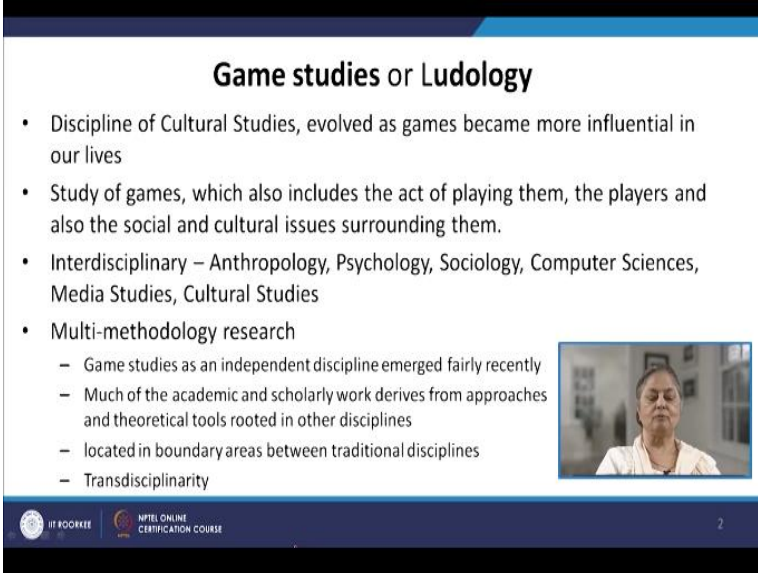


Literature, Culture and Media
Prof. Rashmi Gaur
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology – Roorkee

Lecture - 56
Game Studies I


Dear friends, welcome to the final week of our discussions. In this module today, we would be introducing game studies. Game studies is a burgeoning and new discipline which is related with cultural studies. It is being evolved now as games are becoming more and more influential in our lives and cultures.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:54)



Game studies or Ludology

- Discipline of Cultural Studies, evolved as games became more influential in our lives
- Study of games, which also includes the act of playing them, the players and also the social and cultural issues surrounding them.
- Interdisciplinary – Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, Computer Sciences, Media Studies, Cultural Studies
- Multi-methodology research
 - Game studies as an independent discipline emerged fairly recently
 - Much of the academic and scholarly work derives from approaches and theoretical tools rooted in other disciplines
 - located in boundary areas between traditional disciplines
 - Transdisciplinarity





IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 2

Game Studies or ludology is a study of games which also includes the act of playing them, the players as well as the social and cultural issues surrounding them. It is inherently interdisciplinary and we find that not only the critics belonging to different fields but also the research tools belonging to diverse areas like anthropology, psychology, sociology, computer science, media studies and cultural studies are being brought in together to study this field.

The research is also multi-methodology as it is an independent discipline which is emerging fairly recently. So much of the academic and scholarly work is derived from different approaches and also the theoretical tools which are being used belong to different disciplines. We can say that it is transdisciplinary and as yet it is located in the boundary areas between different traditional disciplines.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:56)

- Game studies is often confused with the study of video and multi media games, but it includes all types of gaming, containing sports and board games also.
 - Anthropologists studied the history of games before video games
 - After video games were introduced, academicians and theorists started to study sociological and psychological influence
- Debates about its comparison with narratology –
 - Many narratologists believe that games should be looked at for their stories, like movies or novels.
 - The ludological perceive games as different from these mediums, because players are actively taking part in the experience and should therefore be understood on their own terms.
 - Resulted in development of new ways of studying and theorizing about games

 IIT KOOBEE
  NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE
 3

Game studies can often be confused with the study of only video games or the multimedia games but as a discipline it includes all types of gaming containing sports as well as board games. However, there is no doubt that the major focus now is on the video and multimedia games but we find that anthropologist have always studied the history of games before the advent of video games.

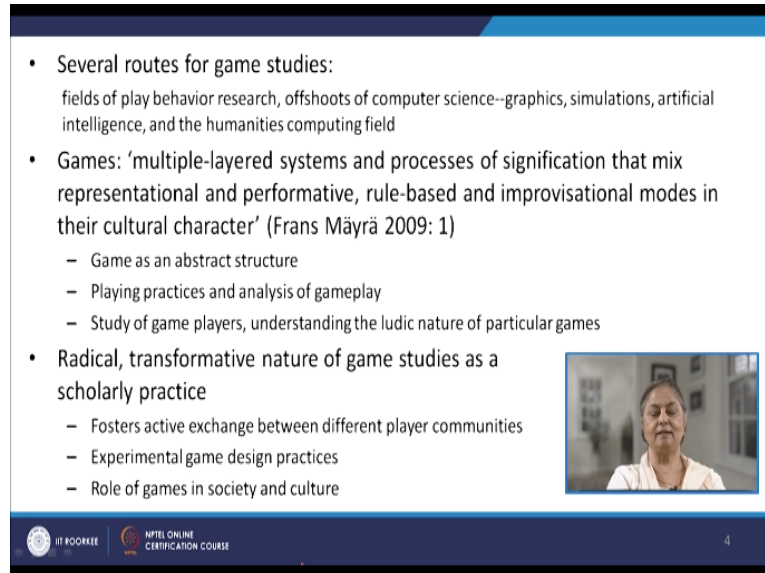
However, after the video games were introduced, academicians and theoreticians have started to study the psychological and sociological influence of these games on the psyche and the sociological interactions of the players. Since it is an emerging field, we find that critics are still struggling to contextualize it properly and therefore several interesting debates still are continuing.

A pertinent debate which we can refer to here is about its comparison with narratology. Many narratologists believe that games should also be looked at primarily for their stories and they should be studied and looked at very much like we look at a movie or a novel for that matter. On the other hand, the ludological perceive games as different from these mediums because they feel that players are actively taking part in the experiences.

