Photo Credit: Hampshire Game Library

Weekly Gameplay

Part I Due before class on **2/3**
Part II Due before class on **2/17**
Part III Due before class on **3/24**
Final Due before class on **4/30**

For this project, you will play boardgames from the Hampshire Game Library and write session reports or reviews on boardgamegeek.com (BGG). This assignment is intended to be fun, and to help you increase your skills in the following areas:

- Reading, learning, and retaining complex game rules
- Developing a breath of knowledge of many different design ideas
- Describing play sessions with precision
- Writing game rules
- Understanding your own tastes
- Analyzing games
- Networking with peers

What To Do
Each week, play a game from the Hampshire Game Library collection. From the previous link, go to the HFJGameLibrary collection on BGG:

1) https://boardgamegeek.com/collection/user/HFJGameLibrary?own=1&subtype=boardgame&ff=1
I've labeled some games as Wishlist(2) and Wishlist(3). The (2)s are recommended games that are complicated and/or long. The (3)s are also recommended games, but they're shorter and less complicated.

You'll play many different games this semester. **At least 4 should be from Wishlist(2)** and **4 from Wishlist(3)**.

2) You can check the game out from the library, or you can play it there. I'll be at the following game gathering each week:

Wednesdays, 2:30pm - 5pm, Library (Room 205, training room)

The class is free to organize other game gatherings as desired. Note that you can also play your games from the Design A Game project. If you want to post a session report from those games, just use "Unpublished Prototype."

3) Approximately every-other week, write about your gameplay session on BGG:
    a) Find the game on BGG.
    b) Click on "Forum" or scroll down to the Forum section.
    c) Click "Post" and post to the Sessions, Reviews, or General forum.
You should aim to earn at least 2 GeekGold (GG) per post. If you're earning less than that, it's a good sign that you need to include more content.

Good Session Writeups

For your first three posts, write session reports to hone your documentation and observational skills. After your first three session reports, you may choose to write a session report or a review.

If you write a session report, include answers to these questions:
- Who played? (number of players, personalities, experience level, etc.)
- What actually happened in the game? (in extreme detail)
- What did the game look like? (include a picture of the game being played)

I also recommend addressing other questions like:
- What was unclear about the rules, and how did you resolve it?
- How fun was the game, and why?
- How balanced was the game? How would you improve the balance?
- Any interesting probability analysis or questions for further consideration?

If you write a review or general post, you may discuss anything interesting as long as you support it with details from the game itself. Ira will be the final judge of what's interesting, and you can ask for clarification if you're unsure. Here are some ideas that would be interesting:
- Compare/contrast this game with another game of similar mechanics
- Compare/contrast this game with another game of similar theme
- Compare/contrast this game with another game of the same designer
- Analyze the iconography used in this game and how it supports player understanding
- Analyze the game within a cultural context, considering issues of representation, class, power, race, gender, and/or sexuality.
- Analyze the rulebook for things it does particularly well and/or poorly, compared to other similar games.

Note that non-session reports won't get GeekGold, and that's OK as long as the posts are interesting.

Part I

By the deadline, complete at least 1 gameplay session writeup and post it to BGG under the appropriate game, earning at least 2 GeekGold (GG). You should be completing one session each week, but it's helpful to have milestones to ensure you don't get egregiously behind.

Part II

By the deadline, complete at least 3 gameplay session writeups of different games and post them to BGG Session reports, earning at least 2 GeekGold (GG) each. At least 1 session should be from Wishlist(2). You should be completing one session each week.

Part III

By the deadline, complete at least 5 gameplay session writeups and post them to BGG under the appropriate games, earning at least 2 GeekGold (GG) each. At least 2 sessions should be from Wishlist(2) and 1 from Wishlist(3). You should be completing one session each week.

Final

By the deadline, complete at least 7 gameplay session writeups and post them to BGG under the appropriate games. At least 3 sessions should be from Wishlist(2) and 2 from Wishlist(3).

Examples of Detailed Session Reports
Here are some examples of detailed session reports, though most lack the additional analysis that I'm looking for in your posts for this class:

Mage Knight: (solo game) http://boardgamegeek.com/thread/826871/detailed-solo-full-conquest-pictures
War of the Ring: http://boardgamegeek.com/article/15679232
War of the Ring: http://boardgamegeek.com/thread/965521/age-men
Caverna: (solo game) https://boardgamegeek.com/article/16177830
Android: Netrunner: https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/872850/play-play-last-nights-game-my-son
Agricola: https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/835672/planned-parenthood-28-action-win
Agricola: (solo game) https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/337684/agricola-solo-pictorial-report
Civilization: https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/753199/faf-tale-german-efficiency-russian-industrialism-a

Duplicating Session Reports
Assuming you're playing with other people in the class, each person can write a separate session report for the same game. On one hand it may seem silly to have many different perspectives on the same game, but I believe it will be valuable for each of you to individually practice thinking, writing, and presenting your ideas (all key game design skills). It's totally appropriate to discuss the play session after the game is over, but it's vital that each of you write the session report separately, without copying from others. Do whatever works for you to remember what happened, such as writing notes during the game, taking pictures, skipping notes but writing it up immediately afterward while it's still fresh in your memory, etc.

Advanced Search
You can search Hampshire's game collection using the Advanced Search feature: https://boardgamegeek.com/advsearch/boardgame
Under "Search Games Owned," specify user HFJGameLibrary, and then choose whatever details you want, like number of players, min/max play time, or board game mechanic. The advanced search won't show if the game is Wishlist(2) or (3), so you'll need to cross-reference with the normal collection view.

Magic League
If you're in the Magic league (or otherwise play magic), you can count one match as one of your weekly gameplay sessions, as long as you post a good session writeup to BGG. https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/463/magic-gathering

DDM
Everyone is going to be playing DDM as part of this class. You can use a game of DDM as one of your weekly gameplay sessions, as long as you post a good session writeup to BGG. https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/37184/dungeons-dragons-miniatures-game-second-edition

An Opportunity with Fantasy Flight Games
I've had some conversations with the lead game designer of Lord of the Rings: The Card Game, published by Fantasy Flight Games. If you learn the game well and would like to be a playtester for future releases, I would consider making an introduction on your behalf. Playtesting can be a good way to get your foot in the door, possibly leading to internships, good references, and credits on published games.

Playing the Same Game Multiple Times
This semester-long project requires you to play lots of **different** games over the semester. I believe that a diversity of games will be good for your game design skills. Of course, if you particularly enjoy a game or want to play a game again to explore issues of replayability or deeper strategy, that's great! Another session report isn't required, but more practice is always good and I can easily reflect exceptional effort in the written evals.

Games Ira Wants to Play
Below are some games that I particularly enjoy, and I will happily play and/or help you learn at any Wednesday game lab session from 2:30pm – 5pm. I'm also happy to learn other games and/or playtest, but I'll be favorably inclined to anything below.

War of the Ring, Sid Meier's Civilization, Agricola, Android: Netrunner,
Lord of the Rings: The Card Game, Lords of Waterdeep: Scoundrels of Skullport,
Eurorails, Clash of Cultures, Mage Knight and expansions, Merchant of Venus,
Risk Legacy, Seasons

Original assignment designed by Professor Ira Fay.