Introduction: Why Game Theory
Introduction: Why Game Theory

In mapping the trajectory of popular media, we can see a clear corollary between the relationship of theory and practice. Literature, film, even popular music all began as "folk" genres which, once their cultural relevance had been proven, grew up and “matured”. 
Introduction: Why Game Theory

In mapping the trajectory of popular media, we can see a clear corollary between the relationship of theory and practice. Literature, film, even popular music all began as "folk" genres which, once their cultural relevance had been proven, grew up and “matured”.

Such a cycle is currently underway in computer games. But this medium is still erroneously considered to be in its "infancy." The evolution of a body of theory on computer games is an exciting prospect. As with other media, it promises to broaden and deepen the discourse of the medium (we can start talking about something beyond blood/guts and explosions, for example.)
Introduction: Why Game Theory

In mapping the trajectory of popular media, we can see a clear corollary between the relationship of theory and practice. Literature, film, even popular music all began as "folk" genres which, once their cultural relevance had been proven, grew up and “matured”.

Such a cycle is currently underway in computer games. But this medium is still erroneously considered to be in its "infancy." The evolution of a body of theory on computer games is an exciting prospect. As with other media, it promises to broaden and deepen the discourse of the medium (we can start talking about something beyond blood/guts and explosions, for example.)

In addition, if history is any indicator, it will also have a positive influence on the practice of creating games, just as the development of film theory in the sixties and seventies did on the film; or modern art criticism had its affect on art from the 1860’s to present.
Introduction: Why Game Theory

In mapping the trajectory of popular media, we can see a clear corollary between the relationship of theory and practice. Literature, film, even popular music all began as "folk" genres which, once their cultural relevance had been proven, grew up and “matured”.

Such a cycle is currently underway in computer games. But this medium is still erroneously considered to be in its "infancy." The evolution of a body of theory on computer games is an exciting prospect. As with other media, it promises to broaden and deepen the discourse of the medium (we can start talking about something beyond blood/guts and explosions, for example.)

In addition, if history is any indicator, it will also have a positive influence on the practice of creating games, just as the development of film theory in the sixties and seventies did on the film; or modern art criticism had its affect on art from the 1860’s to present.

Ironic, isn’t it, that the birthplace of games (the academy), has until recently shunned their creation, practice and discussion.
Earliest Computer Games

1. 1952 – Alexander S. Douglas wrote his PhD degree at Cambridge University, creating a version of “Tic-Tac-Toe” on the EDSAC vacuum-tube computer.
Earliest Computer Games

1. 1952 – Alexander S. Douglas wrote his PhD degree at Cambridge University, creating a version of “Tic-Tac-Toe” on the EDSAC vacuum-tube computer.

2. 1958 - William Higinbotham created and played on a Brookhaven National Laboratory oscilloscope "Tennis for Two".
Earliest Computer Games

1. 1952 – Alexander S. Douglas wrote his PhD degree at Cambridge University, creating a version of “Tic-Tac-Toe” on the EDSAC vacuum-tube computer.

2. 1958 - William Higinbotham created and played on a Brookhaven National Laboratory oscilloscope "Tennis for Two".

3. 1962 - Steve Russell at MIT invented “Spacewar!”, the first game intended for computer use on a then state-of-the-art PDP-1 mainframe.
Earliest Computer Games

1. 1952 – Alexander S. Douglas wrote his PhD degree at Cambridge University, creating a version of “Tic-Tac-Toe” on the EDSAC vacuum-tube computer.

2. 1958 - William Higinbotham created and played on a Brookhaven National Laboratory oscilloscope "Tennis for Two”.

3. 1962 - Steve Russell at MIT invented “Spacewar!”, the first game intended for computer use on a then state-of-the-art PDP-1 mainframe.

