

Abstract

Title: Mechanics as Meaning: Examining Ludic Forms of Representation in Contemporary Video Games

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This research paper examines how game mechanics and game rules perform representational functions in contemporary video games. A definition of game mechanics is advanced based on Sicart's (2008) 'object-oriented' notion of mechanics as "methods invoked by agents, designed for interaction with the game state" (ibid.). This definition is then applied in qualitative analyses of three recently published video games - Lucas Pope's *Papers, Please* (2013), Yager's *Spec Ops: The Line* (2012), and Richard Hofmeier's *Cart Life* (2011) - in order to examine different aspects of the interaction of games' ludic elements and their representational or ideological goals. The research is conducted with aspirations to both contribute to the existing literature on gameplay and representation and to encourage critical awareness of game mechanics and rules as objects of meaning-making in the game design process.