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## Project Proposal

**Thesis:** Despite videogames becoming nearly ubiquitous in American culture over the last couple decades, research into the rhetorical aspects of games is just starting to emerge from scholars. Ian Bogost has been the foremost scholar in this area, creating the idea of “Procedural Rhetoric” to describe how the procedural systems within the game direct players towards, and reinforce, specific desired behaviors or beliefs. However, videogames don't exist in a vacuum. Even single-player games develop large social dialogues surround them as the players who have shared in the experience of the game communicate with each-other. Thus, the procedural systems of the game not only influence the individual, but the social as well. With that in mind, the object of this thesis is to understand the question: What are the social implications of procedural rhetoric in videogames?

**Method:** In order to analyze this question, this essay will utilize library research along with critical analysis of multiple videogame artifacts to show that games create a “Procedural Ecology” in which social dialogue and constructions surrounding the game are directly related to the procedural systems found within the game itself.

**Plan:** Aside from the thesis/introduction, the paper will start out with an explanation and analysis of Ian Bogost’s procedural rhetoric. Following that, this essay will point out that, procedurally, some games are specifically designed with large groups of people in mind – objectives cannot be procedurally completed otherwise. The online game *Eve Online* is used as a casual example of the large social aspects to games.

Following that discussion, this essay will point out that multiplayer games are not the only ones that have social aspects to their procedural systems. While the single-player game is an individual experience, it is experienced by many individuals, and in nearly identical fashion. This allows those who play the game early to pass on knowledge to those who play the game later, assisting them in avoiding missing valuable clues or avoiding common mistakes. Players seek out knowledge from others through discussions with peers, or through “expert” advice found in guides or walkthroughs. As games become more complex, more knowledge is required to exist with the procedural systems, therefore more social interaction is required to assist players in navigating that complexity. This coincides with current research that suggests that learning through social interaction is more important than “trial-and-error” for MMO players (Schrader & McCreery, 2008).

It is important to realize that social interaction related to a video game is constrained by the procedural system of the video game. Walkthroughs and guides give players the information needed to play the game “correctly”. Discussions of ways to play the game incorrectly – to cheat – are still constrained by the procedural rules the cheaters are trying to find ways around. Even qualitative dialogue regarding the “best” way to finish a game is still constrained by the procedural system. Therefore, the social environment itself is an extension and reinforcement of the procedural system, pressuring players to play and experience the game in a specific manner. The game, and the social environment which supports and extends its rhetoric, is then a *procedural ecology*

To understand the basics of social dialogues/Procedural Ecology that surround videogames, the Nintendo™ game *Super Mario Brothers* will be analyzed by providing examples of social dialogue centered on procedural information-sharing (Walkthroughs/Game

Guides), and social comparisons (Speed-Runs) related to the game. These examples show the social dialogue that surrounds the game – procedural information-sharing, and social competition.

After Super Mario Brothers, the highly popular multiplayer online game *League of Legends* will be analyzed to show how modern online social games can create a super-ecology in which feedback mechanisms allow players to influence the very procedural systems that give rise to the ecology in the first place, creating a cyclical, self-renewing system. For this game, the complex procedural systems have given rise to multiple websites that serve as procedural information repositories as well as sites that serve to track and report on the varying levels of respective players – providing a rich social comparison system. Additionally I will discuss the feedback system that exists with online multiplayer games and how the reactions of developers to player suggestions/demands in regards to a procedural system that is under constant review and subject to adjustment.

### **Resources:**

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The art of warfare has evolved significantly over the past three hundred years, from infantrymen with smoothbore rifles in the civil war, tank warfare in World War I and II, and the air campaigns of Vietnam. As we progress into the twenty first century with Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and as the United States continues to prepare for future conflicts, new technologies continue to infiltrate the battlefield and fighting force. As the machine and artificial intelligence technology becomes increasingly advanced, the implications of their uses are numerous and warrant further investigation.

