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## **Keywords for Video Game Studies Graduate Interest Group Launches, Named HASTAC Scholars**

SEATTLE, Washington (September 28, 2010) - Starting this fall quarter at the University of Washington (UW), a new graduate interest group (GIG) sponsored by the Simpson Center for the Humanities will host a school-year long series of workshops and colloquia on video games. The major players behind the Keywords for Video Game Studies working group consists of six graduate students representing four campus departments and grew out of the collective work of the Critical Gaming Project at UW, an informal community of undergraduates, grads, and faculty interested in playing, studying, and teaching games. The Keywords participants are Edmond Chang (English), Timothy Welsh (English), Terry Schenold (English), Theresa Horstman (Education), Megan Bertelsen (Comparative Literature), and Michael Barthel (Communication).



“We recognized a need for a more formal space, an institutionally supported space for video game studies at UW,” says Edmond Chang, a key organizer of the Keywords group. “Attention to video games as legitimate objects of study is growing, even as people are trying to figure out what that means. Part of the goal of the GIG is to make video game studies more visible on campus, to show that there’s already a lot of interest and work in games going on, and to get people to network, collaborate, and keep doing what they do.”

Given the recent online brouhaha over film critic Roger Ebert’s controversial claim on his blog that video games could never be considered art, the Keywords group hopes to bring together interdisciplinary perspectives and scholarship on video games and video game culture, addressing things like the design of games, the analysis of games, and the pedagogical and political potential of games. “I am interested in the theoretical and conceptual analysis of video games. I think this type of analysis can be used across a variety of fields. For example, it would be great if a student could major in education with an emphasis in video games or even vice versa,” Theresa Horstman says. “I’ve played video games for a long time, and I’m amazed at how efficiently video games teach players how to play. As an instructional designer, it seems like there is an enormous opportunity to design virtual environments for learning but in order to do so it requires researching games from a variety of perspectives.”

The Keywords group is one of three GIGs funded by the Simpson Center this year, each receiving up to \$1,000 for events and workshops. The Keywords group hopes to highlight the central questions, key terms, and most importantly, the resonances and dissonances in video game debates and theories in the contexts of and alongside other areas of study. “My early love of literature, writing, and roleplaying games like D&D found a tandem focus in computer games. As I grew older I started to reflect on why those experiences were so meaningful to me and wanted to understand how they shaped my habits, imagination, and view of life. Studying video

games is an extension of self-study in this way,” says Terry Schenold, who started the Critical Gaming Project at UW in 2007. “Video games provide one of the most inclusive and historically relevant objects of inquiry in the humanities.”

In addition to funding the GIG, the Simpson Center has also nominated all six of the Keywords group as HASTAC Scholars for the 2010-11 year. HASTAC or Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory, is a consortium of scholars, artists, scientists, social scientists, and engineers from over a hundred institutions and organizations committed to collaboration, critical thinking, and creative uses of technology. HASTAC Scholars are nominated by HASTAC members who are faculty or staff at institutions of higher education, and each scholar receives a small fellowship for their contribution, funded by their home institution. This year, the Simpson Center wanted to nominate a cohort of Scholars formed around a focused line of inquiry and the Keywords for Video Game Studies graduate interest group seemed a perfect match.

The Keywords group will hold six reading group meetings and workshops, two each quarter, culminating in a one-day colloquium at the end of spring. Workshops are organized around a key idea or concern and will draw on important video game scholarship and actual game play. The first two events of the autumn quarter take as the starting points for analysis and discussion the keywords “Play” on October 13 and “Immersion/Interactivity” on November 10. In addition, the GIG will produce and maintain a blog and discussion space, hosted and co-presented with the CGP, contribute as a collective to the HASTAC forums, and offer a two-credit focus group course through the Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) department. All of the group’s public events are free and open to students, faculty, staff, and the community of the UW. For more information about the Keywords for Video Game Studies graduate interest group and for a calendar of events, visit their website at:

<https://depts.washington.edu/critgame/wordpress/keywords/>

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