

**Global Kids, Inc.**  
**Media Masters**  
**Session #16 - April 3rd, 2009 3:30-5:30**  
**Play, Simulation & Serious Games**  
**Rafi Santo & Shawna Rosenzweig with Flourish Klink**

**Objectives**

Participants will be able to:

- Understand the notion of Play, the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem solving.
- Understand the notion of Simulation, the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real world processes.
- Understand how serious games can fit into a larger understanding of given issue.
- Understand how serious games operate as a form of documentation and representation, and the issues implicit in that.
- Express how playing a game relating to a real world issue changed, or didn't change, their understanding of that issue, and what benefits and biases, if any, a simulation of a real world issue can have towards understanding that issue.

**Materials**

- Sign in sheet
- 15 computers with internet connections
- Computer with Projector
- URL's for Serious Games
- Url for NY Times Haiti country profile: <http://tinyurl.com/haitiarticle>
- Student blogging accounts
- Blogging Serious Games handout (15)
- Speakers and music
- Paper and pens (15)

**Digital Transcript**

Attendance at this workshop will give students the "Recognize It" badge for Play and Simulation, and, contingent on blog posts, the "Talk about it" badge for Play, Simulation and Judgment.

**Prior to workshop:**

- Turn on computers, set out on desks.
- Set up room for musical chairs
- Print out updated digital transcripts

### **What do Play, Simulation and Credibility mean to you? (5 - Rafi)**

One minute writing on each of the concepts.

#### **IceBreaker: Hyper-gendered Musical Chairs (25 - Shawna)**

Have kids play a round of musical chairs. After one round, ask what the rules of musical chairs are. Ask students to then modify the game so that it's either "super masculine" or "super feminine". Have them discuss and decide what the rules would look like for that game. Have them try it out, see how it works, and then modify it to have it better convey the gender identity they chose.

After they're finished, have them reference their digital transcripts and have two volunteers read out the definitions of Play and Simulation. Discuss: How did the activity we just did relate to these skills?

#### **Understanding Haiti (30 - Rafi)**

- Ask the students to read the New York Times country profile about Haiti on their computers. Put the URL on the board: <http://tinyurl.com/haitiarticle>

- Process with students about the article, what they took away, what their impressions of the country were after reading the article, what kinds of information the article represent and how it did so. (10)

-Play Ayiti: The Cost of Life (<http://ayiti.newzcrew.org/globalkids/>), (10)

Processing: (Rafi & Shawna 10)

Simulation (Rafi) :

Tell the students that games and articles represent information differently.

- What do you think that the game got at that the article did not?
- What do you think the article got at that the game did not?
- Did the fact that you took on a character change the way you related to the issue?

Play (Shawna):

- What were the different ways that the game portayed information about Haiti?
- Which way was easier for you to learn about the issue? Why do think that was?

Let the group know that games, just like other forms of media, represent information in their own way, but also choose to represent certain things, and perhaps leave out others.

Credibility (Rafi):

- Do you think that you can trust the game as an accurate portrayal of events in Haiti? Why or why not? How would you think of its credibility as different from the news article?
- How could this game have "distorted" your understanding of Haiti?
- Do you think that the game had a point of view that it was trying to get across? If so what was it?

Transmedia navigation:

- Is reading an article and then playing a game an example of another skill that we've discussed? (Transmedia navigation)

### **Understanding Global Issues through Games (Shawna - 25)**

Give students the Blogging Serious Games handout

- Tell the students to select a game, a simulation of an issue they're interested in, and while playing paying attention to how issues of representation, credibility and play.

- Darfur is Dying (genocide) - [darfurisdying.com](http://darfurisdying.com)
- Tempest in Crescent City (hurricane katrina and local response) - <http://tempestincrescentcity.ning.com/game>
- McDonald's Game (Fast food practices, food politics) - <http://www.mcvideogame.com/index-eng.html>
- Layoff game (Downsizing and corporate bailouts) - <http://www.tiltfactor.org/layoff/play.html>
- Profit Seed (Agricultural Practice, GMO crops, food politics) - <http://tinyurl.com/profitseed>

### **Blogging Serious Games (Rafi - 40)**

Have students refer to the Blogging Serious Games handout.

Questions to answer in the blog post:

Questions about Representation and Simulation:

- What was the game that you played, what issue did it represent? What were the different ways that the game represented information about the issue?
- What made your game different from a documentary, news article, photograph, radio story, or other form of media about the issue?

Questions about Play and experimentation as a form of problem solving:

- How did you use experimentation or "play" in order to figure out how to succeed in the game?
- Did you ever succeed at something in the game by failing first? What's an example of when you did this?

Questions about Credibility:

- Do you think that the game had a point of view that it was trying to get across? If so, what was it?
- Do you think that you can trust the game as an accurate portrayal of the issue? Why or why not?

# Blogging Serious Games!

**Step 1** - Select a game, a simulation of an issue you're interested in, and while playing pay attention to how issues of representation, credibility and play come up.



Profit Seed - A game about the politics of agriculture.

[tinyurl.com/profitseed](http://tinyurl.com/profitseed)

Layoff - A game about economics and employment.

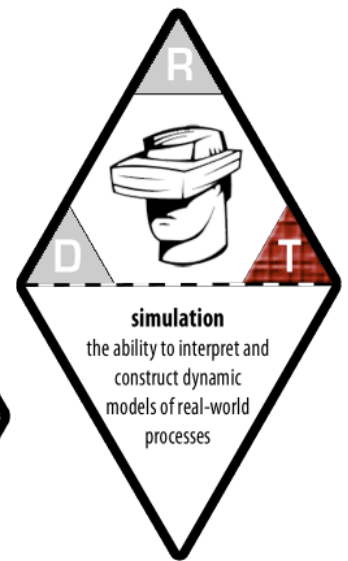


[tinyurl.com/layoff](http://tinyurl.com/layoff)

Darfur is Dying - A game about killings in Darfur.

Darfur is Dying

[DarfurIsDying.com](http://DarfurIsDying.com)



Completing this project **effectively** gets you the "Talk About It!" badge for Play and Simulation!

Tempest in the Crescent City - A game about local heroes in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina



[tinyurl.com/tempestgame](http://tinyurl.com/tempestgame)

The McDonald's Game - A game about fast food practices.



[McVideoGame.com](http://McVideoGame.com)



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## Step 2 - Blog serious games!

Try answer at least **one question from each of the sets of questions** below.

Log into the Blog at:  
[HolyMeatballs.org/mt](http://HolyMeatballs.org/mt)  
**Username:** Your First Name!  
**Password:** holymeatballs

Feel free to link to the game that you played in your blog post!

### Questions about Representation and Simulation:

- What was the game that you played, what issue did it represent? What were the different ways that the game represented information about the issue?
- What made your game different from a documentary, news article, photograph, radio story, or other form of media about the issue?

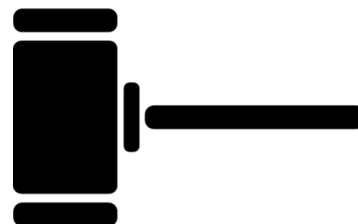


### Questions about Play and experimentation as a form of problem solving:

- How did you use experimentation or "play" in order to figure out how to succeed in the game?
- Did you ever succeed at something in the game by failing first? What's an example of when you did this?

### Questions about Credibility:

- Do you think that the game had a point of view that it was trying to get across? If so, what was it?
- Do you think that you can trust the game as an accurate portrayal of the issue? Why or why not?



### FINAL QUESTION - **REQUIRED!**

What makes games in general, not just your game, different from a documentary, news article, photograph, radio story, or other form of media?

