

Shira Chess

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Education

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Dept. of Language, Literature, & Communication, Troy, NY

PhD, Communication and Rhetoric, August 2005 – Present

Coursework GPA: 4.0

Expected Dissertation Defense, Spring 2009

Dissertation Proposal Accepted March 6, 2008

Dissertation: License to Play: Women, Productivity, and Video Games

Committee Members:

- Professor June Deery (Chair), Dept. of Language, Literature, & Communication
- Professor Nancy Campbell, Dept. of Science & Technology Studies
- Professor James P. Zappen, Dept. of Language, Literature, & Communication
- Professor Katherine Isbister, Polytechnic Institute of New York University
- Professor Nathan Freier, Dept. of Language, Literature, & Communication

Emerson College

Dept. of Media Arts, Boston, MA

MA, Media Studies, January 2001 - December 2003

Coursework GPA: 3.9

Thesis Defense, December 2003

Thesis: (En)Gendering the Boob Tube: Technology, Agency and the Action TV Femme

Committee Members:

- Michael Selig (Chair), Dept. of Media Arts
- Katrien Jacobs, Dept. of Media Arts

University of South Florida

Tampa, FL

BA, English, August 1991 - August 1995

Research Interests

While my overall research interests are broad—extending to many areas of communication and media studies—I am specifically interested in gender differences and how they relate to digital play. In my dissertation, *License to Play: Women, Productivity, and Video Games*, I investigate the relationship between gender and play. In my dissertation, I analyze several video games, advertising campaigns, and video game reviews and blogs all relating to femininity and play. It is my contention, that this is a vital area of study: as more games are being advertised to, produced

for, and played by women it is becoming important to understand the how play is culturally constructed by gender, and how these constructions are often marginalizing and essentializing.

My research approach tends to be cross-disciplinary, integrating several areas including media studies, gender studies, rhetoric, science and technology studies, video game studies, and leisure studies. While I plan to continue investigating this research area, I also intend to extend my research to look at other factors including race and class. I would also like to take a more hands-on and empirical approach to studying play and leisure, specifically the play patterns of women. This, I believe, will attract funding.

Academic Publications

- Chess, S. (2008). "The C-Word: Queering the Cylons." *Battlestar Galactica and Philosophy: Mission Accomplished or Mission Frakked Up?*. Eds. Josef Steiff and Tristan D. Tamplin. (p. 87-94.). Chicago, Ill: Open Court Press.
- Chess, S. (2008). "Playing the Bad Guy: *Grand Theft Auto* in the Panopticon." *A Strategy Guide for Video Game Studies: Essays on the Intersection Between Games and Gamers*. Ed. Nathan Garrelts. North Carolina: McFarland Press, 2005.

Publications in Review

- Chess, S. (2008). "A 36-24-36 Cerebrum: Gendering Video Game Play Through Advertising." September 2008. Submitted to *Games and Culture*. Currently in Review.
- Chess, S. (2008). "How to Play a Feminist." Submitted to *Thirdspace*. September 2008. Currently in Review.
- Chess, S. & C. O'Donnell. (2008). "Will the Real Power Gamer Please Stand Up: Oprah Gamers, Hardcore Gamers and Productive Play." Submitted to *Convergence*. August 2008. Currently in Review

Conference Papers

- Chess, S. (2008). "Balancing on the Great Gender Platform (Watching the Video Game Sharks Below)" Internet Research 9.0. Copenhagen, Denmark. (forthcoming)
- Chess, S. & A. Davisson. (2008). "36-24-36 Cerebrum: The Nintendo DS and Gendered Advertisements." William A. Kern Conference on Visual Communication: Rhetorics and Technology. Rochester, NY. April 10, 2008.
- Chess, S. (2007). "What Do Feminists Know About Play Anyway? Understanding Feminism Through Digital Play." The Society for Social Studies of Sciences. Montreal, Quebec. Oct. 11, 2007.

Curriculum Vitae Shira Chess

Chess, S. (2007). "My Gnome, My Guild, My Self: MMOs and the Collective Projective Identity." National Pop Cultural Association. Boston, Massachusetts. April 4, 2007.

Chess, S. (2007). "Commentary Without Pity: Retelling, Rewriting, and Recapping the Television Text." International Conference on Narrative. Washington DC. March 15, 2007.

