

## The Possibilities and Problems of *Sid Meier's Civilization* in History Classrooms

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IN THE YEAR 1200 CE, a joint Indian-Mayan army swept into British lands and conquered the city of Edinburgh, ending the reign of Boudicca and her Celtic civilization while ushering in a brief period of peace in a world otherwise embroiled in conflict. Centuries later, in 1937, the Indian-Mayan alliance disintegrated when a secret pact between the Mayans and Ottomans led to a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the Indian capital of Seoul (a city that Gandhi had annexed in 250 BCE). This nuclear war ultimately benefitted the Ottomans, who were able to use their newly conquered Indian territories to facilitate the production of spaceship parts that led them to launch a shuttle to the planetary system of Alpha Centauri. With that, after over 5,500 years of careful diplomacy and empire-building, the Ottomans under the indefatigable Suleiman the Magnificent won this particular game of *Sid Meier's Civilization V*.

*Civilization V* is part of the best-selling strategy game series, *Sid Meier's Civilization*, which is named after its eponymous creator. The popularity of this series is such that it comprises over sixty games developed across a number of platforms that have combined to sell

over 30 million units.<sup>1</sup> On the digital distribution platform Steam, players have logged over one billion hours of game time within the series. The most popular game in the series is *Civilization V*, which was released in 2010 and has sold over ten million copies.<sup>2</sup> The goal of all games in the *Civilization* series is to build a historical empire that can stand the test of time, an objective that has made the series an object of affection for gamers and history buffs alike.

Because of its widespread popularity and developing use in classrooms, this article will focus on the educational potential of *Civilization V: Complete Edition*, which includes all downloadable content (DLC) and expansion packs.<sup>3</sup> Players of *Civilization V* report that the game has stimulated their interest in history and that they have used the game as a source through which to learn about history. Scholars have also seen the potential for student learning in *Civilization V* and have begun developing curriculum around it. Nonetheless, there remains a lack of extensive critical analysis about the kind of history that *Civilization V* teaches its players. While *Civilization V* can help players learn about historical peoples and empires, the overarching teleological narrative espoused in the game stands in stark contrast to current historical scholarship. The game emphasizes a Eurocentric vision of progress that does not consider the plurality of historical experiences in world history, particularly with regard to women and societies from the global south. Furthermore, the in-game encyclopedia within *Civilization V*, the “Civlopedia,” contains descriptions of historical content that are at times problematic.<sup>4</sup>

With these factors in mind, I contend that the primary educational value of *Civilization V* is as a tool through which students can critique how procedural rhetoric in video games influences modern perceptions of the past. In a classroom setting, students can use gameplay and Civlopedia entries to interrogate the historical narratives that this game tells. Such work allows students to subsequently interrogate *Civilization V* as a secondary source about history and to develop the skills necessary to conduct similar analyses of both written texts and similar video games. The utilization of *Civilization V* and other video games with historical themes can thus help students understand the process through which historians—and game developers—construct narratives about the past.

## The Gameplay of *Civilization V*

*Civilization V* creates worlds that are both historical and ahistorical. The first menu that players see upon opening the game contains a disclaimer that reads:

The content of this videogame is fictional and is not intended to represent or depict an actual record of the events, persons or entities in the game's historical setting.

This disclaimer cuts to the heart of the game's ambiguity. Although the game has a historical setting, everything else about the game—including its civilizations and leaders—is not intended to be historical. This tension is confirmed in another in-game menu, which states that *Civilization V* “examines all of human history—from the deep past to the day after tomorrow” and seemingly contradicts the introductory menu stating that this game does not depict the actual historical record.<sup>5</sup> This fundamental tension between game and history is best explored by outlining the game's structure.

In a standard game of *Civilization V*, players take control of the leader of a civilization and make decisions on behalf of that leader over a chronology of thousands of years: from 4000 BCE until a player fulfills one of several victory conditions.<sup>6</sup> As players progress through a game, they discover technologies that advance their civilization through historical epochs, interact with rival civilizations commanded by other humans or AI opponents, and expand their empire as they see fit. Players can win their games through military conquest, scientific discovery, cultural output, diplomatic supremacy, or by accruing the highest aggregate score by the year 2050 CE.

The game mechanics, units, and civilizations within *Civilization V* are inspired by the historical record. Players take control of leaders and civilizations that range from Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, to Ramkhamhaeng of Siam, to George Washington of America. While commanding these leaders, players found cities based on the civilization they are playing. If a player begins a game as George Washington, the default name for the first city is Washington, followed by New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Atlanta. Within these cities, players can create buildings that range from temples, which increase the religious output of a city, to solar plants, which increase the rate at which cities produce buildings and units. Players

can also build historical world wonders like Petra and the Taj Mahal, which can only be built once per game and provide powerful bonuses to the civilization that constructs it.

An integral component of any game of *Civilization V* is progression along a vast technology tree. As players advance through it, they unlock for their civilization new units, buildings, technologies, and progress toward victory conditions. All of these technologies (with the exception of the final one, called “Future Tech”) have historical precedent from the origins of civilization to the present day: Archery, Bronze Working, Theology, Acoustics, Economics, Electricity, Atomic Theory, and Nanotechnology to name a few. The units that these technologies enable likewise have a place in the historical record. In the early stages of the game, players rely on units like Spearmen and Archers, but as the game progresses, more advanced units like Longbowmen, Riflemen, Gatling Guns, Battleships, and Stealth Bombers are unlocked. By constructing buildings, researching technologies, and defeating enemy units, players can also unlock historical “great people” that provide various bonuses to civilizations. Great Engineers like Henry Ford allow for increased production in a chosen city, Great Generals like Sitting Bull provide bonuses to nearby military units, and Great Artists like Francisco Goya produce works of art that increase cultural production.

While all civilizations research the same technologies and have access to the same basic pool of units and buildings, each also has unique elements that are in some way reflective of their history. America, for example, has a unique ability called “Manifest Destiny” that makes it easier to purchase land around cities and gives extra vision to military units. It also has unique units in the form of a B17 and a Minuteman, which have better stats than the generic units (Bomber and Musketman) that they replace. These elements make each civilization unique and promote more varied gameplay options for players. Furthermore, the music and architecture of buildings is likewise grouped by region. The aesthetics of European civilizations like Poland and England are different from East Asian civilizations like Japan and China.

