of **sensitive** content include explicit violence, sexuality, and phobias.

2. Multiple choice

Which of the following is **not** a potential risk that can arise in role-playing games described in Chapter 5?

players forgetting who they are in the real world

emotional flooding

dysregulation

activation and/or triggering

harm

3. Red zone brink play is experienced as transpiring outside of the growth edge, approaching or exceeding a player’s hard limits

TRUE / FALSE

4. Fill in the blank

Lev Vygotsky’s zone of **proximal development** refers to the area within which a person feels safe enough to explore in order to learn while supported by the scaffolding of another person or structure.

5. Multiple choice

According to the textbook, which of the following is **not** a responsible response when adopting a risk assessment and mitigation approach to safety?

expect players to handle all risks themselves

rank possible risks according to severity and likelihood

remove risks completely

adding, modifying, or removing aspects of the original plan based on risks

guiding participants in how to behave to best mitigate the risk

6. According to the textbook, it is possible to make role-playing spaces that are totally safe for players

TRUE / **FALSE**

7. Multiple answer

According to the textbook, which of the following are recommended responsibilities of a safety team?

upholding the code of conduct

monitoring play activity

receiving safety reports from players

addressing conflicts that erupt in real time

helping players in states of crisis, overwhelm, or bleed

meeting to discuss details of reports and decide on actions

providing therapy sessions to players before or after the game

enacting consequences or boundaries

calling the police after every report of harassment

8. Players should send organizers a red flag about a co-player if they are awkward to role-play with or if they used to be in a relationship with the person.

TRUE / **FALSE**

9. Multiple choice

According to the textbook, which of the following is **not** a form of debriefing?

structured

semi-structured

unstructured

narrativizing “war stories”

10. A consent negotiation allows players to calibrate with one another regarding certain content, such as romance, sexuality, or aggression

Unit 8: Game Technologies and RPGs

Unit 8 Overview: Game Technologies and RPGs



Welcome to our unit on game technologies and RPGs! By its very name, analog role-playing emphasizes interactions between people unmediated by technology, but of course in reality, we often use technologies during play. Facilitators might include special lighting or sound to a tabletop experience to augment the experience. They might add special effects to a larp to intensify the immersion into environment. Analog role-playing games are often played online, just as we have been on Zoom, or on platforms like Roll20 or D&D Beyond. Complex games like *Dungeons & Dragons* are now played with technical tools that update character sheets and do the math for players.

But how will newer advanced technologies be integrated into analog role-playing games, such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), extended reality (ER), mixed reality (MR), and other methods of shifting visual and aural reality. How can 3D modeling and additive manufacturing help create impressive tangible, custom game pieces, costumes, and props? How will AI affect the writing process of games or the types of interactions we can have? What types of technologies can enhance the role-playing experience? What experiences detract from the spontaneous and improvisational co-creation of play? What are the ethical implications of the use of such technologies for designers, organizers, artists, and players? We will be exploring these questions throughout the programme.

In this Unit, we will cover:

- Various technologies and tabletop RPGs
- Various technologies and larp
- Technologies to play tabletop
- Extended reality
- Augmented reality

* * *

Required materials:

- Suominen, Taisto. 2024. "[Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs -- Taisto Suominen](#)." Transformative Play Initiative. YouTube, May 14.

Reflection Journal 3: Game Technologies and RPGs

Watch the first 28 minutes of Taisto Suominen's "[Game Technologies in Larp and Tabletop RPGs -- Taisto Suominen](#)" until the end of the section on augmented reality.

