

Call for Papers

Morality Play

The Design of Games for Moral Engagement
Workshop at DiGRA 2017 - July 3 2017
<http://digra2017.com/workshops/>

After the success of the Morality Play workshop in 2016, we would like to announce a follow-up workshop for DiGRA 2017.

Questions of morality are a pervasive topic for media and the arts. Across every medium we see artists engaging audiences with challenging moral questions concerning topics such as war, crime, corruption, fidelity and the abuse of power. Questions of morality have long been central to how we understand ourselves, our lives, and our cultural contexts; and in turn our art forms have reflected, embodied, and challenged beliefs about right and wrong.

Games, however, seem to have long existed in a moral vacuum. While morally-charged themes such as crime or war have always been present, few games invite us to engage with the morality of the worlds they depict or the behaviour they encourage us to adopt. Those games that do adopt some kind of “morality system” have been criticised for turning morality into a mere point-scoring exercise, more about optimising pragmatic outcomes than about making decisions based on the moral values.

In recent years this conversation has been changing. A number of game titles have been released which invite the player to make difficult moral choices, and enjoy doing so. Titles such as *Spec Ops: The Line*, *Papers Please*, *This War of Mine* and *The Walking Dead* deliberately provoke their players with difficult ethical dilemmas and place the concept of “winning” at odds with doing what is right.

In academic circles there has been increased interest in understanding how games engage and challenge players ethically, not just through narrative but also through gameplay. Questions arise such as: How to engage and maintain the player’s empathy towards game characters? How to offer meaningful ethical choice without obvious prompting? How to go beyond simple acts of judgement and call on the player’s initiative, courage and perseverance?

There is also a growing interest in games as tools for moral education, both in terms of creating awareness of and empathy for social problems (such as homelessness, climate change, terrorism) and also as tools for teaching general-purpose ethical reasoning. Role-play and hypotheticals have long been tools for ethics education; videogames are being recognised as a means for making such exercises more engaging and widespread. However there are questions about whether such lessons can be taught by games alone.

We invite papers looking at topics such as:

- Critiques of games with moral choices or themes
- Principles and frameworks for the design of moral gameplay
- The role of ethical dilemmas in games and other media
- Games for moral pedagogy
- Applications of behavioural ethics to game design
- The design of games to promote empathy
- The ethics of subversive, taboo and treacherous play

The object of this workshop is to bring together various researchers in the area for a live conversation and sharing of ideas. As such, we invite contributions from ethics researchers from philosophy, psychology and education as well as designers who have worked on games such as these.

Important Dates

Paper submission: 13 April, 2017

Notification to authors: 12 May, 2017

Camera Ready: 12 Jun 2017

Workshop: 3 Jul 2017

Workshop Organization: The Ethics in Games workshop will feature a half day of research paper presentations, followed by a group discussions on challenges and opportunities in ethics and game design.

Paper submission: Authors are invited to submit full papers (max 8 pages) by Apr 13. Papers will be selected by peer review. Since the workshop is intended to explore new ideas and directions, submission of incomplete and in-process results are encouraged.

Papers should be formatted using the **DiGRA template**:

http://digra2017.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/DiGRA_Template_2017.doc

Papers can be submitted using EasyChair at:

<https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=mp2017>

Accepted papers will be published on the DiGRA conference website.

Demonstrations: We are also inviting demonstrations of games exhibiting novel design for ethically engaging play. Game demonstrations should be submitted with an accompanying 1-2 page abstract describing the game and its research purpose.

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