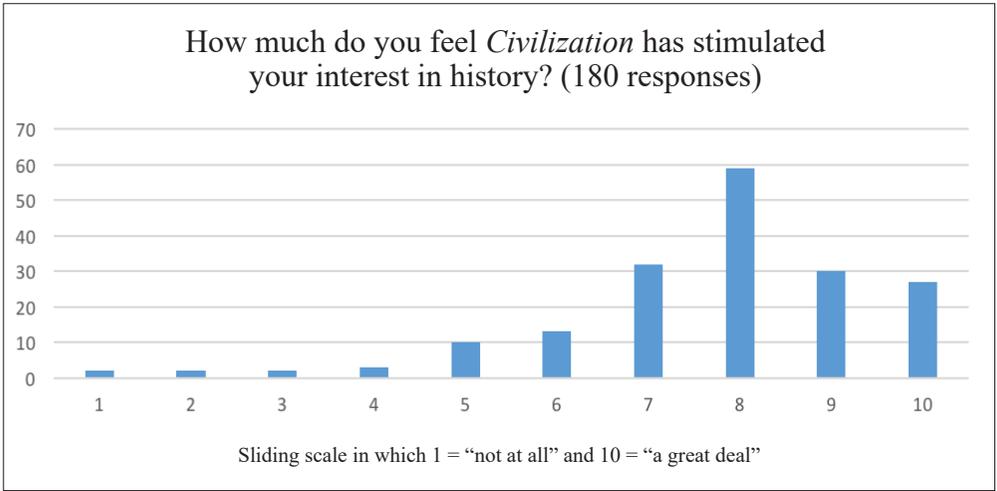
Players are able to learn more about gameplay mechanics and the historical inspiration behind them in *Civilization V*'s substantial in-game encyclopedia, called the “Civlopedia.” An entry for the world wonder of Chichen Itza, for example, contains logistical

information about it from the perspective of gameplay alongside a 228-word historical overview of the monument itself. Players that reference the Civlopedia are thus provided with information about how to use historical items within the game and how to interpret these items within a larger, out-of-game context. The content of *Civilization V*'s Civlopedia will be the subject of extended analysis later in this article.

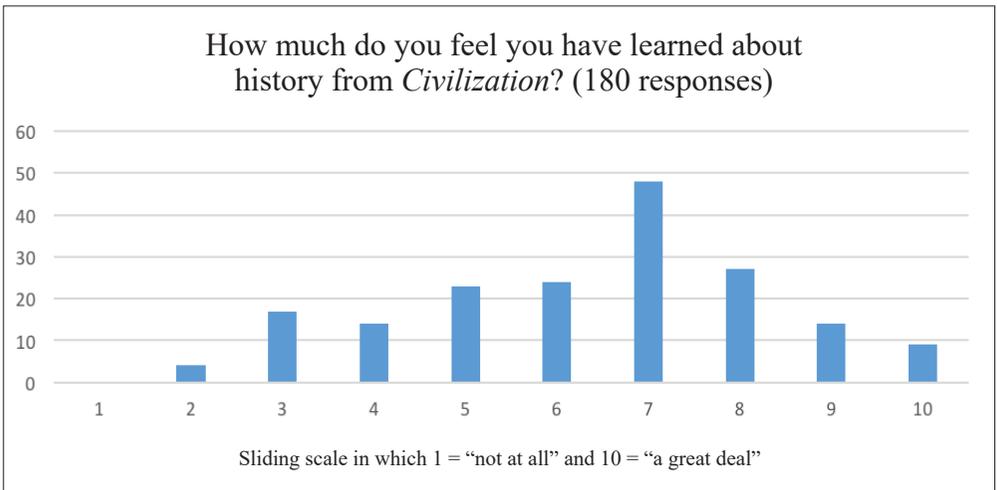
The gameplay design elements described above create a world that is inspired by world history, but is also expressly ahistorical. The geography in a game of *Civilization V* is randomly generated, based on pre-defined parameters that are designated by players. Someone playing a game as Ramesses II of Egypt (d. 1213 BCE) might start on a continent also containing Sejong the Great of Korea (d. 1450 CE) and Otto von Bismarck of Germany (d. 1898 CE). Regardless of their chosen civilization, all players have access to the same pool of world wonders, meaning that Shaka Zulu could construct the Sistine Chapel in his capital city of Ulundi. The trade agreements, alliances, and wars that players conduct over the course of the game are entirely determined by players and are not constrained by historical chronology. Players of *Civilization V* thus occupy a nebulous space that weaves between the historical and the ahistorical.

### ***Civilization V* and Education**

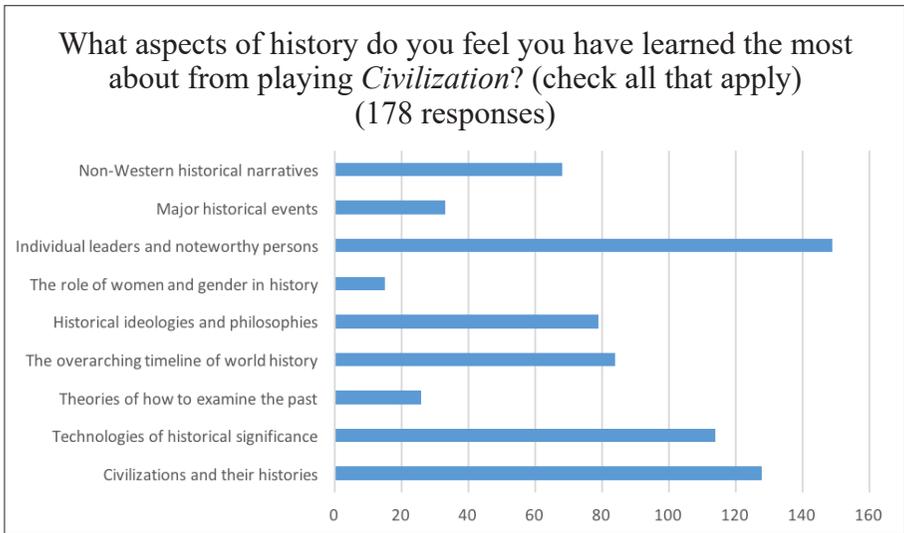
The historical backdrop of *Civilization V* has created an environment that many players feel has bolstered their interest and knowledge of history. In August 2017, I conducted a survey titled "*Sid Meier's Civilization* and Education" for the community of over 200,000 *Civilization* players at the website Reddit, specifically on the discussion board (called a "subreddit") at <reddit.com/r/civ>.<sup>7</sup> This group, which is devoted to the discussion of all things related to the *Civilization* series, is one of the largest online communities dedicated to this game alongside the forums at the website CivFanatics.<sup>8</sup> Over the course of two weeks, 180 Reddit accounts responded to this ten-question survey about their perceptions of the educational value of *Civilization*.<sup>9</sup> The results from this survey show that many players perceive the series as having increased their knowledge of history and piqued their interest in learning more about the subject. When asked how much *Civilization* has stimulated their interest in



**Figure 1:** Responses from the “*Sid Meier’s Civilization* and Education” Survey on Reddit. Original survey at <[https://www.reddit.com/r/civ/comments/6wnc5y/survey\\_civilization\\_in\\_the\\_classroom/](https://www.reddit.com/r/civ/comments/6wnc5y/survey_civilization_in_the_classroom/)>. Survey results at <<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1C1bKE-corUrTSAy25ngSNibAjsx5STpLWdIDMrs8ufI/>>.



