

DTC 392 – Project 4:

Critical Making & Game-Making Tools

So far this semester, we've worked to understand videogames (broadly defined) through our own analysis of particular titles and by reading the (oft theoretical/philosophical) analysis of others. These are both very important to the goal of improving our literacy of games (or *ludoliteracy*) and are fundamental to learning “how to read” videogames.

In this project, we'll move a step beyond the ability to understand meaning with respect to the games we play into a deeper level of ludoliteracy: the ability to *make* games. Have no fear: I do not expect any of us to completely produce a “full” videogame within the time remaining to us. Instead, I want you to think of this as documenting an exploration into a certain corner of game design, namely that of “no-code,” game-making platforms.

Directions:

With a partner or very small group *or* by yourself:

Choose a platform to use. The platform must be a “no-code” platform, meaning a user need not have any knowledge of coding to use it. I have a list of suggested platforms available on BaseCamp/Slack, and I am open to the inclusion of others not listed.

Spend time learning your way around the tool. Check out any relevant tutorial materials the platform provides. (Feel free to also look for those made by 3rd parties, too, but at least *start* with the platform's own documentation.) You should strive to build a “game-like” artifact that exhibits a good sampling of what the platform affords.

As you experiment, learn, and build, analyze the platform. What does it allow you to do? What does it prohibit? How are the various functionalities presented to you as the user? Is the UI window-based? Menu based? Icon based? What are the ramifications of that on your understanding of the tool and/or the game you work to produce? These are just a start to the kinds of questions you might ask.

At the end of the semester, you will submit/provide access to the game and you will submit this “design narrative/ tool analysis” document. Your game will not be evaluated, rather it will be regarded as a product of critical making – a method in which a maker is critically attuned to the processes of making itself. The videogame is a means to that end – making the game provides us opportunity to critically consider the act of making the game.

The document you will submit will be where you lay out that critical consideration, both as an analysis of your chosen platform and as a personal narrative of the processes of learning the tools and making the game.

Recommended length:

The game should be long enough so as to incorporate a “good sample” of the affordances of the platform. Let's strive for a **10 minute game** with the understanding that we can adjust this expectation as we move through the project.

The “design narrative/ tool analysis” document should be a thorough account of your work and ideas over the next few weeks. Strive for a 5 page essay that walks me through how you perceive the tool, how you learned it, how it shaped your experience and the game you made with it. (Like with the game, we can reassess this goal later in the process.) Members of group projects must all submit their own essay.

Due Date: End of semester (actual date TBD) @ midnight (PDT)