

Workshop: Writing about Gameplay Call for Expressions of Interest

This workshop will explore the different forms and functions that *writing about gameplay* assumes within game studies research and teaching.

Written accounts of gameplay are found in many places, from novels and poems to letters and memoirs, critical essays to blogposts, forum threads to zines. Depending on the researcher's interests, orientation and training, the same texts may be read as works of life-writing, historical sources, psychological case studies or qualitative data, using methods ranging from coding to close reading. The *production* of textual accounts of gameplay - from ethnographic field notes (Apperley 2010; Nardi 2016) to gameplay diaries (Lammes and de Smale 2018) and surveys (Stirling and Wood 2021) - is also central to many methods of studying games and their players. And writing about play often figures in games pedagogy, where reflective writing exercises may form part of in-class activities or summative assessments (Gallagher, Wake and Germaine 2024).

While there are now many other ways of recording, reflecting upon and discussing experiences of gameplay, this workshop will focus on what it means to put them into writing. By so doing, it aims to build on and bring together several existing currents in games research. Edited collections have investigated how gameplay figures in literature, life-writing and poetry (Condis and Sell 2024); scholars have developed approaches to studying games grounded in the production of richly descriptive autoethnographic and phenomenological accounts of play (Crick 2012; Ash 2015; Bakels 2020; Wilde 2023); theorists have considered how older texts like *Pilgrim in the Microworld* (Sudnow 1983) may yet offer new frameworks for understanding play (Keogh 2019), and how memoirs like *Gamelife* (Clune 2015) can challenge pathologizing diagnoses of addiction (Butterworth-Parr 2024); and historians and curators have stressed the importance of archiving players' accounts of their experiences with games (Nooney 2013; Murphy 2015).

Taking inspiration from such scholarship, the workshop invites participants to suggest texts to read through together, offering an opportunity to think through questions such as:

- Where are first-hand written accounts of gameplay found?
- What do such texts reveal about players' feelings, motivations, relationships and embodied experiences?
- How can they help us to understand play's role in individuals' lives and identities?
- How can they illuminate the historical contexts and material circumstances within which gameplay takes place?
- What kinds of lexical and grammatical innovations can be found in such texts?
- What role has phenomenological and autoethnographic research played in the theorisation and critique of concepts like immersion, flow and agency?
- Where might the act of writing play fit into research and pedagogy, and what tools, concepts and methods can game studies borrow from other disciplines?
- What is the role of writing in a gaming culture increasingly dominated by other modes of recording, sharing and discussing play, from streams to podcasts?

- How do such texts corroborate or complicate assumptions about games and their players found in marketing materials, diagnostic manuals and other discourses?

Workshop Format and Intended Outcomes

This will be a three-hour hybrid workshop facilitated by Dr. Rob Gallagher (King's College London). The first two hours will be devoted to reading through a selection of texts/excerpts supplied in advance by workshop participants. This will be followed by a more general discussion, an opportunity for participants to identify areas of common interest, and, in the final half hour, an opportunity to discuss potential for future events, outputs or bids that might arise from the conversation.

Expressions of Interest

Those interested in participating are invited to submit expressions of interest to robert.1.gallagher@kcl.ac.uk incorporating

- A brief bio (>250 words), incorporating an account of how writing about gameplay figures in your research and/or pedagogy and why you would like to attend the workshop
- A short description (two-three sentences) of a text or excerpt (no more than two pages) that you would like to propose for discussion in the workshop
- An indication of whether you would plan to attend online or in person

A maximum of 25 participants will be selected to participate.

Important Dates

- EoI submission deadline: 15 April 2025
- Confirmations: 2 May 2025
- Workshop date: 30 June 2025

Facilitator Bio

Rob Gallagher is a lecturer in Digital Media Industries at King's College London. His recent research has explored autobiographical videogames and gamer life-writing, resulting in publications in *Game Studies*, *The European Journal of Life-Writing*, *Convergence* and the edited collection *Ready Reader One* (Condis and Sell 2024). He is the author of *Videogames, Identity and Digital Subjectivity* (Routledge 2017) and *Artgames after Gamergate* (Palgrave, forthcoming).

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