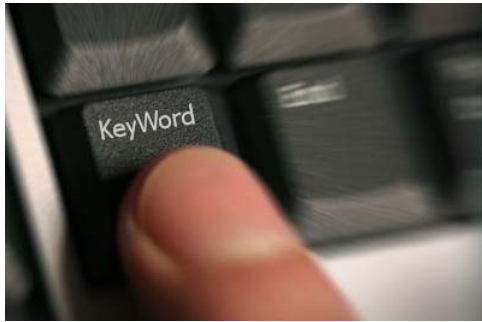


Keyword Major Papers

engl 207 / sec. A / winter quarter 2008-09 / chang



One of the crucial goals in academic writing (perhaps all writing) is the ability to define and to provide definitions that are developed, detailed, relevant, and appropriate for a discipline or audience. So, how do you define something? Most would reply to go look up the definition in a dictionary or on a website. And most people would treat that definition as fact, as fixed, even commonly agreed upon. In fact, it is a common strategy to begin academic papers with a quote from a dictionary but find the definitions either not useful or too obvious or too numerous to choose from. Unless a specific history or etymology or usage of a word or term is in question, a dictionary will rarely provide much more than overly generalized information.

However, the impulse to look up a term's definition is a good one and reveals that the writer knows he or she needs a way to focus, to use background information, to determine what is necessary in order to define a term.

Goals and Outcomes

Definitions are a common genre, a common practice across many different disciplines: defining specialized terminology or neologisms, defining a process or a function, defining a theoretical or methodological perspective, defining a project's goals, target audience, or impact. Definitions are arguments. They argue that this is the way something should be seen, described, done, presented, used, and so on. The best definitions are about this process, about inquiry, about exploration, and about analysis. It is as the editors of the *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* say, a way to "clear a conceptual space" (6), and it is in that space where agreements, contradictions, arguments, counterarguments, elaboration, and change can happen.

Your major paper assignment is to write an academic definition paper, to define a term relevant to video game studies, to write in essence a keyword. In academic writing, the length of a definition may range from a few sentences to many pages to entire books devoted to a single definition. You will write 4 to 6 page extended definition of a video game studies keyword drawing on your definitional claim, on current research and scholarship, and on detailed examples and descriptions. Keep in mind that this is more than just a description of your term, a narrative of your term, or a summary of possible definitions of your term. Remember that definitions are arguments and one scholar's definition of "avatar" might focus on or challenge different things than a second scholar's definition. Use the *Keywords* text as a model for your paper, as if you were writing an entry for a *Keywords for Video Game Studies* vocabulary collection.

Here are possible keywords to choose from (some are more challenging than others, some seem deceptively easy):

art	gender	power
avatar	gold	protocol
body	gold farming	race
boss	griefing	RPG
character	hypertext	sandbox
cheat	identity	self
community	immersion	serious games
control	interactivity	sex
cyberspace	ludology	sexuality
dystopia	machinima	simulation
easter eggs	MMOG	skin
emote	narrative	swarming
EULA	nation	utopia
exploit	other	virtual labor
FPS	performance	virtual reality
game	play	virtual world
gaymer	political economy	women gamers

Guidelines and Due Dates

- Audience:** Because this paper requires a strong understanding of cultural studies and games studies concepts, you will write for an audience that is more of an academic community, which can include your instructor, your classmates, and the authors of the essays we have read. Keep in mind that your audience is varied in many ways, including academic experience and familiarity with the texts, so you'll need to consider of what information each type of reader will need to make sense of your essay. Another good way to think about your audience is to imagine the publication in which your essay could appear such as for a game studies website or a *Keywords* type book.
- Format:** This assignment is a formal, academic paper and should follow the manuscript guidelines outlined in the course policies
4-6 pages, typed, double-spaced, proper heading, page numbers, stapled
works consulted page, at least 5 recent, authoritative sources
MLA citation and bibliographic format
- Due:** You must complete two Keyword Major Papers during the quarter. Each paper must be on a different keyword, submitted on a different due date.
Papers will be collected three times during the quarter, roughly in Week 4, Week 7, and Week 10.
If you are looking to receive W Credit in the course, you must complete all three papers.