**Figure 2:** Responses from the “*Sid Meier’s Civilization* and Education” Survey on Reddit. Original survey at <[https://www.reddit.com/r/civ/comments/6wnc5y/survey\\_civilization\\_in\\_the\\_classroom/](https://www.reddit.com/r/civ/comments/6wnc5y/survey_civilization_in_the_classroom/)>. Survey results at <<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1C1bKE-corUrTSAy25ngSNibAjsx5STpLWdIDMrs8ufI/>>.



**Figure 3:** Responses from the “*Sid Meier’s Civilization and Education*” Survey on Reddit. Original survey at <[https://www.reddit.com/r/civ/comments/6wnc5y/survey\\_civilization\\_in\\_the\\_classroom/](https://www.reddit.com/r/civ/comments/6wnc5y/survey_civilization_in_the_classroom/)>. Survey results at <<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1C1bKE-corUrTSAy25ngSNibAjsx5STpLWdIDMrs8ufl/>>.

history (on a scale from one to ten, with one indicating “not at all” and ten indicating “a great deal”), respondents averaged a score of 7.71 (**Figure 1**). Similarly, respondents indicated that they felt they learned about history from playing these games, with an average score of 6.34 (**Figure 2**).

Respondents also indicated that they learned about various aspects of history from playing *Civilization*. Over 50% of them felt that the series increased their knowledge of individual leaders and noteworthy persons, civilizations and their histories, and technologies of historical significance (**Figure 3**). Respondents also elaborated on these answers and provided specific examples of what they have learned from *Civilization*. Some reported that *Civilization* taught them overarching concepts about historical trajectories. One respondent wrote that “the importance of technological advancement and food prioritization actually seem to line up well with history.” Another similarly found that *Civilization* taught “the value of landmass for a country. I mistakenly thought countries fought for landmass essentially for ‘glory and housing’ capacity. Civ taught

me that strategic or luxury resources are very valuable and worth the expansion and the wars.” Other respondents felt that *Civilization* was useful for learning about specific peoples and technologies. One respondent wrote, “Enrico Dandolo in Civ 5 compelled me to do a project on Venice for a college class. I was fascinated by his trading perks and wondered what historical reasons there were for giving him such bonuses.” Another admitted, “I never knew Scythia and Nubia existed” before playing *Civilization*.

The educational value of *Civilization* has not been lost on the series’ creator, Sid Meier. While speaking at the thirteenth annual Games for Change Festival in 2016, Meier reflected on how he approaches the relationship between entertainment and learning in the gaming industry, saying, “we’ve found that one of the fun secrets of *Civilization* is learning while you play.”<sup>10</sup> He added that, although his games “focused on entertainment first,” he still believed that “our players—young and old—enjoy learning, even if they don’t always enjoy education.” This approach is reflected in the strategies through which the developers of *Civilization* convey historical information. Meier reported in the same interview:

We kind of joke that we do our research in the kid’s section of the library. We want you to start playing with the common knowledge that everyone has.... We don’t want you to have to read every history book to be able to play the game. But maybe we’re going to intrigue you to learn a little more about these historical characters that you run into.... So the gameplay is really about creating your own story, but in a world that feels real enough that it feels important. I think those things come together to create a fun learning experience.<sup>11</sup>

Sid Meier and the developers of *Civilization* thus see learning as a positive experience for their players, but one that should take a backseat to entertainment value. Nonetheless, in recent years, they made education a priority through a partnership with GlassLab Inc., a non-profit learning company, on a modified version of *Civilization V* called *CivilizationEDU* for high-school students. According to a press release from June 2016, this game would “provide students with the opportunity to think critically and create historical events, [to] consider and evaluate the geographical ramifications of their economic and technological decisions, and to engage in systems thinking and experiment with the causal/ correlative relationships between military, technology, political and

socioeconomic development.”<sup>12</sup> The game would also use a “learning analytics” engine through which teachers can assess the progress that students make on their game-based assignments. Although this announcement of *CivilizationEDU* was met with fanfare on gaming blogs, which applauded this effort to place *Civilization* into history classrooms, nothing materialized of *CivilizationEDU* since the press announcement from June 2016.<sup>13</sup> The game did not release in fall 2017 and GlassLab Inc. shut down in 2018.

Nonetheless, the fact that *Civilization* developer Firaxis Games even considered partnering with an educational gaming company to create *CivilizationEDU* shows that game developers like Sid Meier have begun to recognize the pedagogical value of their digital creations. So too have scholars. Ian Bogost analyzed the theories of history advocated in Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* to those of games like *Civilization*.<sup>14</sup> Brandon K. Ashinoff argued that although historical games like *Civilization* might motivate students learn more about history, playing these games will not improve students' “executive functions” like working memory.<sup>15</sup> The most substantial study of *Civilization* in a classroom context comes from Kurt Squire, who wrote a dissertation in 2004 titled “Replaying History: Learning World History through Playing *Civilization III*.”<sup>16</sup> In this study, Squire used *Civilization III* (a predecessor to *Civilization V* that contains many of the same mechanics) in three academic settings among middle and high schoolers in order to see its value as part of world history curricula.

Squire's analysis shows the game's potential as an educational tool. Participating students “enjoyed playing as civilizations that [they] believed were repressed” and could rewrite history by playing the game.<sup>17</sup> One student, for example, was not interested in the game until he learned that he could play as the Iroquois. Once he started ruling this civilization, he showed an immediate interest in the game as he plotted how best to reverse the historical record by invading European civilizations. The overturning of traditional historical narratives like this caused some students to ask larger questions relating to the history of colonialism and imperialism. This kind of learning, which is akin to the “transgressive play” advocated by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, shows the potential for using an ahistorical game like *Civilization* to spur students to think critically about issues relating to world history.<sup>18</sup>

While scholars are beginning to see the pedagogical value of *Civilization* in history classrooms, few of the studies have been by trained historians.<sup>19</sup> A. Martin Wainwright's analysis of *Civilization IV* alongside other historical games like the *Total War* and *Call of Duty* series provides the most comprehensive analysis of the academic merits of a game in the *Civilization* series written by a professional historian.<sup>20</sup> Throughout his article, "Teaching Historical Theory through Video Games," Wainwright documents his experiences teaching courses centered on the critical analysis of video games at The University of Akron as a way of helping students learn about historical methods and historiography. He finds the pitfalls of certain historically themed games (oversimplification, quantification bias, and over-access to power and information) can nonetheless act as valuable tools for helping students learn, as long as they are guided along the way by a teacher. I seek to build upon his work, which considers multiple games in the context of undergraduate classrooms, by considering specifically *Civilization V* and its pedagogical merits when taught with an eye toward its procedural rhetoric.<sup>21</sup>

The analysis and pedagogical suggestions below are based partially upon an upper-division undergraduate history course that I designed and taught at the University of Minnesota called "History and Video Games," which considered medieval history through both video games and written historical sources.<sup>22</sup> In this course, *Civilization V* was one of a handful of games that students interrogated. To ensure that all of these games were accessible to students, I partnered with University of Minnesota Libraries to install these games on student-accessible computers in one of their labs. For those who wanted to own these games (which ended up being the vast majority of students), I also made explicit when they were on sale so as to mitigate costs for the course. As will be discussed, students were expected to complete certain objectives within video games as homework and then analyze their progress through a handful of written assignments and in-class discussions. I also used my personal laptop to project games in class to facilitate discussions and group-play opportunities. Specific examples of pedagogical exercises involving *Civilization V* in the classroom are included in the following two sections.

