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Utopic Dreams and Apocalyptic Fantasies: Critical Approaches to Researching Video Game Play

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Few books have attempted to contextualize the importance of video game play with a critical social, cultural and political perspective that raises the question of the significance of work, pleasure, fantasy and play in the modern world. The study of why video game play is "fun" has often been relegated to psychology, or the disciplines of cultural anthropology, literary and media studies, communications and other assorted humanistic and social science disciplines. In *Utopic Dreams and Apocalyptic Fantasies*, Talmadge Wright, David Embrick and Andras Lukacs invites us to move further and consider questions on appropriate methods of researching games, understanding the carnival quality of modern life, the role of marketing in altering game narratives, and the role of fantasy and desire in modern video game play. Embracing an approach that combines a cultural and/or critical studies approach with a sociological understanding of this new media moves the debate beyond simple media effects, moral panics, and industry boosterism to one of asking critical questions, what does modern video game play "mean," what questions should we be asking, and what can sociological research contribute to answering these questions. This collection includes works which use textual analysis, audience based research, symbolic interactionism, as well as political economic and psychoanalytic perspectives to illuminate areas of inquiry that preserves the pleasure of modern play while asking tough questions about what such pleasure means in a world divided by political, economic, cultural and social inequalities.

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