Session 1 – PLAY

Reading
Huizinga, Homo Ludens Ch.1: Nature & Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon.

Concepts/Keywords
- Play / Playfulness
- Meaningful Play
- Magic Circle → Ritual
- Play as Contest
- Fun

Goals
- Understand play as a mode to act
- Relate play to a set of activities (ritual, sports, theatre, etc.)
- get across Huizinga's concepts of:
  - Huizinga (and other readings)
    - Meaningful play
    - Magic circle
    - Play as contest
  - Play as primary formative element of human culture

Huizinga, Dutch historian – Aesthetic approach (art & spectacle as part of culture)

Play:
- part of human nature (& animals)
- Initially studied by anthropologists, educators, philosophers

Play = a mode that we enter; a state of mind that must be shared

Questions:

Q: What are some playful activities (that are not games)?
(e.g. make-believe, jokes, pranks, songs, parody, irony)
Not all play is a game but play is necessary for having a game.

List of characteristics of play according to Huizinga:

1) Free : Voluntary
   i) it can be suspended at any time – unless it has a cultural function (e.g. a rite or ceremony)
   ii) Q: What is a rite or ceremony? Is play part of a rite or ceremony?

2) 2 – Not ordinary / Real Life: not Serious (although Serious /non-laughable vs. fun isn’t a productive comparison)
   i) Q: What does “Serious” mean?
   ii) A: ‘For real’ vs. 'This is just a game'
CMS.300 – Intro to Video Game Theory

3) Absorbing nonetheless
4) necessary break from Real Life
   i) \( Q: \) How is play meaningful?

5) 3 – Secluded, Limited (space & time)
6) Magic Circle
7) repeatable, transmittable (meaning you can teach people how to play)
   i) \( Q: \) What are some examples of these spaces? (Play fields, theaters, ARGs?)

8) 4 – Regulated:
9) Order, organized
10) Tension (vs. solution) \( \rightarrow \) Suspense \( \rightarrow \) unknown outcome (relates to 'Space Time' of 3)
11) Rules hold up the space of play \( \rightarrow \) binding vs. broken (cheat, spoilsport)
12) The game has a distinct ending point

13) 5 – Social Grouping:
14) Community stays together after playfulness
15) Play as exclusive club (dressing up)

16) 6 – No material interest:
17) No profit can be gained
18) (this is contested by Caillois: pro games, contests, & gambling)

5 & 6 are both 'The representation of contest'

What do you play for? What's the point?
(Animals play too) \( \rightarrow \) Play in itself, rather than for some purpose (training, relief)

According to Huizinga:
- \textbf{CONTEST:} competition *without consequences
- \textbf{REPRESENTATION:} Identification, do something to make it happen *(wishing)
- (Huizinga), flirting, make-believe, rites, Dromenon, music, dance

\textbf{RITUAL AS SACRED PLAY}

\textbf{NEXT CLASS:} GAMES, as specific play activity, quintessentially \textit{ludus}