4. 1967 - Ralph Baer wrote the first video game played on a television set – Chase – while at Sanders Associates, a military firm.
Earliest Computer Games

1. 1952 – Alexander S. Douglas wrote his PhD degree at Cambridge University, creating a version of “Tic-Tac-Toe” on the EDSAC vacuum-tube computer.
2. 1958 - William Higinbotham created and played on a Brookhaven National Laboratory oscilloscope "Tennis for Two”.
3. 1962 - Steve Russell at MIT invented “Spacewar!”, the first game intended for computer use on a then state-of-the-art PDP-1 mainframe.
4. 1967 - Ralph Baer wrote the first video game played on a television set – Chase – while at Sanders Associates, a military firm.
5. 1971 – Nolan Bushnell created the first arcade game, Computer Space, based on Steve Russell's earlier game of Spacewar!.
Pong was created in 1972. Atari started 1975.
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

1. Ease and availability of video games has led to an epidemic of youth violence.

8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

1. Ease and availability of video games has led to an epidemic of youth violence.


Researchers find that people serving time for violent crimes typically consume less media before committing their crimes than the average person in the general population. It's true that young offenders who have committed school shootings in America have also been game players. But young people in general are more likely to be gamers — 90 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls play.

The overwhelming majority of kids who play do NOT commit antisocial acts.
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

1. Ease and availability of video games has led to an epidemic of youth violence.


According to a 2001 U.S. Surgeon General's report, the strongest risk factors for school shootings centered on mental stability and the quality of home life, not media exposure.

The moral panic over violent video games is doubly harmful. It has led adult authorities to be more suspicious and hostile to many kids who already feel cut off from the system. It also is a smokescreen misdirecting energy away from eliminating the actual causes of youth violence and allowing problems to continue to fester.
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

2. Scientific evidence links violent game play with youth aggression.

- Claims like this are based on the work of researchers who represent one school of research, "media effects."

This research includes some 300 studies of media violence. But most of those studies are inconclusive and many have been criticized on methodological grounds. In these studies, media images are removed from any narrative context. Subjects are asked to engage with content that they would not normally consume and may not understand. Finally, the laboratory context is radically different from the environments where games would normally be played.

Most studies found a correlation, not a causal relationship, which means the research could simply show that aggressive people like aggressive entertainment.

U Michigan L. Rowell Huesmann writes that 50 years of evidence shows "that exposure to media violence causes children to behave more aggressively and affects them as adults years later."

U Toronto Jonathan Freedman writes that "the scientific evidence simply does not show that watching violence either produces violence in people, or desensitizes them."

U Ottawa Andrea Martinez writes in a comprehensive study for the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission in 1994 that the lack of consensus about media effects reflects three "grey areas" contained in the research itself. First, media violence is notoriously hard to define and measure. Second, researchers disagree over the type of relationship the data supports. Third, even those who agree that there is a connection between media violence and aggression disagree about how the one effects the other. Is it psychological or physiological?
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

2. Scientific evidence links violent game play with youth aggression.

- Claims like this are based on the work of researchers who represent one school of research, "media effects."

That's why the vague term "links" is often used in these studies. If there is a consensus emerging around this research, it is that violent video games may be one risk factor - when coupled with other more immediate, real-world influences — which can contribute to anti-social behavior.

But no research has found that video games are a primary factor or that violent video game play could turn an otherwise normal person into a killer.

U Michigan L. Rowell Huesmann writes that 50 years of evidence shows "that exposure to media violence causes children to behave more aggressively and affects them as adults years later."

U Toronto Jonathan Freedman writes that "the scientific evidence simply does not show that watching violence either produces violence in people, or desensitizes them."

U Ottawa Andrea Martinez writes in a comprehensive study for the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission in 1994 that the lack of consensus about media effects reflects three "grey areas" contained in the research itself. First, media violence is notoriously hard to define and measure. Second, researchers disagree over the type of relationship the data supports. Third, even those who agree that there is a connection between media violence and aggression disagree about how the one effects the other. Is it psychological or physiological?
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

3. Children are the primary market for video games.

- 62 percent of the console market and 66 percent of the PC market is age 18 or older.

While most American kids do play video games, the center of the video game market has shifted older as the first generation of gamers continues to play into adulthood. The game industry caters to adult tastes. Meanwhile, a sizable number of parents ignore game ratings because they assume that games are for kids. One quarter of children ages 11 to 16 identify an M-Rated (Mature Content) game as among their favorites. Clearly, more could be done to restrict advertising and marketing that targets young consumers with mature content, and to educate parents about the media choices they are facing.

But parents need to share some of the responsibility for making decisions about what is appropriate for their children.
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

4. Almost no girls play computer games.

➢ Women now slightly outnumber men playing Web-based games.

