Answer the following questions in at least 200 words a piece.

1. We had a very EU/US-centric discussion on games in this class. Why might it be important for game historians to pay attention to video game production in locations outside the U.S. and Western Europe?

“Its not that anyone can become a great artist, but a great artist can come from anywhere.” This quote from the movie *Ratatouille* was the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about the importance of video game production in locations outside the U.S. and Western Europe. Modern game development platforms are becoming more accessible, and more people can access computers capable of running these game engines. As barriers to entry decrease, more people will be able to enter the video game development industry. This in turn has the potential of causing new and potentially innovative ideas to flood the industry. Looking back on history, innovation in the video game industry come from all over the world, not just the areas discussed during lectures. Nintendo is highly regarded for publishing high-quality games, as well as dominating the mobile video game platform industry. Capcom is well known for the Street Fighter series, as well as games such as Mega Man, Resident Evil, and Monster Hunter. Chinese developer Tencent Games hosts several online multiplayer games such as Call of Duty Online and League of Legends. MiHoYo Co., Ltd. is another Chinese developer known for the Honkai series and Tears of Themis, but is most well-known for Genshin Impact, one of the highest-grossing mobile games of 2021. In short, it is worth paying attention to video game production outside the U.S. and Western Europe as there is potential for new and creative innovation in the industry that is yet to be found.

1. What is the connection between “play” and gaming?

Gaming’s relationship with “play” is linked to how “play” itself is defined, in the sense that it is freedom in a system of constraints. While there are various definitions of “play”, it tends to follow several key components. The first is that it is driven by internalized rewards, with examples including enjoyment and satisfaction. Some ways that gamers reward themselves is by memorizing the control scheme or completing an action in the shortest amount of time. The second is that “play” often invents fictional worlds or scenarios that people are meant to act out. Gaming has similar elements in which people are put into worlds (Horizon Zero Dawn) or scenarios (a sniper from Sniper Elite) which are often grounded in imagination over reality. Even though “play” encourages taking the world or scenario seriously, it is not typically associated with serious consequences or obligations. There are exceptions to this in gaming (gambling is one of these), but many types of games such as sudoku or crosswords do not command the kind of attention that a job would. Finally, “play” is not always aligned with the rules, as it can change based on the interest and needs of the “player” While games like Just Cause have rules about what you can and cannot do, it highly encourages “players” to think of creative solutions that may or may not be pertinent to your goals or objectives. The key connection between “play” and gaming is that you are free to do as you want within the limits of this reality.

1. Choose one of the facets of the games industry we talked about in class (mobile, vr, licensed, indie, etc.) How does that facet reflect on the state of the games industry at large?

Focusing on mobile game development, this facet highlights the rise of premium, freemium, and other marketing strategies in the games industry. At the time, a significant portion of the global population now has access to mobile phones. Due to this, mobile game development gained enormous potential as apps can reach a large audience easily. This was further increased by the novelty of touchscreens, which introduced new ways of engaging with games. One example of this is fruit ninja, in which you use your finger to swipe across a screen to cut fruits. Fruit Ninja is an all-inclusive package that you only needed to pay for once and did not need to do anything else after that. However, it was quickly realized that mobile games can be purposefully designed to lead people into paying more money, indirectly or not. The mobile game Angry birds represents this transition. The mobile game was among the first to come with advertisements that occur during gameplay, creating additional funds due to reach. This model was soon followed by in-app purchases, such as the option to remove ads for a small fee or purchasing a decorative item to be used in-game. From a marketing standpoint, mobile game development resulted in a paradigm shift that led to new strategies for “selling” games.

1. What makes mods, hacks, and machinima so useful for game production today?

Game production today can benefit from mods, hacks, and machinima in several ways. To fully understand why, some definitions are needed. A mod, or modification, is a user-made alteration to a game, ranging from texture changes to complex gameplay overhauls. The value of a mod is that it can add new content that was not part of the original game, create new features that the game did not have, or essentially change the game’s overall mechanics. Some games have entire communities built around mods, such as Minecraft, The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, and Cities: Skylines. On the other hand, hacks are a specific category of mod that is often associated with cheating or exploitative behaviors, as they tend to provide unfair advantages in a game. By exploiting flaws in the game code, hacks can be used to gain unlimited resources, bypass challenges, and can even control players. In this case, hacks can highlight vulnerabilities in a game using aimbots, wallhacks, and speed hacks. In contrast to a mod or hack, a machinima is a type of filmmaking that uses the game engine to create movies or animations; these allow creators to tell stories or create sketches in creative ways. There are several real-world examples of machinima in action, such as Red vs. Blue, various Minecraft machinima, and The Sandbox from Garry’s Mod. Mods, hacks, and machinima show how a game can be manipulated in creative ways that game production studios do not normally consider.

1. Bonus Question: Choose one game we played during class (not mentioned in any of the readings) in our Demo & Play Activity, and talk about it in terms of its constraints. Please include the definition of constraint in your discussion.

For this question, I will be covering the VR game Pistol Whip and how the player’s actions are shaped through limits or boundaries (constraints). First are internal potential constraints, which describes how the player engages with a game. In the case of Pistol Whip, they do so with the hand grips and headset, which allows engaging with various menus, environments, and weapons. The second constraint is the external potential constraints, which covers the game as designed. The game is designed around your hands and headset, as it allows you to aim and shoot with your hand grips while navigating menus or dodging incoming fire with your headset. The third constraint is external active constraints, which is the rules that immediately affect the player. In the context of the game, you are rewarded for taking out enemies and given bonuses for doing it in sync with the background music. This influences the internal active constraints, in which players create the rules. For example, the player can choose whether or not to shoot targets in sync with the music, or can create specific rules about how to engage with targets. This system of constraints combine in Pistol Whip to create an engaging and novel videogame.