Notes on Playing and Obtaining *World of Warcraft*, *Dear Esther*, *Gone Home*, and *The Stanley Parable*

This section of Narrative and Technology will spend considerable time playing videogames both in class and out. Playing videogames in a class setting presents a number of challenges and difficulties not usually encountered in other classes, so I have provided this handout to help assuage some of those difficulties. As with anything technology related, there will be a few speed bumps along the way, but I hope that everyone will be patient with such problems. I will also be handing this out later in the term when we get closer to playing the games.

Play
Students will be expected to seriously and critically play *World of Warcraft* (2004-2014), *Dear Esther* (2012), *Gone Home* (2013), and *The Stanley Parable* (2013) in this course. Though students will not be assessed on their ability to play these games, achieving some amount of adeptness with them will be vital for the student's ability to critically engage the material of the course. As such, students will note that the equivalent of a page requirement for these games is achieving a certain level (e.g., getting to level 10 in *Warcraft* by the first Friday we play the game) or finishing the game. These activities are important not only for the student's understanding of the text but for their ability to participate in class. During *Warcraft*, for example, some Fridays will be devoted to in-class play, and students will not be able to participate if they have not achieved the appropriate level. So it is expected that students will spend considerable time playing games outside of class and be as prepared in the games as they would be with the assigned readings.

Access
Students will be asked to purchase *World of Warcraft* (see below), *Dear Esther*, *Gone Home*, and *The Stanley Parable* (also see below). It is expected that students have access to their own computer, and these games should run on even older equipment. But if students do not have regular access to a PC or Mac connected to the internet, *please speak with the instructor as early as possible in the semester to arrange an alternative method of playing the games*. Additionally, there will be open hours in which the English Department's computer lab, CL 435, will be available for students to come in and use the computers. *World of Warcraft* has been installed on all these computers and can be played during these hours. It is also expected that the leveling assignments will be able to be completed during these open hours. Arrangements are still being made regarding when CL 435 will be open, so I will alert students to these open hours later in the semester. Obviously, however, students are highly encouraged to play these games on their own computers.

For reasons beyond my control, *Dear Esther*, *Gone Home*, and *The Stanley Parable* will not be available on CL 435's computers. If this represents a problem for you, *speak with me as soon as possible so that other arrangements can be made*. Unless I am notified that playing any of these three games is not possible for a student by the beginning of the third week of class (September 8), I will assume that everyone has purchased, downloaded, and are able to play these games by the time they are assigned.

Purchasing *World of Warcraft*
The version of *World of Warcraft* we will be using is *World of Warcraft: Battle Chest*, released in 2013 by Blizzard Entertainment. The *Battle Chest* contains the original game and three expansion packs: *The Burning Crusade* (2007), *Wrath of the Lich King* (2008), and *Cataclysm* (2010). Students must obtain *this* version of the game. There are a few ways that you can get your hands on *Warcraft*. You can obtain a physical copy. But it is easier to just download it. Please go to Blizzard's website, https://us.battle.net/shop/en/product/world-of-warcraft to do so.[1] You can purchase and download the game directly from this site. When you buy the game, you will be given a month of free play, so *do not purchase Warcraft until Wednesday, October 8th at the earliest and Friday, October 10th at the latest*. *Warcraft* is $19.99 plus tax.[2]

After you have purchased *Warcraft*, install it on your computer. It is a fairly big game, so allow some time both for the initial installation and for updates. (*Warcraft* is also an older game, so most of you should have no trouble whatsoever running it on whatever computer you own. And it is available for either Mac or PC.) You should have purchased the game, downloaded it, launched it, have created a character, and have logged on to that character by Friday, October 10th. Further directions will be provided on how to do all this when we get closer to playing it.[3]

Warcraft will be installed on the computers in CL 435, so you will be able to log on to the game from your desktop. Students who will not be playing *Warcraft* on their own computer, but principally in CL 435 during open hours, can purchase game time at GameStop (there is one in Oakland).

Purchasing *Dear Esther*, *Gone Home*, **and** *The Stanley Parable*
Dear Esther, *Gone Home*, and *The Stanley Parable* are all small, independent games that can be played on either PC or Mac. The easiest way to obtain these games is to sign up for a Steam account and download the Steam service. You can create a Steam account at: https://store.steampowered.com/join/. After you have created an account, install Steam on your computer. After you have done this, search for *Dear Esther*, *Gone Home*, and *The Stanley Parable*. Purchase each game and download them. They are all relatively inexpensive. I would recommend purchasing and downloading these games as soon as possible, and launching them to make sure they work on your hardware. Please see me ASAP if you have any problem obtaining or playing these games.

I think that covers everything, but if I have left anything out, please feel free to come to me for help with anything. I will also be playing these games along with you, so I will help you if you have any problems playing the games themselves. The study of video games is a new and emerging discipline. As such, those of us who critically research videogames are still in the process of figuring out how best to teach them. I thank you in advance for your patience.

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[1] Note: this link works as of 10 December 2013, but it may be different by the time you get around to purchasing the game. In that case, I imagine that you can navigate through http://us.blizzard.com/store with little difficulty and find the correct version of the game. Further note: there is a "free to play" trial version of *Warcraft*, but it lacks many of the features that will be essential for us to play it as a class. So make sure you get the version that contains all 3 expansions and not another version of the game.

[2] Also, if you do not choose to keep playing the game after we are done with it for class, remember to cancel your account, or else you will be charged for an additional month.

[3] For those who might be interested in advance, we will be on the server "Galakrond," and we will all be making characters on the Alliance side. Also, I know many may prefer their own rig for playing *Warcraft*, so please feel free to bring your laptops to class, particularly on the Fridays when we will be playing as a class.