And therefore these games should be understood on their own terms. We can say that these different debates have resulted in the development of new ways of looking at this field as well as theorizing how to study games in our contemporary situation. There may be several ways about studying the games in our culture today. There may be a field which may look at the play behaviour research.

It can also be studied as an offshoot of computer science focusing on graphics, simulations, artificial intelligence as well as the humanities computing field.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:14)



• Several routes for game studies:
fields of play behavior research, offshoots of computer science--graphics, simulations, artificial intelligence, and the humanities computing field

• Games: 'multiple-layered systems and processes of signification that mix representational and performative, rule-based and improvisational modes in their cultural character' (Frans Mäyrä 2009: 1)

- Game as an abstract structure
- Playing practices and analysis of gameplay
- Study of game players, understanding the ludic nature of particular games

• Radical, transformative nature of game studies as a scholarly practice

- Fosters active exchange between different player communities
- Experimental game design practices
- Role of games in society and culture

IT KOOKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 4


Games have been defined by Frans Mayra as multiple-layered systems and processes of signification that makes representational and performative, rule-based and improvisational modes in their cultural character. We can respond to games as being an abstract structure and at the same time we have to look at what are the playing practices and we also have to analyze gameplay a phenomena which is emerging now.



At the same time, we also have to look at the behavioral aspects of the game players, how the gaming itself affects them as well as we also have to try to understand the ludic nature of particular games. Game studies as a scholarly practice possess radical and transformative nature. These studies foster active exchange between different player communities as well as experimental game design practices as well as they want to assess what is the role of games in society and culture.

An interesting fact which is often highlighted about the game studies is that they are as located in the western culture because of their differences from other cultures.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:33)

- Why it took so long for Game studies to emerge as a discipline in its own right
 - Critical awareness of games rather limited in the 70s, 80s and 90s
 - Ethnographics studied only the influence of games in culture, society
 - Digital games spread from research labs and mainframe computer to gaming arcades and eventually people's homes—TV games, console video games, computer games
- Contemporary Game Studies: Late 1990s and early 2000s
 - Primarily a study of digital games: Shift from classic board and card games
 - Experience of entering alternative game oriented worlds in digital games
 - Immersion in simulated worlds of challenges and actions which are audiovisually spectacular
 - studied not only the influence of games in culture and society, but also intersections with technology and economics





5

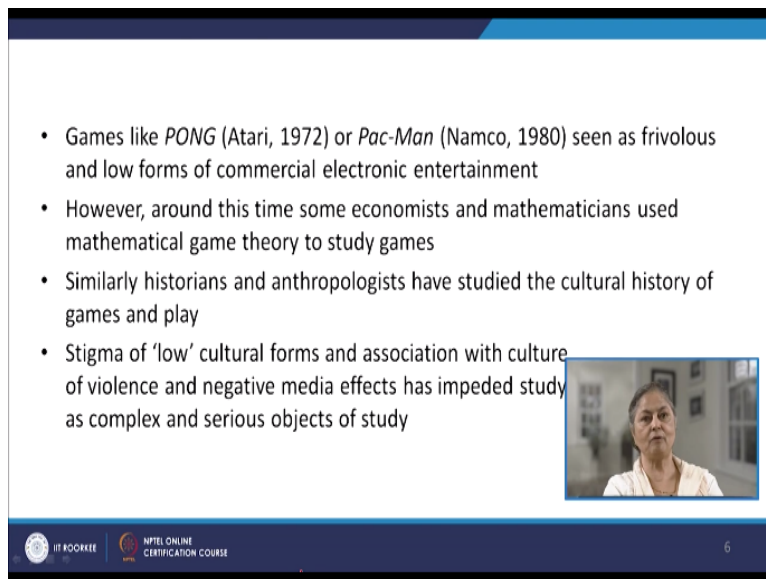
The discipline of game studies took certain time to emerge as an independent field of study and there have been several reasons behind it. We can say that primarily when the computer systems started to make their presence felt during 70s or even 80s the critical awareness about games was rather limited. Prior to this time, ethnographics had studied only the influence of games in culture and society and how does a particular culture or society look at these activities.

But we find that the digital games started spreading from research labs and mainframe computers to gaming arcades and eventually they reached people's homes and we find that they were TV games, console video games, computer games, etc. The way we look at the contemporary game studies, it has developed only in late 1990s and early 2000. Prior to that ethnographics had a different approach towards the game studies.

So the contemporary game studies are primarily a study of digital games. Even though they do not leave the traditional games and the board games outside the purview but still we find that primarily the focus is on digital games and there is a shift in terms of focus from the classical board and card games for example. They look at the experience of entering alternative game oriented worlds in digital games.

And they also look at how a player can be immersed in a simulated world of challenges and actions which are audiovisually spectacular. They study not only the influence of games in our culture and society but they also look at the intersections which exist with technology as well as with economics.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:38)




• Games like *PONG* (Atari, 1972) or *Pac-Man* (Namco, 1980) seen as frivolous and low forms of commercial electronic entertainment

• However, around this time some economists and mathematicians used mathematical game theory to study games

• Similarly historians and anthropologists have studied the cultural history of games and play

• Stigma of 'low' cultural forms and association with culture of violence and negative media effects has impeded study as complex and serious objects of study



