The Convergence of War Films and First Person Shooter Video Games
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Throughout my time at Bowdoin, I have consistently found myself intrigued by the ways in which media—particularly film and video games—are used to construct historical narratives. In the digital age, it is becoming increasingly important to understand how we use digital media to understand and represent the world around us; film, as a legacy medium that is constantly evolving with new digital technologies, and video games, as an emerging medium, are two cornerstones of media in the digital age. The relationship between these two cornerstones is where my inquiries lie. Video games have grown and developed out of film, relying on certain filmic devices to establish the beginnings of video game form. Even as technology, and with it video games, has advanced, remnants of film form exist within the new medium. This project thus sought to explore how video games utilize film form to construct historical narratives.

The most immediate connection to film that video games have is the cutscene, which is a section of the game where the player has no interaction with the game, and instead, much like a film, observes what is being shown. Cutscenes are often triggered by player interaction within the gamespace and are used to give the player important information regarding the story or gameplay. Additionally, cutscenes often rely on film conventions, including aspects of continuity editing like the shot/reverse shot sequence, when giving information. However, the cutscene is not the only place where video games draw from film. The first person shooter (FPS) genre within video games utilizes film's first-person perspective in order to control an armed character through the gamespace, thus integrating the relationship to film within all aspects of the game. The FPS genre is traditionally rooted in the historical setting of World War Two, as the first FPS game ever was set in the War and many titles since have followed suit, and thus felt like a clear place to start with this project.

Ultimately, I conducted three case studies, playing through three FPS games that all had different relationships to the historical setting of World War Two in order to examine the different ways in which video games could build historical narratives. The three games were *Bioshock* (2007), a post-WWII dystopian game, *Wolfenstein: The New Order* (2014), an alternate history take on WWII, and *Call of Duty: WWII* (2017)*,* a traditional exploration of World War II as it happened. As I played through the games, I simultaneously reviewed a handful of war films, including titles such as *Dunkirk* (Nolan 2017) and *Lebanon* (Moaz 2009), in order to understand what the modern war film looked like. Furthermore, I conducted a brief literature review to grasp how media scholars were thinking about video game form, how video games construct historical narratives in comparison to film, and, finally, how video games construct notions of "realism" and "immersion."

After my investigations, I found that the usage of the cutscene and the first person perspective within the game is an integral part of how it constructs a historical narrative. The cutscene is key in establishing the historical setting (or the relationship between the game's setting and a historical setting) and in creating player immersion. The use of first person perspective, however, is used to create player agency, which alters how the game's narrative is built. I presented these conclusions in depth in a final video essay, which included footage from my gameplay alongside key clips from the films I worked with. The final video essay can be found here.