We must consider the ethicality and moral responsibility regarding the deployment of the technology on the battlefield as well as their place within the laws of war, among others. We will then further investigate the artificial intelligence and its potential for decision making processes on the battlefield and confront the issues that are raised in concerns over A.I and the identification of friendlies, threats, and non-combatants. The development and fielding of these systems is occurring as rapidly as the technology becomes available, resulting in an ever-changing arsenal of assets to forces on the ground, both in and out of the theatre of war.

Among these new technologies are unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) that are capable of executing missions at the click of a button with no further human interaction, including potential decision-making capacities to identify and engage potential threats. There is also potential for artificial intelligence systems both collecting and maintaining intelligence information. Additionally, robotic assistive suits to be worn by infantrymen, providing increased war-fighting performance and function. Indeed, only a few examples are listed

above, but the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency, or DARPA, along with the help of others, continues to test and push the limits of possibilities of machines and artificial intelligence for military applications.

### **Method**

For this project, I will use library and Internet research to provide a historical review of artificial intelligence and its development for use within the military and offer insight into previous investigations about A.I and machines in order to provide necessary background information on the topic. From there I will approach the ethicality and other implications faced by the use of these technologies in the battlefield using philosophical framework and ethics of war.

### **Plan/Outline**

- Introduction
- Historical military use of A.I
  - Intelligence
  - First Gulf War
  - OIF and OEF
- Literature Review
  - Autonomous machines
  - Military uses for A.I
- Analysis
  - Ethical concerns
  - Law of war and UAVs
  - Further implications of A.I and military applications.
- Conclusion

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## **Influencing the Influencers: Quantifying Online Influence Strategy among Chicago Organizations**

### Thesis

“Mass self-communication” is a term coined by Manuel Castells to describe how power relationships have been profoundly changed by the availability of online communication. Through this term Castells explains that essentially anyone with Internet access now has the power to influence. Marketing consultants and academics like Mark Schaefer of Rutgers University are proponents of influencing the influencer – connecting with online influencers to create buzz about an organization’s products or message.

This paper will investigate how formalized programs with the objective of influencing the influencer have grown and developed over the past decade within a sample of Chicago area marketing firms. An example of a formalized influence action would be when AUDI USA gave popular blogger Calvin Lee complimentary use of the company’s newest model in hopes that he would blog about the experience. The results of this study will inform a greater future body of scholarly study that may seek to identify contributors to the cycle of power and influence in online communication.

### Method

An online survey of members of the Chicago Chapter of the American Marketing Association via AMACConnect will be conducted. The survey will be preceded by interviews with a few Chicago marketers who have influence strategies to identify potential tactics/actions to include in the survey options. The survey will also be preceded by a pilot test of the survey.

### Plan

*Literature Review:* Review studies from communication theory, sociology and psychology to identify and describe theoretical underpinnings for the study (i.e. Castells mass self-communication and others). Also review studies from marketing and business publications to describe marketing and business objectives/drivers for such programs. The literature review as described will also serve to inform question development for the survey and for pre-survey interviews. For example, marketing and business publications will provide case studies which will inform language choice (vernacular) in the survey, definitions and scope of the questions.

*Pre-Survey Interviews:* Identify three Chicago area marketers (2 from agencies, 1 from in-house marketing department) to interview regarding influence the influencer programs. Develop a question set based upon the literature review. Schedule the interviews – in person if possible, over the phone if necessary. Provide questions in advance to give interviewees time to consider. Conduct interviews. Code interviews to identify patterns, common issues, outliers.

*Survey:* Obtain email list of CAMA members. Write survey questions and create SurveyMonkey survey. Pilot test the survey to subset of CAMA members. Edit survey questions based upon outcome of pilot. Distribute link to survey via email request and also post on open forum on CAMA member-only site. Provide incentive to participate by communicating that the names of all survey participants who complete the survey in full will be placed into a raffle to win a gift card to \_\_\_\_\_ (BestBuy...Target... Some place that is popular with mid- to upper-income professionals). Offer to share results with participants(?).  
Compile results.

*Results:* Assess results and link outcomes to theory and practice. Identify opportunities for future research using survey findings and literature review.

### Resources

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