

CALL FOR PAPERS
“Trans Game Studies”

Special issue of *Communication, Culture and Critique* (Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2023)

Editors: Bo Ruberg (University of California, Irvine) and Whit Pow (New York University)

Contribution length: 6,000 to 7,000 words, inclusive of all notes and references

Abstracts due December 15, 2021

Trans studies and game studies—the academic study of video games, analog games, and play—have many productive points of resonance. Transgender people have long made and played games, despite the misconception that trans inclusion is a recent addition to the medium. Trans representation in games has had its own long-standing yet rocky history, while trans players themselves have for years used game spaces for their own radical purposes: exploring gender identity and alternate modes of embodiment in ludic and often digital spaces. Even in the face of transphobia, trans designers, programmers, artists, and fans have worked to trans games themselves: repurposing games and reimagining them in ways that resist and refuse the dominant cis-normativity of games culture. These are only some of the myriad ways that trans issues have come to intertwine with games.

The intersection of trans experience and games is not yet as codified an area of study as queer game studies, which allows for a great deal of potential and possibility as work on the intersection of trans lives and games continues to grow. We take this special issue as an opportunity to turn toward community imaginings of the past, present, and future of trans game studies. While an imagined trans game studies has much to draw from the established sub-field of queer game studies, trans game studies (like trans studies more broadly) must be understood as distinct from the study of queerness. Addressing trans experiences and trans lives in games may necessitate its own set of approaches, methodologies, theories, and archives. It may also raise its own array of rich new perspectives and productive contradictions between this widely influential media form and the realities of trans life.

This special issue of *Communication, Culture & Critique* calls for the envisioning of—and a critical self-reflection on—a trans game studies. We understand this issue to be exploratory in spirit, driven by an interest in speculative futures, reimagined histories, and alternate presents. What is trans game studies? What has it been, what is it now, and what would we like to see it become? We are particularly interested in contributions from authors who themselves identify as part of trans (game) communities—as well as those who are similarly invested in the importance of positioning trans life, and Black and Indigenous trans lives and trans lives of color, as inseparable from the study and the design of games and computational media.

With this special issue, we aim to explore the following questions:

- What is trans game design and/or what are trans games? How might trans perspectives shift the creation of games, their temporalities and spaces, or the politics of their labor and design?
- What is the place of trans people or trans issues in video game history? What might it mean to re-tell the history of games through trans perspectives or trans lives, or to use trans game studies to question existing modes of writing and thinking about history?
- What is the relationship between trans studies and game studies? What might it mean to trans the field of game studies or to bring a focus on games and play to the field of trans studies?

Building from these questions, potential article topics may include but are not limited to:

- Games (digital or analog) with trans representational content
- Games interpreted through trans lenses
- Trans game creators and/or design
- Trans lives in game history and/or trans approaches to game history
- Perspectives, experiences, and politics of Black and Indigenous trans people and trans people of color and games
- Trans embodiment in or through games
- Digital trans aesthetics in games
- Tensions between the representational and the deliberately non-representational and their relation to trans life and experience (e.g. the glitch, the pixelated, or the deliberately opaque)
- Trans issues in game culture
- Experiences of trans players
- Trans video game live streamers
- Trans game fandoms
- The place of trans topics within game studies and vice versa
- The relationship between trans game studies and queer game studies

Submission Instructions:

Please submit an **abstract of approximately 500 words**, not inclusive of references, to the special issue editors Bo Ruberg (bruberg@uci.edu) and Whit Pow (wpow@nyu.edu) by **December 15, 2021**.

Based on the relevance and strength of the proposed work, the special issue editors will choose a selection of the submitted abstracts and invite their authors to submit full drafts of their articles for peer review. Because all articles undergo a full anonymous peer review process, an invitation from the editors to submit does not guarantee acceptance in the issue. Notifications regarding abstract selection will be sent out by **January 15, 2022**. For those authors invited to submit, full articles will be due **May 1, 2022**. These will be submitted directly to *Communication, Culture, and Critique* via ScholarOne (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/cccr>)

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the co-editors, Bo Ruberg (bruberg@uci.edu) and Whit Pow (wpow@nyu.edu).

Special Issue Editors:

Bo Ruberg, Ph.D. (they/them) is an associate professor in the Department of Film and Media Studies and an affiliate faculty member in the Department of Informatics at the University of California, Irvine. They are the author of *The Queer Games Avant-Garde: How LGBTQ Game Makers Are Reimagining the Medium of Video Games* (Duke University Press, 2020) and *Video Games Have Always Been Queer* (New York University Press, 2019) as well as the co-editor of *Queer Game Studies* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

Whit Pow, Ph.D. (they/them) is an assistant professor in the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University. Their work has been published in *Feminist Media Histories*, *ROMchip: A Journal of Game Histories*, *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, and *The Velvet Light Trap*.