Chess, S. (2007). "From Pink Games to Frag Dolls to Brain Age: The Changing Space of Gendered Games." Science and Technology Studies Conference: Metamorphosis. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. February 17, 2007.

Chess, S. (2006). "The C-Word (Cylon!): *Battlestar Galactica* and the Technoqueer." Midwest Popular Culture Association, Indianapolis, Indiana. October 27, 2006.

Chess, S. (2003). "Technology, Femininity, and *Fabulous* Accessories: *Alias* and Cyborg Representation." Media in Transition 3, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. May 5, 2003.

Invited Lectures

Chess, S. (2007). "Thinking Beyond Pink: Navigating the Intersection of Gender, Play, and Technology." Colloquium series for the Department of Language, Literature, and Communication. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. April 3, 2007.

Chess, S. (2005). "Playing the Bad Guy: *Grand Theft Auto* in the Panopticon." Guest speaker as part of a speaker series on new media. University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA. October 24, 2005.

Awards and Recognition

Humanities and Social Sciences Fellowship

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 2007-2009

This competitive prestigious fellowship is awarded to a small number of doctoral students at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute covering all fees and stipends for the final two years of study. I competed with several other students in humanities, social sciences, arts, and architecture both in and out of my department, and I was ultimately awarded the H&SS Fellowship for my dissertation research.

McKinney Writing Award, Essay Competition (1st Place), 2007

For the essay "My Gnome, My Guild, My Self: MMOs and the Collective Projective Identity."

McKinney Writing Award, Essay Competition (2nd Place), 2008

For the essay "How to Play a Feminist."

Academic Employment

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY

Graduate Teaching Assistant, August 2005 - Present

Course Taught:

- History and Culture of Games

Teaching Assistant:

- Introduction to Human Computer Interaction
- Utopian Literature
- IT Capstone
- HCI Prototyping

Endicott College, Beverly, MA

Adjunct Professor, Sept. 2004 – May 2005

Courses Taught:

- Introduction to Mass Communications (two sections)
- Media Ethics and Law

Emerson College, Boston, MA

Graduate Assistant, January 2002 – May 2003

- Served as a teaching assistant guest lecturing courses on media studies and gender studies
- Tutored students one-on-one and in small groups to help them improve their writing and overall understanding of topics such as new media, cinema, gender, and television studies.
- Helped develop course syllabi for classes on Media Studies, Television Studies, and Gender Studies.
- Graded research papers, assignments, and examinations.
- Worked as a faculty research assistant for books and articles.

Guest Lecturer

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

- Gender and Technology (Spring 2006; Fall 2008)
- Psychological and Social Affects of Games (Fall 2008)
- Media and Popular Culture (Spring 2007)
- Science and Fiction (Spring 2007)

Emmanuel College,

- Media Theory and Criticism (Spring 2004)

Professional Affiliations

- Association of Internet Researchers
- National Communication Association
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies
- Society for Social Studies of Sciences

Service Commitments

Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace

Since November 2006, I have volunteered with Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (ABTeC), a group based out of Concordia College in Montreal. ABTeC's primary goal is currently the use of games and gaming technologies to work with Canadian Aboriginal youth, giving them both opportunities to work with emerging technologies, and using those technologies to teach them about their cultures. I have attended several ABTeC meetings and workshops—both at Concordia and virtually.

Peer Reviewer

Children, Youth and Environments, Special issue on Children in Technological Environments: Interaction, Development, and Design
Summer 2008

Usable Content in a Post-Document World

I contributed research to this Society for Technical Communications grant, with several other students and faculty members in my department. Specifically, I worked with Dr. Katherine Isbister and Dr. James Watt to develop game environments for helping people who abuse drugs and alcohol.

December 2005 – Jun 2006

Selected Professional Experience

1st Playable Productions, Troy, NY

Researcher, May 2006-August 2006

My work at 1st Playable Productions involved various modes of research for their forthcoming game, *GoPets*. For this game, I created and analyzed customer surveys and did some preliminary and interviewed adolescent girls who play-tested the game.

Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA

Web Developer, May 2001 – July 2005

Working for the college technology division of the publishing company Houghton Mifflin, I created textbook web sites (for both students and instructors) using various technologies including Dynabase, Macromedia Flash, and HTML.

Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Academic Web Designer, March 1998 - January 1999

At Nova, I developed one of the first complete online MBA programs, allowing students to receive a master's degree without ever having to enter a classroom. I collaborated closely with faculty to develop tools for this emerging industry.