

## Call for Papers, Video Games: Time and Nostalgia

12 May 2023, one-day symposium run by [@ExeterComms](#), Department of Communications, Drama and Film, University of Exeter

Organisers: Aditya Deshbandhu, Neil Ewen, Shannon Lawlor, and A.R.E. Taylor

### About the conference:

This one-day in-person conference at University of Exeter's Streatham Campus will be structured by two thematic strands. One will focus on 'time' and the other on 'nostalgia'.

### Time – Morning Session

**Keynote:** Professor Christopher Hanson, Syracuse University

Video games are an inherently interactive medium that offer players and researchers multiple avenues to explore time and temporality. These temporalities can unfold across multiple scales, from the narrative time of the game itself to the time that exists beyond game worlds. Video games demand time if they are to be completed or mastered and, similarly, players require time to reconfigure and make games their own. Video games have incorporated time-based mechanics and dynamics in myriad ways – some games, like MMORPGs, are effectively never ending, while others have their engagement durations extended through updates, DLCs or reward systems that incentivise player engagement or time spent in-game.

Time in games has been a key area for study in the field of video game studies and is a dimension that often unifies this very diverse domain. This panel hopes to initiate new conversations on time and temporality in video games by reflecting on how new developments in gaming culture (as well as new game and console releases) alter experiences of game time and temporality. Increasingly, games are emphasising temporality in their play mechanics, enabling players to manipulate narrative time, while the rising popularity of mobile gaming means that 'game time' increasingly moves beyond the temporal confines of the game itself. For example, game-accompanying platforms like companion apps have allowed game time to seep into the mundanity of everyday life and vice-versa. We welcome contributions that approach the theme of temporality and video games from a range of angles, such as (but not limited to):

- Grinding and 'no lifing' as temporal experiences
- Journeys of the collector, the quest for gathering in-game items, gear, and trophies
- Playing with permadeath
- Altering dimensions of time in the play experience to showcase mastery of the game or a willingness to win with increased complexities – speed runs and *Nuzlocke*-like challenges
- Understandings of time and temporality through acts of leisure, labor and playbor
- Representations of time and temporality in video game narratives/play mechanics
- Lived experiences of game time
- Conceptions of time and temporalities in mobile and free-to-play games
- Game time beyond the screen
- The 'always on' and 'live' worlds of online games
- Game and console development and launch time (including 'crunch time' and launch/release anticipations)

## **Nostalgia – Afternoon Session**

**Keynote:** Professor Debra Ramsay, University of Exeter

Nostalgia permeates gaming in various forms, from remakes of classic games to new games made to mimic the look and feel of early games (such as the use of 8bit aesthetics and music). Companies like Nintendo repeatedly revisit their core franchises (Mario, Legend of Zelda, Pokémon, etc.) which continue to attract new and returning players, while companies like Rockstar and Bethesda re-release their biggest titles on new consoles, such as Skyrim and Grand Theft Auto V, with great commercial success. The appeal of rediscovering the same games in new and ‘improved’ forms has resulted in a slew of remakes and reboots in gaming, while at the same time the rise of retro gaming reflects a desire to discover new stories in old formats, due to nostalgia for previous gaming experiences. The afternoon session of the conference will be dedicated to critically exploring and critiquing nostalgia and games in various ways, including but not limited to:

- Nostalgia’s role in intra-generational gaming
- Nostalgia and fandom
- Games and memory
- Nostalgia in games as comfort / pleasure / affect
- Nostalgia as regression
- The value of nostalgia in games
- Nostalgia and aesthetics
- Nostalgia and interactive storytelling
- Nostalgia and sound

We look forward to receiving proposals from established scholars, emerging career researchers, and postgraduate candidates who are engaging with video game studies within or across multiple disciplines.

This in-person event will take place on the University of Exeter’s Streatham Campus. Attendance is free.

Proposals for 20-minute presentations should include:

- Your name, email, and affiliation
- Proposed paper title
- Abstract (400 words max)
- Bio (100 words max)

Please send proposals to Aditya Deshbandhu and Shannon Lawlor by 20 January 2023: [a.deshbandhu@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:a.deshbandhu@exeter.ac.uk) and [shannonlawlor92@gmail.com](mailto:shannonlawlor92@gmail.com)

Notifications of acceptance will be sent by 5 February 2023.

Conference presentations will be considered for two edited volumes (*Temporality in Video Game Studies* and *Nostalgia in Video Games*) in the Routledge series *Games and Contemporary Culture*, edited by the symposium organisers.