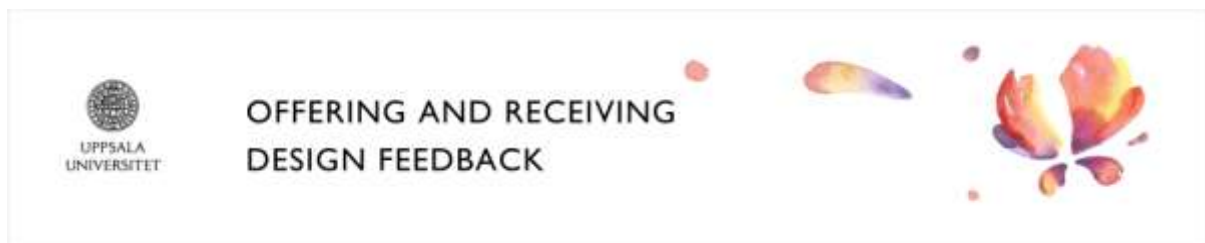
* * *

Then, answer the following questions:

1. Have you experienced technology in games or other types of narrative or immersive experiences?
 - A. If so, did the technology enhance or detract from the experience, or both? Please explain.
2. Consider one technology Suominen mentioned. How might you include this technology in your nanogame, or a scaled up version? Be specific.
3. How might inclusion of this technology affect the transformative potential of your game, whether positively or negatively or both?

Unit 9: Offering and Receiving Design Feedback

Unit 9 Overview: Offering and Receiving Design Feedback



Welcome to our unit on offering and receiving design feedback! In this unit, you will be providing feedback on the scenarios of other students. Figuring out the best way to give feedback can be difficult. Some people appreciate extensive feedback and are comfortable with comments that might sound harsh to others. Other people are more sensitive about their work and may become offended or take critiques personally. As

the design process can be quite personal, it's entirely understandable when designers react to feedback with sensitivity. Therefore, our goal when giving design feedback should be finding ways to frame our comments in such a way that the other person can best receive it.

One approach is to focus first on the positive aspects of the work, including what we enjoyed, found interesting, or learned from it. Such a framing can help the other person feel comfortable. Then, framing so-called negative critiques as areas for improvement is much more constructive. All of us have areas in which we can improve. If you are able to establish trust with the other person, then they are more likely to take your recommendations on board. Remember that the goal of feedback is not to judge the other person's work as "good" or "bad," but rather to help them make the work the best it can be.

From this perspective, learning how to receive feedback is also a skill. We may blow a comment out of proportion or read negativity between the lines that was not intended by the reviewer. If such reactions happen, we recommend stepping aside and not responding right away, returning to the comments when in a more calm and receptive state of mind. From the perspective of transformative learning, sometimes we realize in retrospect that the more difficult comments can be the ones that help us grow the most.

* * *

Required materials:

- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Josephine Baird, Angie Bandhosingh, and Josefin Westborg. 2024. "Chapter 5: Safety and Community Container Setting." In *Transformative Role-playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 147-185. Transformative Play Research Series. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala University Press.

Discussion Forum Instructions

When writing your initial post in the discussion forum assignments, answer all questions with 1 paragraph per numbered question cluster, making sure to answer all subquestions within the cluster. Assignments will have 3-4 overall question clusters. A paragraph is 4-6 sentences.

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 based upon the content of their post. 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 to generate further discussion. 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.
- Please respond in this manner throughout the week to build community in the online classroom.

Discussion 5: Transformative Nano-game Design Document Feedback

Post your first draft of **Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document** in this discussion forum.

Then, reply to the design documents of **two (2) peers** answering the following questions in a thoughtful and respectful way in Ask a Question, Answer a Question format:

1. Describe **one (1) strength** of the design document. Be specific.
2. What areas could be more clear, if any? Be specific.
3. Describe **one (1) element** that was particularly surprising or intriguing. Be specific.