### History in *Civilization V*: Western-Centrism, Gender, and Race

In the “*Sid Meier’s Civilization and Education*” survey that I conducted in August 2017, respondents indicated that playing *Civilization V* increased their knowledge of history in multiple ways, from theoretical understandings of history to the history of individual leaders. There are two main sources within the game that help inform players’ perceptions of history. The first is the procedural rhetoric of the game itself: the rules, setting, and aesthetics that dictate how history looks and progresses. The second is the wealth of information found in *Civilization V*’s in-game encyclopedia, the “Civilopedia.” Players that read Civilopedia entries learn specific details about the peoples, units, and technologies in the game. Although the historical content found in *Civilization V* itself and the Civilopedia helps to expose new historical content to players, at the same time, these sources reinforce a Western-centric and teleological approach to history that has fallen out of favor among professional historians.

The in-game processes and visuals of *Civilization V* espouse an antiquated vision of history, one that is best understood through the lens of “procedural rhetoric.” This term, coined by scholar Ian Bogost, shows that video games can be read “as deliberate expressions of particular perspectives.”<sup>23</sup> He extrapolates on the term as follows:

[P]rocedural rhetoric is the practice of persuading through processes in general and computational processes in particular. Just as verbal rhetoric is useful for both the orator and the audience, and just as written rhetoric is useful for both the writer and the reader, so procedural rhetoric is useful for both the programmer and the user, the game designer and the player. Procedural rhetoric is the technique for making arguments with computational systems and for unpacking computational arguments others have created.<sup>24</sup>

In essence, Bogost argues that the designers of video games make arguments about the world (both virtual and not) through their code, and that players of video games experience these arguments. For the study of the pedagogical merits of *Civilization V*, this argument is substantial. The developers of *Civilization V* have created a

game that blends their imagined digital world with that of the real world. As shown above, players of this game both experience an imagined history from this game and apply that imagined history to their knowledge of the past. It thus becomes necessary to consider the procedural rhetoric within *Civilization V*—the lines of code that manifest as gameplay rules, dialogue, and rendered graphics—to see what kind of history the developers of this game have created.

The procedural rhetoric of *Civilization* utilizes a Whiggish narrative of history in which inevitable scientific progress defines civilizations and makes some better than others.<sup>25</sup> Players in a game of *Civilization* rush to complete various technologies that progress from “Pottery” and “Mining” all the way through “The Internet” and “Nanotechnology.” The units, buildings, and abilities that are unlocked with various technologies become more powerful the further along the technology tree a given civilization is. The civilization with the most advanced technologies is given more victory points, is allowed better units, and thus has an advantage over civilizations less far along this technology tree.

The technologies of *Civilization V* are organized to reflect Whiggish and Western notions of progress. Players begin in the Ancient Era before advancing to the Classical, Medieval, Renaissance, Industrial, Modern, Atomic, and Information Eras. These are historical epochs that European scholars have long used to anachronistically chart the “progress” of civilization and to justify the need to advance “less-developed” peoples along this chart.<sup>26</sup> European colonial powers like England and France, for example, drew upon these notions to justify the subjugation and indoctrination of peoples deemed to be less progressive than their own. *Civilization V* utilizes this trajectory for all civilizations in the game, including groups like the Iroquois and the Aztecs that suffered at the hands of these European ideas of technological progress.

The chronology of technologies within these eras is likewise based on a given technology’s relationship to European history. Gunpowder, which historians know was invented in the ninth century CE in China, is presented in *Civilization V* as a creation of the Renaissance Era because this was when the technology arrived in Europe. The ability to traverse oceans also becomes possible in the Renaissance Era with the construction of Caravels, despite peoples in the Pacific Ocean having the seafaring capacity to cross

oceans long before this.<sup>27</sup> All civilizations can research Chivalry during the Medieval Era, despite it being an ideology largely limited to the bounds of Latin Christendom.

In *Civilization V*, scientific progress is also linked inextricably to cities and sedentary societies. Before founding a city, civilizations are unable to advance along the technology tree.<sup>28</sup> Within a game, it is therefore impossible to pursue any style of nomadic or semi-nomadic civilization, despite the documented ability of these groups to utilize many of the technologies found within the technology tree.<sup>29</sup> This is peculiar given that some of the civilizations available to players are from nomadic societies like the Shoshone, which is a Native American group that was concentrated in the area that is now the west-central United States. Despite the Shoshone's nomadic lifestyle, *Civilization V* still forces its players to found cities like every other civilization. The same is true of the Huns, a nomadic group that lived in ancient Scythia (northeast of the Black Sea). The procedural rhetoric of *Civilization V* thus presents a notion of civilizational progress that is tied to Western-centric notions of progress, particularly with regard to technology and the necessity for civilizations to be sedentary.<sup>30</sup>

The means of producing "science" in *Civilization V* is likewise skewed toward modern notions of science rather than its many historical definitions. The science-producing buildings in *Civilization V* are ones that we associate today with scientific learning: libraries, universities, public schools, and research laboratories. This procedural rhetoric gives the impression to players that there is a distinct divide between places of learning and other institutions, particularly religious ones. Buildings in *Civilization V* that allow for religious development—shrines, temples, and the like—are almost entirely independent of the buildings that produce science. As a result, the game advocates for a notion of history in which there is a fairly rigid divide between scientific progress and religious devotion.

Historically, this was not the case. Religious institutions were centers of learning for much of world history, ranging from the integration of Confucianism into the system of aristocratic education in China as early as the third century BCE to the Catholic Church's patronizing of monastic and cathedral schools throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>31</sup> The intellectual foundation of



**Figure 4:** Great General Jeanne d'Arc in the Medieval Era in *Civilization V*.

the work of the so-called “Enlightenment” came from medieval theologians and scholars, whose writing was sponsored by the Church. It is only in the years after the Middle Ages, when scientists sought to distance themselves from a past that they interpreted to be defined by religious barbarity, that the idea of a separation between religion and science became common. By segregating the development of science and religion, *Civilization V* gives the false impression that there were clear lines that historically divided these two categories.