In the early years, the video game market was predominantly male. However, the percentage of women playing games has steadily increased over the past decade.

Based on the educational philosophy that computer games were an easy way to address digital literacy, efforts were made in the mid-90s to build games that appealed to girls. More recent games such as The Sims were huge crossover successes that attracted many women who had never played games before.

Given the historic imbalance in the game market (and among people working inside the game industry), the presence of sexist stereotyping in games is hardly surprising.
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

5. Since the military recognizes and uses games to train soldiers to kill, you can’t deny the same impact on children.

➢ We will have a generation of young people brutalized and conditioned to be aggressive in their everyday social interactions.

The military uses games as part of a specific curriculum, with clearly defined goals, in a context where soldiers actively want to learn and have a need for the information being transmitted.

The consequences for not mastering those skills for soldiers in a war is real (not fantasy) death.

“The official U.S. Army game is one of the five most popular PC games played online”, according to the official website: [http://www.americasarmy.com/](http://www.americasarmy.com/) And it is free.
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

6. Video games are not a meaningful form of expression.

➢ “Video games do not convey ideas and thus enjoy no constitutional protection.”, according to U.S. District Judge Stephen Limbaugh (April 19, 2002).

Overturning a similar decision in Indianapolis, Federal Court of Appeals Judge Richard Posner stated: "Violence has always been and remains a central interest of humankind and a recurrent, even obsessive theme of culture both high and low. It engages the interest of children from an early age, as anyone familiar with the classic fairy tales collected by Grimm, Andersen, and Perrault are aware. “

“To shield children right up to the age of 18 from exposure to violent descriptions and images would ...leave them unequipped to cope with the world as we know it."

The Sims designer Will Wright states that games are perhaps the only medium that allows us to experience guilt over the actions of fictional characters. In a movie, one can always pull back and condemn the character when they cross certain social boundaries. But in playing a game, we choose what happens to the characters. In the right circumstances, we can be encouraged to examine our own values by seeing how we behave within virtual space.
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

7. Video game play is socially isolating.

➢ Video game play is often social. According to MIT, over half of frequent gamers play with friends. Even games designed for single players are often played socially, with one person giving advice to another. A growing number of games are designed for multiple players — for either cooperative play in the same space or online play with distributed players. Sociologist Talmadge Wright writes that conversations about game content often provide a context for thinking about rules and rule-breaking.

In this way there are really two games taking place simultaneously: one, the explicit conflict and combat on the screen; the other, the implicit cooperation and comradeship between the players.
8 Video Game Myths (according to MIT Henry Jenkins)

8. Video game play is desensitizing.

➢ **Play is distinctive from reality, according to designer Eric Zimmerman, it’s a kind of “magic circle”**.

Classic studies of play behavior among primates suggest that apes make basic distinctions between play fighting and actual combat. In some circumstances, they seem to take pleasure wrestling and tousling with each other. In others, they might rip each other apart in mortal combat. The same action — say, sweeping a floor — may take on different meanings in play (as in playing house) than in reality (housework). Play allows kids to express feelings and impulses that have to be carefully held in check in their real-world interactions.

**Often in media effects research, punching rubber dolls is the measure of real-world aggression. This seems problematic. The child who is punching a toy designed for this purpose is still within the "magic circle" of play and understands his/her actions on those terms.**
Time for a Game: MMGRPS - massively multiplayer game
Time for a Game: MMGRPS - massively multiplayer game  Rock, Paper, Scissors

1. The players both count aloud to three, or speak the name of the game (e.g. "Rock! Paper! Scissors!"), each time raising one hand in a fist and swinging it down on the count. On the third count, the players change their hands into one of three gestures, which they then "throw" by extending it towards their opponent.

2. **Rock**, represented by a closed fist.
   - **Paper**, represented by an open hand.
   - **Scissors**, represented by the index and middle fingers extended.

3. The objective is to select a gesture which defeats that of the opponent. Gestures are resolved as follows:
   - **Rock smashes scissors; rock wins.**
   - **Paper covers rock; paper wins.**
   - **Scissors cut paper; scissors wins.**
rules + play + culture
Assignment for Saturday, Sept 15


2. In class you will pick a “game” from the list. Prepare a 3 minute executive summary about it. Oral presentation in class, first thing.