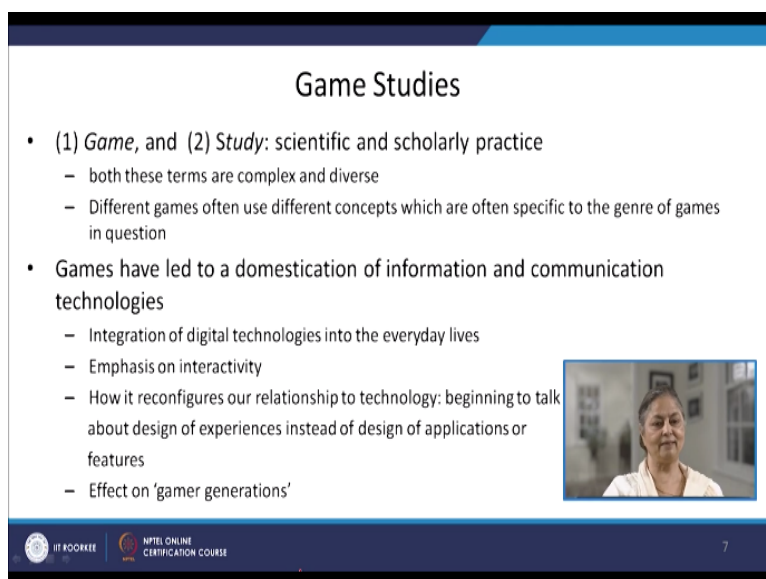
6

NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

During the 70s and 80s, games like *PONG* or *Pac-Man* were basically seen as frivolous activities and they were associated with very base forms of commercial electronic entertainment which was not to be meant for the academically oriented. However, it is around this time only that certain economists and mathematicians started using mathematical game theory to study this phenomena.


And at the same time, we find that historians and anthropologists were also attracted towards the cultural history of games and play in a newer context. At the same time, as we have discussed earlier the stigma of low cultural forms and association with culture of violence and negative media effects also impeded study as complex and serious objects of academy.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:36)



Game Studies

- (1) *Game*, and (2) *Study*: scientific and scholarly practice
 - both these terms are complex and diverse
 - Different games often use different concepts which are often specific to the genre of games in question
- Games have led to a domestication of information and communication technologies
 - Integration of digital technologies into the everyday lives
 - Emphasis on interactivity
 - How it reconfigures our relationship to technology: beginning to talk about design of experiences instead of design of applications or features
 - Effect on 'gamer generations'



7

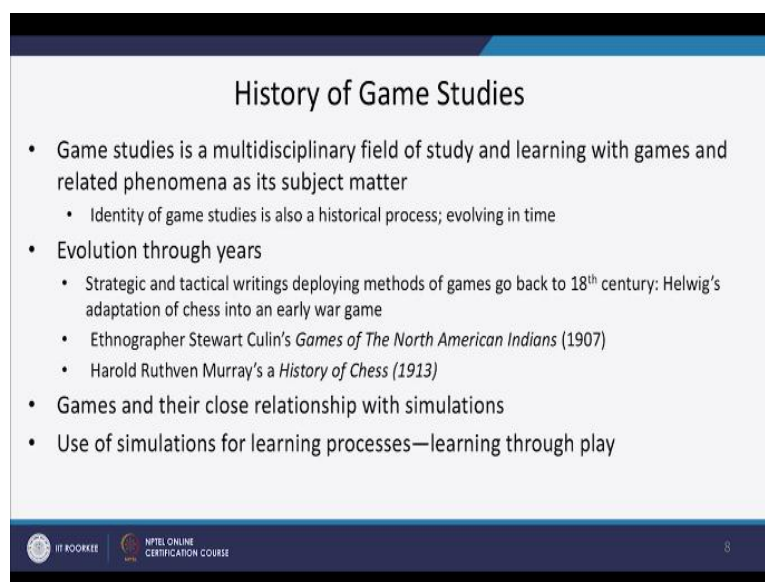
NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

So because of these factors, we find that it took certain time to develop this field as an independent academic field. When we look at the combination of game studies, so we find that it is based on conjoining two terms game and study and it wants to look at the scientific and scholarly practices lying beneath these two terms. These two terms are complex as well as diverse and different games also often use different concepts which are often specific to a particular genre of game in question.

Similarly, we can say that games have led to a domestication of information and communication technologies. We find that towards the end of the 20th century and particularly in the 21st century there has been a very close integration of digital technologies into the everyday lives and at the same time there is a growing emphasis on interactivity in every field be it media or be it games.

So how it reconfigures our relationship to technology so people are beginning to talk about design of experiences instead of design of applications or features only. So now game studies have started to focus on designing experiences of the gamers. So therefore it would have impact on gamer generations if we can put it like this.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:14)



The slide is titled "History of Game Studies" and contains the following bullet points:

- Game studies is a multidisciplinary field of study and learning with games and related phenomena as its subject matter
 - Identity of game studies is also a historical process; evolving in time
- Evolution through years
 - Strategic and tactical writings deploying methods of games go back to 18th century: Helwig's adaptation of chess into an early war game
 - Ethnographer Stewart Culin's *Games of The North American Indians* (1907)
 - Harold Ruthven Murray's *a History of Chess* (1913)
- Games and their close relationship with simulations
- Use of simulations for learning processes—learning through play

At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for IIT KOOBEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, along with the number 8.

If we look at the history of game studies we find that they have also evolved through years. It is a multidisciplinary field of study and learning with games and related phenomena as its subject matter. So the identity of game studies has also been a historical process. The strategic and technical writings deploying methods of games go back to 18th century and we can refer to Helwig's adaptation of chess into early war games.

At the same time, we can refer to certain other books which required different traditions of games and sports activities. Prominent among these books are ethnographer Steward Culin's *Games of The North American Indians* which was published in 1907. Another book which we can mention is of Harold Ruthven Murray, *A History of Chess* which was published in 1913.

