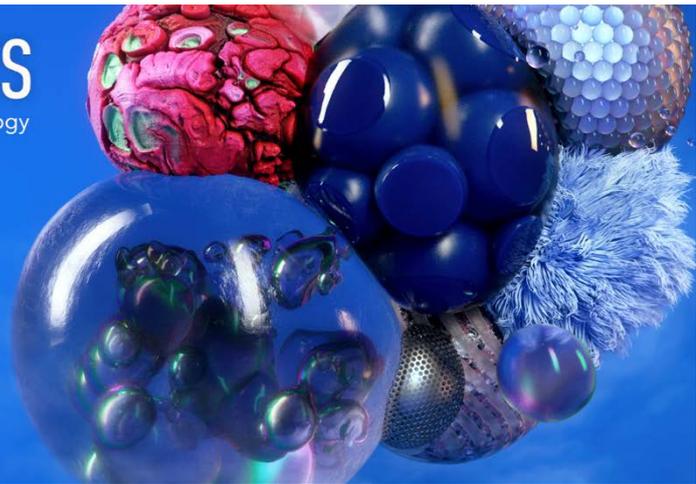


# CLASH OF REALITIES

9th International Conference on the Art, Technology  
and Theory of Digital Games

November 12-14, 2018  
Cologne Game Lab, Germany



## REFRAMING THE VIOLENCE AND VIDEO GAMES DEBATE

The 2018 Young Academics Workshop at the Clash of Realities Conference

Monday, November 12, 2018

Organized by the Cologne Game Lab, TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences  
(Germany) in cooperation with IT University of Copenhagen (Denmark)

Committee: Federico Alvarez (CGL), Curtis Maughan (CGL), Michael S. Debus (ITU)

## Call for Papers

In light of the recurring and fallacious claim that there is a causal link between playing video games and committing violent acts, it is the intention of this workshop to reframe the topic of violence and video games by expanding the conversation to include a broad spectrum of disciplines and perspectives. Two significant aspects of the human condition, violence and play, have often melded into one another throughout history, from the ancient Roman Colosseum to today's UFC octagon. In contrast to spectator sports, video games further complicate the relationship between play and violence: As Gregory Bateson reminds us, the dog's playful nip denotes the bite, but the nip itself is not a true act of aggression. What, then, does the video game player's simulated act of violence denote? What is the draw, within gamer communities and the gaming industry alike, to simulated acts of violence? And what are the design considerations when making video game violence entertaining?

From the dramas of Sophocles to the films of Michael Haneke, works of art across all media aestheticize violence, searching for meaning in conflict. Video games are no exception, as demonstrated by the satirical gunplay of Max Payne, the bleak survival scenarios of This War

of Mine, and the subversive staging of human slaughter in the “No Russian” mission of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2. With this in mind, the 2018 Young Academics Workshop hopes to explore the ways in which violence in video games distinguishes itself from other forms of aestheticized violence. How has video game violence developed over time? And what exactly constitutes video game violence? Graphical representations of violent acts? The performance involved in virtual combat? Social interactions within gamer communities?

Whether we classify games as enclosed within a magic circle, as half-real, or an extension of the real, it is undeniable that video games are intertwined with the contemporary experience, including the inevitability of violence. This workshop seeks to elevate the discussion of violence and video games beyond the polarizing invective that has all too often dominated the popular discourse. Recognizing the breadth and complexity of this topic, we hope to reframe the discussion of violence and gaming by seeking an array of voices from a diverse collection of disciplines, from social studies to neuroscience, from computer programming to art history.

Submission topics **might** include, but are **not limited** to:

- How might we assess our experience of violence in video games within cognitive, emotional, or aesthetic parameters?
- How might we define the ontology of (aestheticized) violence, and what is its status in video games? To what end do we play violent video games? Are they an entertaining distraction or something more?
- What are the challenges for designers and artists when featuring violence in video games? What are the affordances of violence for game art and game design? And what are the (legal, fiscal, aesthetic, ethical) pros and cons of featuring violence in video games?
- Is the discussion around the depiction of violence in video games a symptom of a bigger discourse? Who are the participants and what is their motivation? How does the current controversy around video games compare to past discussions concerned with the representation of violence in other media?

As this is a Young Academics Workshop, we hope to invite those who have recently entered the academic world, including Bachelor, Master, and PhD students, as well as Postdocs. Applicants should focus on the relationship between violence and video games from the unique perspective of their home discipline. We would like to make clear that this workshop is open to future game artists, game designers, game programmers, and all other students learning to make games.

Participants will hold 15-minute presentations followed by 15 minutes of discussion. They will also have the opportunity to prepare a poster about their research that will be displayed in a public space during the main Clash of Realities conference days.

Applicants should submit abstracts (no longer than 300 words) along with a bibliography/ludography to [youngacademics@clashofrealities.com](mailto:youngacademics@clashofrealities.com)

All submissions will be assessed by a peer-review committee.

## Important Dates

Deadline for submissions: July 31

Notification of acceptance/rejection: August 24

Young Academics Workshop: November 12

Clash of Realities Conference: November 12 – 15

## Contact

[youngacademics@clashofrealities.com](mailto:youngacademics@clashofrealities.com)