Quiz 8: Inclusion and Sensitive Content

Read the rest of the sections starting from “5.5d: Community” in “Chapter 5: Key Concepts, Techniques, and Purposes for Transformative Role-playing Game Design” in Transformative Role-playing Game Design (pp. 201-222)

1. Multiple answer

Example of organizer presence in the community include which of the following? (multiple answer)

moderate specific player spaces, such as official forums, Discord, blogs

be clear which spaces are not moderated

consider taking action regarding harassing behavior in unofficial spaces

transparently communicate up front at sign-up the goals for the game, the themes present, and organizer's limitations

place compassionate, inclusive values at the center of all communication

tell players their concerns are unfounded

ignore questions from players

2. Fill in the blank

Designers should consider hiring **cultural** consultants and sensitivity **readers** when designing around sensitive content or marginalizations they do not share

3. According to the textbook, when working with children, facilitators should hide the content of the game from the participants' teachers and caregivers

TRUE / **FALSE**

4. Multiple choice

Which of the following is **not** a serious risk that can arise when working with therapeutic clients using role-playing games?

a client opting-out of the game

lack of training on the needs of that population

delusional tendencies on the part of the client

incompatibility

breaches in confidentiality and privacy

5. Role-playing games are not recommended for neurodiverse players under any circumstances, such as players on the autism spectrum, with ADHD, or PTSD

TRUE / **FALSE**

6. Organizers should clearly communicate any risks for accessibility before the event, as well as any needs they cannot accommodate

TRUE / FALSE

7. Fill in the blank

Gender **neutral** character design allows each player to choose their character's gender

8. Multiple choice

Which of the following is **not** discussed as a likely potential risk when working with incarcerated populations?

an attempted escape

violations of prison regulations

volatile group dynamics

breaches of confidentiality and privacy

9. Fill in the blank

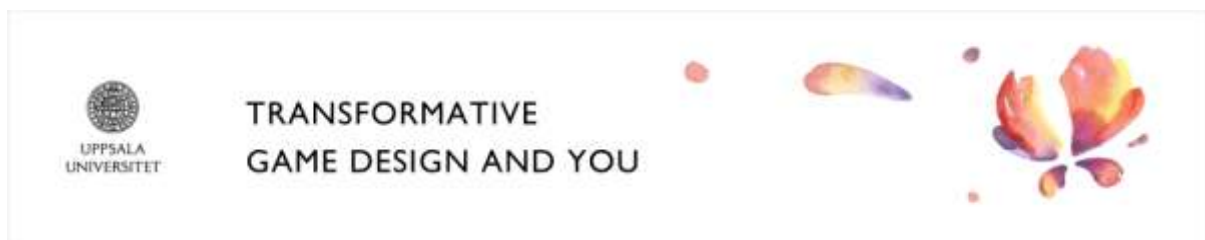
According to Diana Leonard and Tessa Thurman, sleep deprivation, hunger, or physical exhaustion can increase the potential for **bleed**-out

10. Fill in the blank

Post-event **drop** occurs when a player experiences symptoms of depression or “the blues” after play

Unit 10: Transformative Game Design and You

Unit 10 Overview: Transformative Game Design and You



Welcome to our last unit on your reflections and analysis of the transformative game design process. In this unit, you will reflect upon the course as a whole. You will

also submit your Final Draft of Major Assignment 1. We hope you have enjoyed the content!

Reflection Journal 4: 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. Do you plan to continue to design transformative role-playing games? If so, please describe.
6. Any other comments?

Major Assignment 1: Transformative Nano-Game Design Document

Submit your Game Design Document and Playtest Plan for your nano-game.

1. Your Game Design Document should contain all the instructions for your nano-game that facilitators and participants need to play. **These instructions should not exceed 1000 words in Times New Roman 12 point font.**
 - A. Briefly introduce the concept of the game and one (1) transformative goal you the scenario aims to cultivate in players.
 - B. Include any instructions for character creation or distribution, character relations, and any mechanics (if relevant).
 - C. Include at least one (1) safety practice.
 - D. Include any workshopping or debriefing you have planned, including at least one debriefing question based upon your transformative goals.
 - E. Include clear instructions for one (1) or more scenes.

Your nano-game should be no more than 45 minutes maximum for the entire game including workshopping and debriefing.