So we find that very soon games started to have a close relationship with simulations and use of simulations was also taken up for learning processes. So this concept of learning through play also took off.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:32)



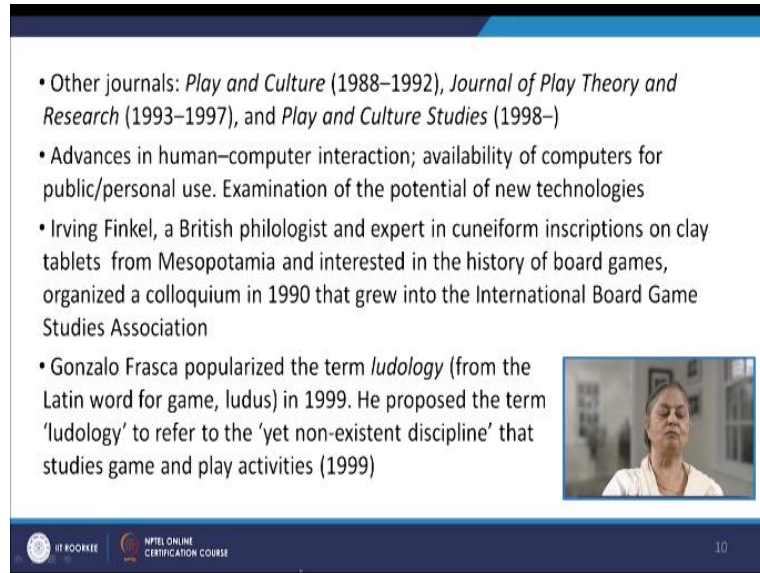
- Varieties of war games used in military, and later for leisure activity
- Formation of East Coast War Games Council in 1960: American War Gamers' Organization.
 - Later named, the North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA)
- Development of simulation and gaming research communities in other countries
- Establishment of International Simulation and Gaming Association (ISAGA) in 1970
- Publication of journal, *Simulation & Gaming*, since 1970
- In 1974, community of North American scholars formed an association devoted to the study of play ; later called The Association for the Study of Play (TASP) in 1987

Around this time, we also find that in different cultures war games were being used by the military personnel and sometimes later on they were also introduced as a leisure time activities. In 1960, we find that an East Coast War Games Council was formed and then American War Gamers' Organization was also established which was later named as the North American Simulation and Gaming Association.

So development of simulation and gaming research communities also took place in other countries. Establishment of international *Simulation and Gaming* association was in 1970, and it was in this year that a journal started its publications and the title of the journal is *Simulation and Gaming*. In 1974, we find that the community of North American Scholars formed an association devoted to the study of play which was later called the association for the study of play in 1987.

So we find that gradually the focus of the society and scholars also shifted from war games or simulation based games to the cultural changes which were taking place in our society after closer integration with computers.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:00)



- Other journals: *Play and Culture* (1988–1992), *Journal of Play Theory and Research* (1993–1997), and *Play and Culture Studies* (1998–)
- Advances in human–computer interaction; availability of computers for public/personal use. Examination of the potential of new technologies
- Irving Finkel, a British philologist and expert in cuneiform inscriptions on clay tablets from Mesopotamia and interested in the history of board games, organized a colloquium in 1990 that grew into the International Board Game Studies Association
- Gonzalo Frasca popularized the term *ludology* (from the Latin word for game, *ludus*) in 1999. He proposed the term 'ludology' to refer to the 'yet non-existent discipline' that studies game and play activities (1999)

During this time, we find that several other journals also started. *Play and Culture* started its publication in 1988 but was closed in 1992. *Journal of Play Theory and Research* continued between 93 and 97. *Play and Culture Studies* was started in 1998 and is still continuing. A particular reason for growing interest in game studies is related with the advances in human computer interaction.

And at the same time, growing availability of computers for public and personal use. At the same time, we find that there is a growing interest in examining the potential of new technologies in several fields related with human activity. It is also pertinent to mention the name of Finkel, Irving Finkel who was a British philologist and expert in cuneiform inscriptions on clay tablets from Mesopotamia was also interested in the history of board games.

So he organized a colloquium in 1990 that ultimately grew into the International Board Game Studies Association. The term ludology was popularized by Gonzalo Frasca in 1999. The term ludology has been derived from the Latin word *ludus* which is a synonym of game. So Frasca had proposed the term ludology to refer to yet non-existent discipline that studies game and play activities.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:42)

- In 1997, Espen Aarseth published *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*: formation of new textualities with hypertexts, adventure games and MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons)
- Janet Murray's *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (1997): future possibilities for interactive drama and narrative
- Jesper Juul's thesis 'A Clash Between Game and Narrative' in 1999
- *Game Studies*, a peer-reviewed journal first published in 2001
- Formation of the academic society – Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA)
- No real 'schools of game studies' in existence
- Persistent debates around fundamental concepts and methodological issues


In 1997, some interesting books were published and prominent among them is by Espen Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. So this book talked about the formation of new textualities particularly with hypertexts, adventure games and MUDs that is Multi-User Dungeons. In 97 also, another book by Janet Murray came out with the title *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. This book talked about the future possibilities for interactive drama and narrative. In the year of 1999, Jesper Juul's thesis on *A Clash Between Game and Narrative* came out. A peer-reviewed journal game studies was also started in 2001. Around this time, we find that the digital games research association was also formulated. Now we find that there is a great interest in this field.



Even now it is perhaps difficult to say whether any particular school of game studies exist but at the same time there are several debates about formalizing its fundamental concepts and methodological issues. So we can say that this is a burgeoning field.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:05)

Games Culture

- Contemporary game culture: Defined by a magnification of the mediation of everyday lives—seamless flow between the real/actual and the virtual
- Experiences in one realm affect and influence interaction in the other realm; the boundaries between the real and virtual are becoming increasingly porous
- Computer, digital or mobile games—an entry point into mediated and mediating reality
- Games Industry: Most established sector of new media landscape; commands a mass mainstream market, 'boom and bust' cycle of new technology







12

Critics also say that the contemporary culture is basically a game culture. Our culture is being defined by a magnification of the mediation of everyday lives and there is a seamless flow between the real and the virtual. So the experiences in one realm affect and influence interaction in the other realm. So what is happening in the virtual is also perhaps affecting our actual lives.