The procedural rhetoric of *Civilization V* also creates a world that is overtly masculine. Although it is no secret that patriarchal societies have been the norm for most (if not all) of human history, *Civilization V* still provides remarkably few outlets for women. The “Worker” unit, which plants farms, builds roads, and improves infrastructure, comprises a cohort of men in period attire. All military units in the game are shown solely as men. The icons that represent various technologies and buildings, too, only show men. When using the



**Figure 5:** Great General Jeanne d'Arc in the Industrial Era in *Civilization V*.

game's interface and commanding units within the game, players are confronted with a world that is inescapably masculine.

Women make few appearances in *Civilization V*. They are most prominently represented as playable leaders, nine of whom (out of a total of forty-three) are women.<sup>32</sup> In addition, all leaders in a game of *Civilization* are given an "Advisor Counsel" of four individuals to provide advice on the economy, the military, science production, and foreign relations. Two of these advisors are women. Women also make limited appearances as "great people." During a game of *Civilization V*, players will be rewarded with "great people" based on various aspects of their civilization. These great people include generals, admirals, artists, writers, musicians, merchants, engineers, and scientists.<sup>33</sup> A fraction of the randomly generated "great people" produced during a game are women, but even these women exist in name only, for their in-game avatar is a generic man, as seen in the in-game representations of Great General Jeanne d'Arc (**Figure 4** and **Figure 5**).



**Figure 6:** A Settler Unit in *Civilization V*.

Beyond these examples, the only women that I could find to be represented in *Civilization V* were part of the “Settler” unit. This unit is exclusively used to found new cities. It cannot attack or defend itself from other units. It is represented in-game as a group of men, women, children, and supplies whose function is to expand an empire (**Figure 6**). The procedural rhetoric of the game is clear: women exist to give birth so that your empire can grow. This is shown in the icon of the “Settler” unit, which is displayed whenever a player selects it (**Figure 7**). In the image, a man stands front and center, with his son on his shoulders. To his right is a donkey on which is perched supplies. To the left is a woman and another donkey, yet another vessel through which to carry the supplies of man. The multifaceted and indispensable roles that women have played throughout history is thus reduced in *Civilization V* to one of almost pure biology.



**Figure 7:** Icon for the Settler Unit in *Civilization V*.

*Civilization V* also has a race problem. Although some of the in-game leaders are people of color, the units they command are overwhelmingly white. Worker units, great people units, and the vast majority of combat units are represented by avatars with white skin. While Haile Selassie, the leader of the Ethiopian Empire, is represented as black, the units that he commands are more reminiscent of the colonial forces against which he fought than the people of Ethiopia. The same is true for other leaders of color like Shaka Zulu and Gandhi. For these leaders, the only units that represent the racial majorities of the areas they inhabited are those units unique to their civilization: Impis for Shaka and War Elephants for Gandhi. Every other unit commanded by these leaders is shown as light-skinned. Thus, the history that players create in *Civilization V* is also inescapably white.

### **The Pedagogy of Western-Centrism, Gender, and Race in *Civilization V***

**Assignment:**

You are a game developer and responsible historian tasked with creating a new expansion pack for *Civilization V* that will make the game more “historically accurate.” Write a memo to your boss, Sid Meier, in which you discuss the concrete steps you plan to take to accomplish this goal.

**Assignment:**

In a game of *Civilization V*, advance to the Renaissance Age. Analyze the technological advancements your civilization has made in a one-page paper. How does the game measure progress? Which peoples are included or excluded from this vision of progress?

**Assignment:**

In a two-page paper, compare your experiences in *Civilization V* with the lived experiences of historical individuals as found in *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr* and Usama ibn Munqidh’s *The Book of Contemplations*.<sup>34</sup> Whose voices and perspectives are present in these sources? Whose voices and perspectives are not present?

**Activity:**

Play a few turns of a communal game of *Civilization V* in which you found a religion, create a unit, capture an enemy city, harvest a luxury resource, and/or spawn a great person. As a class, note changes to your civilization’s income, happiness, and science output every turn. What do these changes say about the relationship between a ruler and the ruled? Can you think of historical examples that fit or do not fit these gameplay rules?

**Activity:**

In small groups, create your own technology tree for the history of the world based on your previous experiences learning about the past. Prepare for a discussion in which the class compares these technology trees and interrogates whether this is a responsible way to think about history.

**Activity:**

Work together with your entire class to assemble a comprehensive list of every woman found in *Civilization V* and her role within the game. Prepare for a discussion in which the class compares this virtual history to those found in pre-assigned written sources.



**Figure 8:** Icons for the Mathematics, Astronomy, and Scientific Theory Technologies in *Civilization V*.

This whiteness is reinforced in the universal imagery of the game as seen in icons and instructional materials. Within the technology tree and the Civlopedia are small pieces of artwork that provide visual representations of gameplay elements, many of which contain depictions of humans. Without fail, these humans are light-skinned men dressed in attire associated with the trajectory of Western Civilization (**Figure 8**). A man clothed in classical robes represents the technology “Mathematics.” A man wearing a tricorne hat while peering through a telescope is the posterchild for “Astronomy.” A man in a white lab coat peers through a microscope to show “Scientific Theory.” The canvas of history onto which players of *Civilization V* can paint their own stories thus marginalizes the well-documented role that non-white and non-male historical actors have had in shaping larger historical processes.

The procedural rhetoric of *Civilization V* creates a space that is Western-centric, male, and white. Players of this game, whether they choose to play as George Washington or Shaka Zulu, are forced to utilize a teleological technology tree that drives players without compromise to a future that is grounded in Western innovations and ways of thinking. Likewise, the people driving this narrative overwhelmingly are men. The leaders that command civilizations, the units represented within the game, and the great people that civilizations create are overwhelmingly male. Women, meanwhile are relegated to the sideline in almost all instances and assume a role in the background that is reflected solely in population growth. People of color are similarly marginalized, as the units that civilizations command are most often white.<sup>35</sup>

## History in *Civilization V*: The Civilopedia

Within *Civilization V* is an expansive in-game encyclopedia that contains informational articles about all aspects of the game. Entries in the “Civilopedia” range from descriptions of game mechanics such as founding cities, to historical analyses of technologies that can be researched in-game. In many of these articles, there is a specific section devoted to the historical analysis of the given topic. The scope of these articles is impressive. There are 714 articles in the Civilopedia that contain a section devoted to history and the word count for these sections is over 200,000 words. These articles consider a variety of topics, including the technological developments of early humans, city-states, natural wonders found on Earth, playable civilizations, and buildings that can be constructed within cities.

