The Players' Realm: Studies on the Culture of Video Games and Gaming

J. Patrick Williams

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Digital games have become an increasingly pervasive aspect of everyday life as well as an embattled cultural phenomenon in the twenty-first century. As new media technologies diffuse around the world and as the depth and complexity of gaming networks increase, scholars are becoming increasingly savvy in their approach to digital games. While aesthetic and psychological approaches to the study of digital games have garnered the most attention in the past, scholars have only recently begun to study the important social and cultural aspects of digital games.

This study sketches some of the various trajectories of digital games in modern Western societies, looking first at the growth and persistence of the moral panic that continues to accompany massive public interest in digital games. The book then continues with what it deems a new phase of games research exemplified by systematic examination of specific aspects of digital games and gaming. Section one includes four chapters that collectively consider politics and the negotiation of power in game worlds. Section two details the ideological webs within which games are produced and consumed. Specifically, this important section offers a critical cultural analysis of the hegemony that exists within games and its influence upon players' personal ideologies. To conclude this analysis, Section three examines game design features that relate to players' self-characterization and social development within digital game worlds. Section four explores the important relationship between the producers and consumers of digital games, especially insomuch as this relationship is giving rise to a community of novices and professionals who will together determine the future of gaming and--to a degree--popular culture.

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