So the boundaries between the two are becoming increasingly porous. So we find that the computers, the digital or mobile games have become an entry point into the mediated and mediating reality. So games industry is the most established sector of new media landscape. It commands a mass mainstream market that is the boom and bust cycle of new technology.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:00)

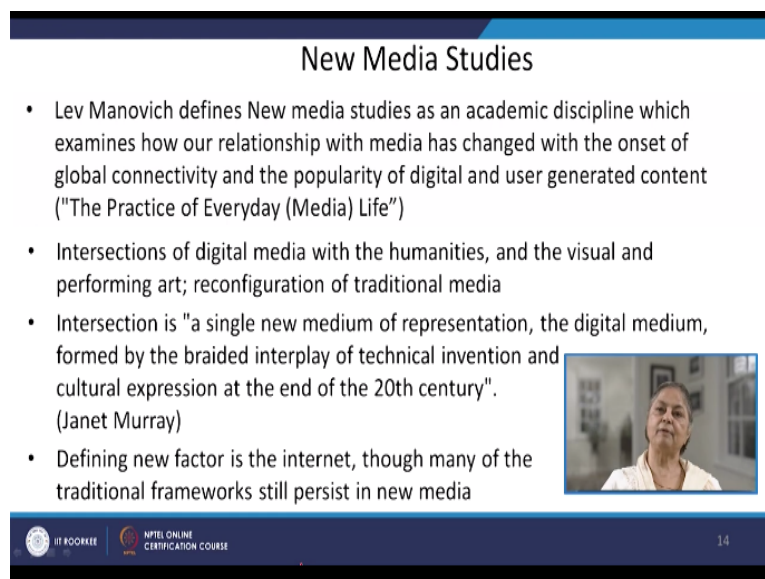
- Post-playstation era: gaming console as an important segment of the western media economy and culture
- Need to study games industry and game culture to understand the current and future directions of new media culture
- Experience of millions of console game players; the nature of gameplay phenomena
- Methods developed within literary studies, cultural studies—study of low, popular culture; emergent traditions of New Media Studies



13

We are now living in an era which can also be termed as a 'post-playstation era'. So gaming consoles are an important segment of the western media economy and culture. This is one of the reasons that it is said that this is a concept or this is a particular study which is more pertinent only for the western world. In the western world, we find that there is a need to study games industry and games culture to understand the current and future directions of the new media culture.

So we have to look at the experiences of millions of console game players and we also have to find out what is the nature of gameplay phenomena. The critics are still struggling to develop certain methods, so the methods which are being developed now have intersections within literary studies, cultural studies, study of what was erstwhile known as the low or the popular culture as well as the emergent traditions of new media studies.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:08)



The slide is titled "New Media Studies" and contains the following bullet points:

- Lev Manovich defines New media studies as an academic discipline which examines how our relationship with media has changed with the onset of global connectivity and the popularity of digital and user generated content ("The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life")
- Intersections of digital media with the humanities, and the visual and performing art; reconfiguration of traditional media
- Intersection is "a single new medium of representation, the digital medium, formed by the braided interplay of technical invention and cultural expression at the end of the 20th century". (Janet Murray)
- Defining new factor is the internet, though many of the traditional frameworks still persist in new media

A small video inset on the right side of the slide shows a woman speaking. The slide footer includes the logos for IIT ROORKEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, along with the number 14.

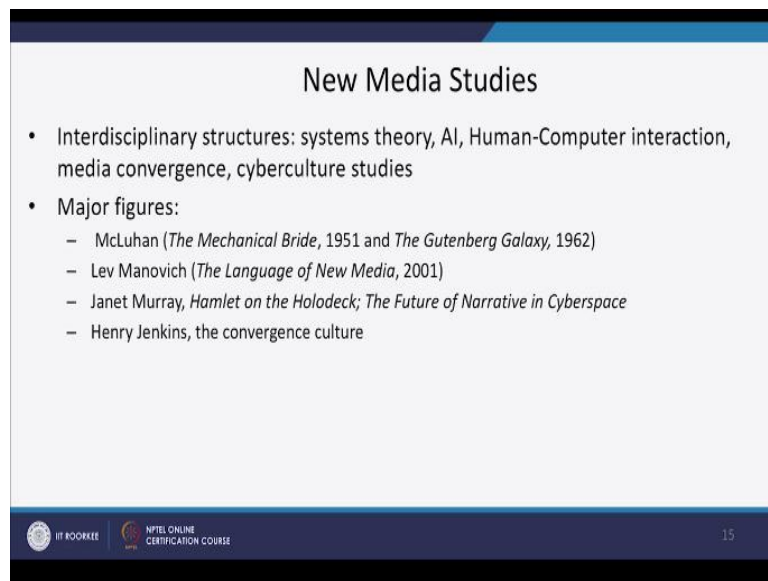
New media studies is also a term which requires some elaboration here. Lev Manovich had defined new media studies as an academic discipline which examines how our relationships with media has changed with the onset of global connectivity and the popularity of digital and user generated content. Now he is not only talking about the popularity of the computers and the digital world.

But his equal focus is on the content which is being generated by the users. So this is the participative nature of media which he is talking about. So the intersections of digital media with the humanities and the visual and performing art and the reconfiguration of traditional media are important aspects related with new media studies. So according to Janet Muray,

intersection is “a single new medium of representation, the digital medium formed by the braided interplay of technical invention and cultural expression at the end of the 20th century”.

So the new defining factor is of course the internet, though many of the traditional frameworks still persist in new media.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:25)



The slide is titled "New Media Studies" and contains the following content:


- Interdisciplinary structures: systems theory, AI, Human-Computer interaction, media convergence, cyberculture studies
- Major figures:
 - McLuhan (*The Mechanical Bride*, 1951 and *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, 1962)
 - Lev Manovich (*The Language of New Media*, 2001)
 - Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck; The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*
 - Henry Jenkins, the convergence culture

At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for IIT ROORKEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, along with the number 15.