The quantity of information found in the Civilopedia is even more impressive considering that it was written on a limited time schedule by only four developers: Michelle Menard, Paul Murphy, Rex Martin, and Scott Wittbecker. All four of these game developers have had impressive careers as programmers and members of teams working on video games, but none of them have backgrounds in history. I was fortunate to be able to interview Michelle Menard and Paul Murphy for this article to ask them questions about the process through which they wrote their entries for the Civilopedia.<sup>36</sup>

Before proceeding to my analysis, it is important to state that the Civilopedia—despite its name—never directly states that it is an encyclopedia, nor is it marketed within the game as a guide for historical resources. Like the landing page for the opening *Civilization V* menu, which asserts that none of the items within the game are based on anything historical, the introductory paragraph for the Civilopedia simply claims, “Here you will find detailed descriptions of all aspects of the game.” Likewise, the manual for *Civilization V* markets the Civilopedia as a “fine in-game knowledge resource.”<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, there is every reason to believe that the Civilopedia was created as both an in-game encyclopedia and a historical one. The authors of the Civilopedia created it with the goal of being historically accurate, and they made the special effort to put “Historical Info” sections in most articles. Although the Civilopedia never directly claims to be an encyclopedia about history, its content and presentation tell a different story—one that blurs the line between history and gameplay.

The “Historical Info” sections found in the Civlopedia do not read like an encyclopedia article from the likes of *Encyclopædia Britannica* or *World Book Encyclopedia*. Instead, the authors of the Civlopedia attempted to create a “master unified tone” that would be “informative” while still providing “some outlets for light humor to make it more accessible.” In this vein, the entry for the Mathematics technology mentions how Arabic numerals “replaced the extremely clunky and awkward ‘Roman’ numerical system, which now survives only in horror movie sequel enumeration.” Similarly, the entry about the Iroquois includes mention of the various wars in which the Iroquois engaged at the end of the seventeenth century. These wars concluded when “everybody pretty much ran out of money and decided to call the whole thing off.” Entries throughout the Civlopedia are reflective of this humor, which uses English slang alongside modern pop-culture analogies to make the past more relatable to its readers.

While some of this humor is sometimes innocuous, there are some inaccuracies and trends in the Civlopedia that are troubling. Take, for example, the entry for the Theology technology, which is researched in the game during the Middle Ages:

Theology is the study of religion. Theologians study religious traditions and beliefs. The practice goes at least as far back in history as the Classical Greeks, who had an extremely rich mythology and religious tradition to observe. In the first and second century AD, Jewish religious scholarship flourished. The Jerusalem Talmud, a collection of Rabbinic notes about Jewish Oral tradition, was published around 200 AD and added to and expanded upon over the next two centuries.

Theology is important. It has had an incredibly powerful effect upon world history. Countless millions have died over religious disputes, and they continue to do so today. The Romans killed Christians over their radical new theology which denied the existence of the Roman gods. Christians killed Jews and Muslims and Christians over religious disputes. Theologian and Christian revolutionary Martin Luther triggered hundreds of years of brutal religious conflict in Europe with his “95 Theses” questioning, among other things, the selling of papal indulgences (divine forgiveness of sins) to pay for the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica. If it is ever to end, theology will be of critical importance in solving the current religious war between radical Muslims and the Western World.

## The Pedagogy of the Civilopedia

**Assignment:**

Choose an article from the Civilopedia about an in-game civilization and then find the corresponding Wikipedia article about the same civilization.<sup>38</sup> In a two-page paper, compare the two articles. How do these articles present the history of this civilization? Which aspects of the civilization does Civilopedia emphasize and which parts does Wikipedia emphasize? How do the depictions of these civilizations compare to the mechanics assigned to them in *Civilization V*?

**Assignment:**

Re-write the “Historical Info” section of a single Civilopedia entry. This entry must include citations from relevant and recent academic sources.

**Activity:**

Lead a discussion in which the class brainstorms ways to make the Civilopedia a more accessible tool for gamers who are interested in history.

**Activity:**

In small groups, discuss a given Civilopedia page in relation to a relevant historical source. For example, these comparisons could include the “Cultural Revolution” entry and a handful of speeches by Chairman Mao; the “Capitalism” entry and selections from *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith; or the “Stele” entry and the text of the Code of Hammurabi.

The approach through which the Civilopedia tackles the substantial topic of theology is troublesome.<sup>39</sup> Theology, which encompasses the study of the divine across cultures, is presented in this article as the sole cause of interfaith conflict from the time of the Romans through the modern day. Even in an encyclopedia article, where some detail must be sacrificed for the sake of brevity, this is a colossal oversimplification. It ignores the study of theology, a rich branch of scholarship that has articulated various relationships between humanity and the otherworldly, in favor of a brief account of how people of different religions have fought each other through history. To the authors of the Civilopedia, theology’s role in the

modern world is the facilitation of the “current religious war” among “radical Muslims and the Western World,” a phenomenon that scholars and political scientists have demonstrably shown to be a web of complex interactions that weaves together religion, geo-politics, colonialism, and imperialism.<sup>40</sup>

Alongside factually problematic entries like the one for Theology, there are others that adhere to outdated historiographical trends. Take, for example, the entry on the Ottoman Empire, which argues that it “endured a slow, steady decline” after the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. Historians of the Ottoman Empire in the last twenty years have thoroughly debunked this simplistic narrative of decline and shown the variability of the Ottomans’ growth and retraction from the sixteenth century into the twentieth century.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the entry on Cultural Exchange insists that there were “unofficial cultural exchanges” beginning in the Industrial Age that only came to be formalized during the Cold War. This entry ignores that substantial and impactful cultural exchanges (I am unclear what “unofficial” means in the context of this entry) that have existed between governments and people since the beginning of human history—most prominently through the Silk Road and Age of Exploration.

These criticisms of the Civikipedia should take into consideration the timeline for its creation. While academics tend to operate on a scale of months or years when conducting research, Michelle Menard and Paul Murphy were working on a scale of days and weeks. Michelle and Paul were forced to maintain a “very high word count” per day limit while writing their Civikipedia articles and were constrained by the resources at their disposal. They had access to *Encyclopædia Britannica*, but beyond that, they were restricted to their own personal libraries and publicly available websites. Michelle Menard mentioned that Isaac Asimov’s *Chronology of Science and Discovery* was useful, as were Wikipedia citations and relevant websites from national governments and NGOs.<sup>42</sup>

The effort that the Civikipedia authors made in constructing such a vast encyclopedia ought to be recognized, particularly considering the access to a pool of sources that virtually any professional historian would say is inadequate. At the same time, though, there might have been other ways for Firaxis Games to construct an effective in-game reference tool without straining its employees and compromising

historical accuracy. Paradox Interactive, which created the grand strategy games *Crusader Kings II* and *Crusader Kings III*, simply included hyperlinks to Wikipedia articles for all relevant rulers that appear in-game. Perhaps Firaxis Games could have done something similar or even sought to collaborate with an encyclopedia like *Encyclopædia Britannica* to bring their content to a game like *Civilization V*? Adding citations to the bottom of encyclopedia articles or adding recommendations for further reading could also have improved the ability of players to access further resources about a given topic. By taking these steps, the content of the Civlopedia could better link *Civilization* to modern scholars and their works.