New media studies are also based on interdisciplinary structures and they incorporate the systems theory, artificial intelligence, human computer interaction, media convergence as well as cyberculture studies. The major figures are McLuhan as well as the work of Lev Manovich. Other people who can be mentioned in this context are Janet Muray and Henry Jenkins.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:54)

Games Produced through the tensions of old and new media	
(Traditional) Media	New Media
The effects of technology are socially Determined	The nature of society is technologically determined
Active audience	Interactive Users
Interpretation	Experience
Spectatorship	Immersion
Representation	Simulation
Centralized Media	Ubiquitous Media
Consumer participant	Co-creator
Work	Play



If we look at the nature of the games which are produced to the tensions of old and new media, so many things would be clear to us. We find that in the new media, it is very different. If the traditional media studied the effects of technology as being socially determined, the new media studies the nature of society as being technologically determined whereas in the traditional media the audience could only be active or passive as the audience used to be in the beginning of the 20th century.


But in the new media, the user has to be interactive necessarily. So whereas a traditional media depended on interpretation, the new media talks about experience and from spectatorship we have moved to the immersion aspect into a game. So whereas the traditional media and traditional games talked about representation, new media and new games are talking about simulation.



From a centralized media, now we find that we are talking about a media which is a common reach because of the latest developments in computers technology. So from a consumer participant, we have moved to a situation where the consumer is also a co-creator and at the same time the boundaries between work and play are trundling in a very fast manner.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:36)

Two levels of Games

- Surface or representational level: Storyline, theme; cultural narrative, allegories
 - Study and critique of story-world, graphics, visuals and virtual world of simulations
- Dynamic gameplay: Gameplay – ‘feelings, considerations, and actions that come along when accepting the challenge of trying to navigate a game’ (Mäyrä 2009)
 - Structures in the game: the essential ‘dynamic system of forces and counter-forces’; ‘programmed challenges’ and ‘actions of other players’ (in multi-player games) (ibid)
- The dual level/structure of games contributes to a totality:
 - Ludic simulations combined with a digital audiovisual medium
- Interdisciplinarity rooted in this dual structure
 - ‘Games as games are something that happen only during the interplay, when a player takes actions within a game’ (Mäyrä 2009)





17

In the context of contemporary game studies, we find that we have to understand that the games exist at two levels. So there is one level which can be termed as a surface or a representational level which is based on the storyline, the theme, the cultural narrative, allegories, etc. It studies and looks at critically the story-world graphics, visuals as well as the virtual world of simulation.

On the other hand, there is another level which can be known as the level of dynamic gameplay. So the term gameplay need certain explanation here. Gameplay has been defined by Mayra as “feelings, consideration and actions that come along when accepting the challenge of trying to navigate a game”. So the dynamic gameplay looks at structures in the game.


The essential dynamic system of forces and counter forces, programmed challenges as well as actions of other players in multiplayer games are also a part of what constitutes gameplay. So this dual level of games contributes to a totality and in this totality we find that ludic simulations are combined with a digital audiovisual medium. So the interdisciplinary nature of game studies is rooted in this dual structure of games.



So games and players do not exist separately now. Games and games are something that happened only during the interplay when a player takes actions within a game. So we find that the very nature of games and participation have changed.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:15)

Gameplay

- Related to unique and specific conceptual frameworks of digital and computer games as 'interactive' texts
 - Doesn't change when the surface is changed
 - In videogames, virtually everything constitutes gameplay
 - Small changes in a single parameter can radically alter and change the strategies required to play the game







18

Gameplay is related to unique and specific conceptual frameworks of digital and computer games as interactive texts. So the idea of interaction is basic to a gameplay. The game does not change when the surface is changed. The gameplay remains there. In video games, we find that virtually everything constitutes what we can understand as gameplay and small changes in a single parameter can radically alter and change the strategies which are required to play the particular game.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:53)

Gameplay

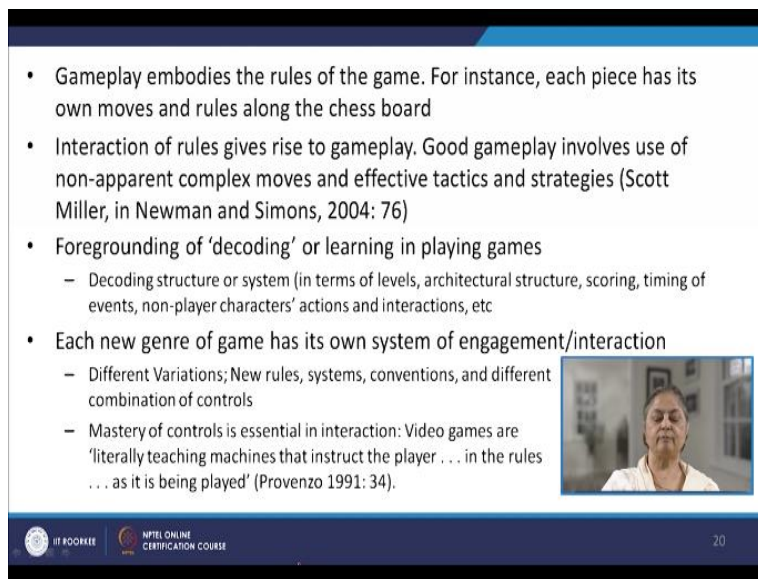
- "The gameplay isn't the entire experience of a game, but it's what makes it a game, what makes it *this* game" (Nils von Barth, in Newman and Simons, 2004: 67.)
 - Not the interface, or the graphics/storyline; it's what you do. Gameplay denotes player/game interaction
 - 'Game' and 'Play' are conjoined and turned into a noun
- 'Gameplay' seems to mean the process that takes place when a game is played, the activity that is produced over time as result of the subject's engagement with the rules, objects, and activities of the game. (Liestol 2004: 400)
 - Emphasizes the inseparability of subject and object in gaming processes



19

The gameplay is not the entire experience of a game but it is what makes it a game. So it is not exactly the interface or the graphics or storyline, it is everything what a player does in a game. So gameplay denotes the player and game interaction in its totality. So we find that a new word is being coined by conjoining these two words game and play together and this combination has been turned into a noun.

So it seems to mean the process that takes place when a game is played, the activity that is produced overtime as result of the subject's engagement with the rules, objects and activities of the game. Gameplay also emphasizes the inseparability of subject and object in gaming processes. So the close interaction of the game and the player is central to our understanding of gameplay.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:58)



- Gameplay embodies the rules of the game. For instance, each piece has its own moves and rules along the chess board
- Interaction of rules gives rise to gameplay. Good gameplay involves use of non-apparent complex moves and effective tactics and strategies (Scott Miller, in Newman and Simons, 2004: 76)
- Foregrounding of 'decoding' or learning in playing games
 - Decoding structure or system (in terms of levels, architectural structure, scoring, timing of events, non-player characters' actions and interactions, etc)
- Each new genre of game has its own system of engagement/interaction
 - Different Variations; New rules, systems, conventions, and different combination of controls
 - Mastery of controls is essential in interaction: Video games are 'literally teaching machines that instruct the player . . . in the rules . . . as it is being played' (Provenzo 1991: 34).


Gameplay also embodies the rules of the game. For instance, we can say that in a chess game, each piece of the chess has its own moves and rules according to which it has to move along the chessboard. So interaction of rules gives rise to what we understand as gameplay and good gameplay involves use of non-apparent complex moves and effective techniques and strategies.

At the same time, we find that it is linked with the foregrounding of decoding or learning in playing games. So decoding structures or systems in terms of levels, timing of events, non-player characters, actions and interactions, etc are also important. Each new genre of game has its own system of engagement and interaction. There may be different variations. There may be new rules, systems, conventions as well as different combinations in terms of control but mastery of control is essential in interaction.

So video games are literally teaching machines that instruct the player in the rules as it is being played.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:07)

- The term 'Configuration' in this context stands for the specificity of the gameplay experience
- The term is derived from the study of Human Computer Interaction: Works of Steve Woolgar, Aarseth (2001), Eskelinen (2001) and Moulthrop (2004)
- Distinguishes between 'push button' interactivity and the productive processes of gameplay
- Describes the complexity of the active processes of both interpretation and interaction as the player literally constructs the game 'on the fly' through the practices of gameplay
- 'Point and click' interactivity: simple choices of the user make important interventions throughout the dynamic system of the game world




IIIT KOOEREE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 21

When we look at the specificity of gameplay experience, a term which draws our attention now is configuration. This term is derived from the study of Human Computer Interaction. It distinguishes between push button interactivity and productive processes of gameplay. It also describes the complexities of the active processes of both interpretation and interaction as the player is literally constructing the game on the fly through the practices of gameplay.

So point and click interactivity, simple choices in a game of the user which may make important interventions throughout the dynamic system of the game world are a part of this study.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:54)

- New games are engaging the sense of smell and body odors – Nintendo Wii Remote Plus, Microsoft Xbox 360 Kinect and Sony Playstation Move add the strain of motion control interfaces, and the result is a pungent smellscape for digital gaming (Simon Niedenthal)
- According to him this “moment of social anxiety gives an inkling of the untapped power of smell in game design”
- The sense of smell thus continues to be a disputed location in which cultural norms are “negotiated, enforced and transgressed”



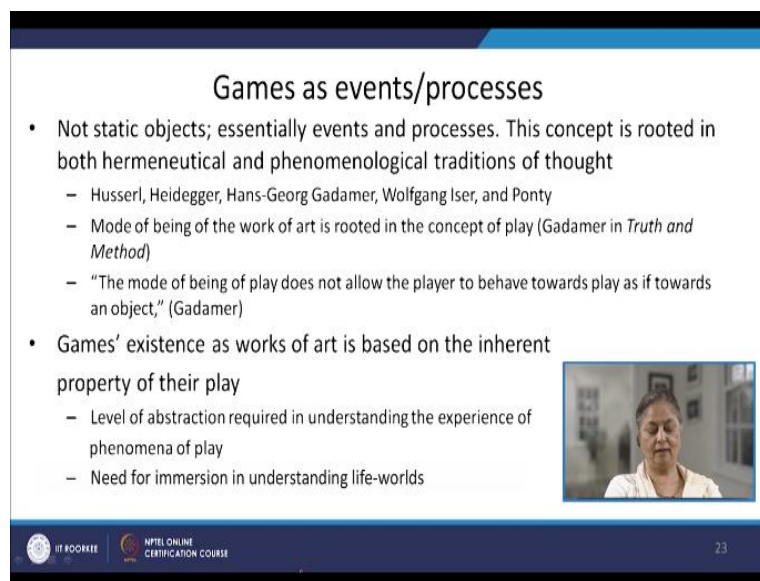
IIIT KOOEREE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 22

New games are also engaging the sense of smell as well as body odors. Nintendo Wii Remote Plus, Microsoft Xbox 360 Kinect and Sony Playstation Move add the strain of motion

control interfaces and this often results in what is known as the ‘smellscape’, a pungent smellscape for digital gaming. Now this is a term which has been used by Simon Niedenthal. Now Simon also suggests that this is a “moment of social anxiety which gives an inkling of the untapped power of smell in game design”.

So he has used the term smellscape for the first time in the critical terminology of this study. So the sense of smell thus continues according to him to be a disputed location in which cultural norms and negotiated, enforced and transgressed.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:57)



The slide is titled "Games as events/processes" and contains the following text:

- Not static objects; essentially events and processes. This concept is rooted in both hermeneutical and phenomenological traditions of thought
 - Husserl, Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Wolfgang Iser, and Ponty
 - Mode of being of the work of art is rooted in the concept of play (Gadamer in *Truth and Method*)
 - “The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave towards play as if towards an object,” (Gadamer)
- Games’ existence as works of art is based on the inherent property of their play
 - Level of abstraction required in understanding the experience of phenomena of play
 - Need for immersion in understanding life-worlds


A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows a woman speaking. The slide footer includes the IIT Kharkee logo, "NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE", and the number "23".