### **Conclusion: *Civilization V* as a Pedagogical Tool**

*Civilization V* is among the most popular strategy games of all time, due in no small part to its enjoyable gameplay that allows players to take control of a civilization and lead it from 4000 BCE to the future. Survey data shows that players of *Civilization V* feel that the game teaches them about history, but the careful analysis of the game's narrative and mechanics shows that the kind of history players are taught is problematic. The narrative of *Civilization V* is Western-centric, marginalizes women and people of color, and refers to an in-game encyclopedia with information that is questionable at times. People whose vision of history is informed by this game, therefore, are unknowingly adhering to a vision of history that does not align with current trends in historical scholarship.

These criticisms of *Civilization V* do not mean that the game (or any historically themed game, for that matter) should be avoided in pedagogy. Instead, these problematic gameplay elements are fruitful points of engagement that educators can confront in their classrooms. By evaluating *Civilization V*'s written content alongside its procedural rhetoric, students can dissect the game and simultaneously confront the process through which historical narratives are created. Educators can use live gameplay and readings from within the game to show students how this virtual narrative is formed and the embedded perspectives/biases within it. Writing exercises derived from this perspective further allow students to critique secondary source narratives and to analyze how historians know what they know about the past.

In the history classroom of the twenty-first century, *Civilization V* and other historical video games provide valuable and relatable pedagogical tools. The procedural rhetoric of *Civilization V* draws upon dated historical narratives that scholars constructed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; game developers have just transformed them into a different, more palatable medium for students of the digital age. Treating the gameplay and writing of *Civilization V* as a secondary source allows students to dissect the arguments of the game while simultaneously learning to evaluate a new kind of source distinct from more traditional texts. Video game analysis requires more than reading words on a page. It requires the analysis of in-game rules, sights, sounds, and gameplay. The critical thinking derived from this kind of analysis develops the skills of the historian while also making students more critical of the inherent biases of the media they consume. In an era of “fake news,” this skill ought to be paramount in classrooms and can be easily transferred to other digital multimedia through which students are exposed to history.

*Civilization V* is not the only immensely popular video game that deals with topics of historical importance. *Assassin's Creed*, *Tropico*, *Crusader Kings II* and *III*, *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, and *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* are a few of the games that deal explicitly with historical subjects or are inspired by historical themes. The reach of these games is vast, from the gamers who play them, to the friends who watch the gamers play them, to the people who encounter ads for them. As such, it would be foolish for teachers of history to ignore their content, just as it would be foolish for instructors to ignore any source of information from which their students' conception of history is informed. Through the implementation of video game analysis into the history classrooms, educators will allow their students to critically study the media that has (knowingly or not) informed their perceptions of the past and better understand the process through which historians of the present craft their narratives.

## Notes

1. Dean Takahashi, “Civilization: 25 Years, 33M Copies Sold, 1 Billion Hours Played, and 66 Versions,” *VentureBeat*, February 18, 2016, <<https://venturebeat.com/2016/02/18/civilization-25-years-66-versions-33m-copies-sold-1-billion-hours-played/>>.

2. Jonathan Leack, “Civilization V Is Now The 3rd Best-Selling PC Exclusive In History With 10 Million Units Sold,” *GameRevolution*, April 18, 2017, <<https://www.gamerevolution.com/news/14051-civilization-v-is-now-the-3rd-best-selling-pc-exclusive-in-history-with-10-million-units-sold>>.

3. *Civilization V: The Complete Edition* includes the base game, the two expansions *Gods and Kings* and *Brave New World*, and thirteen smaller DLC packs. The full list of this content can be found at <[https://store.steampowered.com/bundle/575/Sid\\_Meiers\\_Civilization\\_V\\_Complete/](https://store.steampowered.com/bundle/575/Sid_Meiers_Civilization_V_Complete/)>.

4. The Civlopedia can be accessed directly through the game *Civilization V*. There are several websites that contain a full copy of the Civlopedia as well.

5. This excerpt of text is found on the “Game Concepts Home Page” of the Civlopedia in *Civilization V*.

6. There are numerous variations of standard games of *Civilization V*, including a host of developer-created scenarios that allow players to play games confined to specific periods and geographies, such as “1066: Year of Viking Destiny,” “Scramble for Africa,” and “Wonders of the Ancient World.”

7. When I posted about this survey in August 2017, the subreddit had approximately 209,000 members. At the time of publication, it had over 440,000 members. In this survey, 170 out of 180 participants reported that they played *Civilization V*, which was the most played game by a significant margin. The original survey is online at <[https://www.reddit.com/r/civ/comments/6wnc5y/survey\\_civilization\\_in\\_the\\_classroom/](https://www.reddit.com/r/civ/comments/6wnc5y/survey_civilization_in_the_classroom/)>, and results of the survey are accessible at <<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1C1bKE-corUrTSay25ngSNIBajxs5STpLWdIDMrs8ufl/>>.

8. I was unable to locate statistics about the number of users of CivFanatics, the website of which is accessible at <<https://www.civfanatics.com>>.

9. 94% of respondents to this survey identified as male and 87% of respondents identified as being under 30 years of age. The exact demographics of all Reddit users and visitors is unknown, although studies have shown that the majority of Reddit users are male. Michael Barthel, Galen Stocking, Jesse Holcomb, and Amy Mitchell, “Reddit News Users More Likely to Be Male, Young and Digital in Their News Preferences,” Pew Research Center, Journalism and Media, February 25, 2016, <<https://www.journalism.org/2016/02/25/reddit-news-users-more-likely-to-be-male-young-and-digital-in-their-news-preferences/>>.

10. “Sid Meier, Games for Change President Susanna Pollack Interviews Civilization Creator Sid Meier,” Periscope.tv video, posted by user @classcraftgame, June 23, 2018, 39:59, <<https://www.periscope.tv/classcraftgame/1YqKDVjYdPLJV>>.

11. Stephanie Carmichael, “Sid Meier announces Civilization Edu at Games for Change 2016,” Classcraft, June 26, 2016, <<https://www.classcraft.com/resources/blog/sid-meier-announces-civilization-edu/>>.