Games are not static objects, they are basically events and processes and this concept is rooted in both hermeneutical and phenomenological traditions of thought. We can fall back on the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Wolfgang Iser and Ponty in order to find out related theoretical approaches. The mode of being of the work of art is also rooted in the concept of play as Gadamer had suggested.

Gadamer had also suggested that the mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave towards play as if towards an object. So we find that in some way or the other, the origin of games and processes has been there in human critical thought. So the existence of games is work of art is also based on the inherent property of their play. A particular aspect which has become important today is the aspect of immersion in games by a player.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:06)

- Approaches: 'hermeneutic reduction'
 - Focus on typical/ideal forms of game
 - Not studying all actualizations—what games become as they are played out
- Espen Aarseth (2007): utilizes Iser's concept of an 'implied reader' to focus on the 'ludological counterpoint, the 'implied player'—"role made for the player of the game, a set of expectations that the player must fulfill for the game to 'exercise its effect'"
- Methodological divide between social scientists and humanists in their conception of the category of the player
 - Social scientists focus on the player as historical, situated, and flesh and blood character (Aarseth 2007)
 - Humanists see the player as "a necessary but uncontrollable part of the process of creating ludic meaning, a function that is created by the gameplay as well as co-creator of it." (2007, 131-32)



 IIT KHARAGPUR
  NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE
 24


There also maybe different approaches towards the game studies. A particular interesting approach can be a 'hermeneutic reduction' approach in which the focus is on a typical or an ideal form of game. It does not study all actualization, for example what games become as they are played out. Espen Aarseth has utilized a concept of Iser. This is the concept of an 'implied reader' which had been given by Iser earlier to focus on the ludological counterpoint.

So the implied player is the "role mode for the player of the game, a set of expectations that the player must fulfill for the game to exercise its effect". At the same time, we find that the methodological divide between social scientist and humanists can also be perceived in their conception of the category of the player. Social scientists normally focus on the player as being a historical, situated and flesh and blood character.

On the other hand, humanists normally see the player as a" necessary but uncontrollable part of the process of creating a ludic meaning, a function that is created by the gameplay as well as co-creator of it".

(Refer Slide Time: 30:32)

- Methods and Methodologies
 - Formal methods like statistics in social sciences
 - Game ontologies in the humanities
 - Case-study based informal methods like field work in social sciences
 - Close playing/reading in the humanities
- Different approaches shouldn't be as oppositional or mutually exclusive
- Need to embrace multidisciplinary
 - “methodological triangulation” to increase the validity



25

So we find that the methods and methodologies are still under a process of development. In game studies, critics are using formal methods like statistics in social sciences, game ontologies as well as close playing and reading in the humanities and case study based in formal methods like field work in social sciences. So these different approaches are neither mutually exclusive nor oppositional.

In fact, they have to be adopted simultaneously to increase the validity as well as the validation of this new and emerging field of study. We have to use what is known as methodological triangulation.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:19)

An example of a Game research project in the interdisciplinary mode

- “Children as Actors of Games Cultures” (report by Laura Ermi and Frans Mayra)
 - Undertaken in 2003–2004, in Finland, based on the study of game cultures initiated in the 1990s (rooted in humanist scholarship located in department of Arts and Literature)
 - Also closely related to work done in mobile communication, interactive television, Internet
- Shift to understandings of games as hyper- or cyber-textuality (influenced by cultural studies)
- Research was conducted among 10– 12-year-old children in Finland during spring and summer 2003
 - Sample of 284 survey questionnaires filled out by children and their parents provided an overview, along with 15 thematic interviews

26


In these subsequent slides, I have given an example of a game research project in the interdisciplinary mode. This can be treated as a pilot research project which was taken up in

Finland during 2003 and 2004. So they had used a sample survey and they had taken a sample survey questionnaire of 284 participants and also conducted 15 thematic interviews. So there were various questions which they had asked.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:56)

Contd.

- Game related practices and significances of games were studied with a perspective to examine the pleasures derived from different games and to analyze the different strategies developed by children and their families to situate and control game playing
- It is hard to point towards any single element in games as the most powerfully engaging one, but the imaginary worlds provided by games seem to have an important role in offering children possibilities for experiencing things otherwise impossible.
- In terms of control, there does not seem to be any severe conflicts or serious troubles currently surrounding games in homes.




IT KOOKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 27

And these questions were normally asked in interdisciplinary way. So the findings are also very pertinent and purview of the findings as well as an understanding of what was studied.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:07)


- What was studied?
 - How digital games are played;
 - Games as different kinds of objects or phenomena
 - How games are perceived by players
 - Gameplay experiences
 - Factors which turn digital play into an engaging experience;
 - How digital games are situated within daily contexts
- Interdisciplinary character
 - Researchers from fields like Social Psychology, Early Childhood Education, Computer Science, and Work Research.
 - Coordinated by an interdisciplinary centre: the Information Society Institute.
 - Internal discussion on methodologies, findings and coordination of efforts



IT KOOKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 28

(Refer Slide Time: 32:12)

- Difficulties Faced
- Difficulty in finding support and financial grant for a study based on games situated within digital culture and their exploration in terms of artistic/aesthetic qualities
- The need to situate this study within socially sanctioned research themes to win financial support
- Differences of opinion on goals, theoretical findings and methodological tools because of its collaborative nature



IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 29

And at the same time, a listing of the difficulties which were faced by the personnel of this project can be a pointer forever for our further studies. So today we have incorporated a new and emerging discipline of game studies as a part of cultural studies. In the next module, we would continue our discussions on it. Thank you.