12. Alan Lewis, "Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc., 2K and Firaxis Games Partner with GlassLab Inc., to Bring CivilizationEDU to High Schools Throughout North America in 2017," Take-Two Interactive, June 23, 2016, <<https://ir.take2games.com/news-releases/news-release-details/take-two-interactive-software-inc-2k-and-firaxis-games-partner>>.

13. Kyle Orland, "CivilizationEDU Will Make High School *Totally Radical* Next Year," *Ars Technica*, June 24, 2016, <<https://arstechnica.com/gaming/2016/06/civilizationedu-will-make-high-school-totally-radical-next-year/>>; Timothy J. Seppala, "'CivilizationEDU' Takes the Strategy Franchise to School," *Engadget*, June 24, 2016, <<https://www.engadget.com/2016/06/24/civilizationedu-takes-the-strategy-franchise-to-school/>>; Carmichael, "Sid Meier Announces Civilization Edu at Games for Change 2016"; Tony Wan, "Has the Game Really Changed? Notes From the 2017 Games for Change Festival," *EdSurge*, August 2, 2017, <<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2017-08-02-has-the-game-really-changed-reporter-s-notebook-from-the-2017-games-for-change-festival>>.

14. Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 252-255.

15. Brandon K. Ashinoff, "The Potential of Video Games as a Pedagogical Tool," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (September 2014), <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4179712/>>.

16. Kurt D. Squire, "Replaying History: Learning World History Through Playing *Civilization III*" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2004).

17. Squire, "Replaying History," 339.

18. Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004).

19. Ian Bogost received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, Brandon Ashinoff received his in Psychology, and Kurt Squire received his in Instructional Systems Technology. While this variation in academic specialty is wonderful for the cross-disciplinary methods and ideas it brings, the lack of representation of historians in this group means that there is room to further interrogate the style of history that *Civilization* brings to the classroom.

20. A. Martin Wainwright, "Teaching Historical Theory through Video Games," *The History Teacher* 47, no. 4 (August 2014): 579-612.

21. Some of the problems associated with the use of video games to teach history are explored in Jeremiah McCall, "Navigating the Problem Space: The Medium of Simulation Games in the Teaching of History," *The History Teacher* 46, no. 1 (November 2012): 9-28.

22. This course was designed in collaboration with my colleague Joshua M. Marcotte, although I was the sole instructor of the course.

23. Ian Bogost, "The Rhetoric of Video Games," in *The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*, ed. Katie Salen (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 119.

24. Bogost, *Persuasive Games*, 3.

25. Modern scholarship about the origins and problems of Whiggish history is vast. For overviews of the subject, see Adrian Wilson and T. G. Ashplant, "Whig History and Present-Centered History," *The Historical Journal* 31, no. 1 (March

1998): 1-16; and Michael Bentley, *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

26. The work of eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant looms large in this historical trajectory. See Margaret Meek Lange, "Progress," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, February 17, 2011, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/progress/>>; Katrin Flikschuh and Lea Ypi, eds., *Kant and Colonialism: Historical and Critical Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

27. In fairness to the developers of *Civilization V*, the Polynesians have the unique ability of traversing ocean tiles at the beginning of the game. For more information, see Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006).

28. The closest concept of nomadism within this game comes from monolithic raiders called "Barbarians," whose sole purpose is to harass the units, pillage lands, and attack the cities of any civilization within reach. These units appear in encampments throughout the map and will spawn in locations where players do not have geographic vision.

29. Eileen M. Murphy et al., "Iron Age Pastoral Nomadism and Agriculture in the Eastern Eurasian Steppe: Implications from Dental Palaeopathology and Stable Carbon and Nitrogen Isotopes," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 40, no. 5 (May 2013): 2547-2560.

30. These findings fundamentally oppose the argument of Squire, who sees *Civilization III* as a game that eschews "Eurocentric or colonialist perspectives that have historically characterized similar research." Although *Civilization III* and *Civilization V* permit players to take control of indigenous and non-Western polities, these groups are still pigeonholed into a technology tree that inevitably results in industrialization, Western cities, and the progression of Western medicine. In this way, regardless of the global peoples represented in *Civilization*, all of these groups are ultimately relegated to the same Western teleology. Squire, "Replaying History," 9.

31. John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

32. Maria Theresa of Austria, Theodora of Byzantium, Dido of Carthage, Boudicca of the Celts, Wu Zetian of China, Elizabeth I of the English, Maria I of Portugal, Catherine the Great of Russia, and Isabella of Spain are all of the female leaders in *Civilization V*.

33. The Mongols are able to produce a variant of the Great General called the "Khan" and the Venetians are able to produce a variant of the Great Merchant called the "Merchant of Venice." All of the twenty-two variants of the great people units are men.

34. These two texts provide firsthand accounts of Muslim-Christian relations in the Crusader states and the medieval Mediterranean. They can easily be replaced by other primary sources devoted to the geography/chronology of a teacher's choosing.

35. The developers of *Civilization V* are by no means alone in creating games with problematic aspects like the ones described above. It is only in recent years

that developers have begun to grapple with the overwhelmingly white and male narratives that have dominated gaming since its inception. This reckoning, which was in part spurred by the “Gamergate” controversy of 2014, is slowly reshaping the digital landscape to include voices previously unheard in gaming narratives. This is even seen within the *Civilization* series, as developers at Firaxis included more racially diverse units in *Civilization VI*, which was released in 2017.

36. I attempted to interview Rex and Scott, both of whom still work for Firaxis Games, but was unable to reach them through the 2K Games online support system. Michelle and Paul did the writing for the base game of *Civilization V*, while Rex and Scott did the writing for its two expansions, *Gods and Kings* and *Brave New World*. My interview with Michelle Menard took place over e-mail on September 6th and 7th, 2017 and my interview with Paul Murphy took place over e-mail on September 17th and 18th, 2017.

37. This quotation appears on page two of the 233-page *Civilization V* manual, which is accessible online at <[https://downloads.2kgames.com/civ5/site13/community/feature\\_manual/Civ\\_V\\_Manual\\_English\\_v1.0.pdf](https://downloads.2kgames.com/civ5/site13/community/feature_manual/Civ_V_Manual_English_v1.0.pdf)>.

38. It is also possible to replicate this assignment using in-game leaders instead of civilizations.

39. Theology itself has a range of possible definitions. Merriam-Webster defines it as “the study of religious faith, practice, and experience; *especially*: the study of God and of God’s relation to the world.” *Encyclopædia Britannica* sees philosophy as a “philosophically oriented discipline of religious speculation and apologetics.” Wikipedia maintains that theology is the “study of the nature of the divine” (<<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology>>).

40. The scholarship on this topic is vast. For a useful overview of this complex web of interactions, see John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

41. Douglas A. Howard, “Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of ‘Decline’ of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of Asian History* 22, no. 1 (1988): 52-77.

42. E-mail interview with Michelle Menard; e-mail interview with Paul Murphy.

# Ethnohistory

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