



## History and Games

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## Reminder

Gameplay leader sign-up.

Senet: 3 slots  
Chess: 4 slots  
Faro: 5 slots  
Pokemon: 0 slots

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## Research Paper

One game claimed: Monopoly

Schedule:

- 1/16: pick game
- 1/30: preliminary bibliography
- 2/11: game analysis
- 2/20: annotated bibliography
- 2/27: thesis statement
- 3/19: final paper

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## What is History?

“Only to say how it really was.”

Leopold von Ranke, 19<sup>th</sup> century

- objective history vs polemical history
- from true *stories* to *true* stories
- what is truth?
- importance of careful analysis of evidence

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## The 5 Cs (Andrews and Burke)

- Change
  - change over time: what is different, what is the same?
- Context
  - what is the context in which events takes place? how does this influence the interpretation of events?
- Causality
  - what are causal relations between events? What are primary/secondary causes?
- Contingency
  - how does knowing the outcome influence our view of events? what are the unrealized possibilities in historical situations?
- Complexity
  - avoiding simplistic explanations, how to construct a coherent story in the absence of complete evidence?

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## “Traditional” history

- stories about political history:
  - states, rulers, battles, treaties; names, dates
- change: large-scale political changes
- context: states, societies, civilizations
- causality: great men
- the Grand Narrative (little room for contingency and complexity)

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## Others

- marxist history
  - social and economic point of view
- cultural history
  - stories about cultural concepts: morals, ideas, art, codes of conduct
- intellectual history
  - schools of thought
- technological history
- others: feminist theory,

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Florida House Bill 7087 on May 26, 2006, signed into law by Governor JEB Bush on June 5, 2006

"American history shall be viewed as factual, not as constructed, shall be viewed as knowable, teachable, and testable, and shall be defined as the creation of a new nation based largely on the universal principles stated in the Declaration of Independence."

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## How about us?

- no great men
- no battles and treaties
- few scholarly texts on games before 20<sup>th</sup> century
- cultural history

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## Questions

- context
  - society at the time; who played the game, how was it played, where was it played, in what situations?
- appeal
  - why was the game successful, fun, interesting, challenging, engaging?
- interpretation
  - what is the cultural significance of the game? what does the games success reveal about the society that produced and played it (e.g. Postman)

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## Approach

to tell a story

- gather evidence (sources)
- analyze and interpret sources
- synthesize results (tell the story)

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## Sources

- physical evidence
  - relics: artifacts used or created in the past
    - game pieces, boards, ...
  - remains: bodies and associated evidence
- testimony
  - oral and written evidence
    - writings about games, in which games are mentioned, images

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### Sources

- created by a particular individual
  - in a particular context
  - with a particular purpose
  - might have been intended for posterity
  - might not have been
- might require interpretation

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### Chatrang-Namak

- written around 800
- surviving manuscript from 1323
- reports how chess was brought from Persia to India
- tells how backgammon (nard) was invented as a response
  - however, we know that backgammon is older, so story is not literally true

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### Sources

- Primary source
  - created at the time of event
  - created people close to event
- Secondary source
  - summary or response to other sources
  - often written by historians

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## Sources

- First-hand
  - diaries, memoirs, oral reports, interviews, photographs, films
- Second-hand
  - newspapers, fictional accounts, trial records

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## Credibility

- purpose/intent of writer?
  - disinterested writer
  - political writer
  - normative account (gambling)



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## Alphonso Manuscript (Spain, 1251-1282)



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**Alphonso Manuscript (Spain, 1251-1282)**



Contains 89 chess problems  
What questions to ask?  
What is the point of view of the source?

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**Pieter Bruegel the Elder; Children's Games (1559-1560)**



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**Pieter Bruegel the Elder; Children's Games (1559-1560)**



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## Research Project Summary

- Three primary sources
  - game counts as one
  - manuscripts, images, artifacts
- sufficient number of secondary sources to complete paper
  - only one www source (e.g. wikipedia)
  - journal articles, books
- preliminary bibliography
  - due 1/30
  - 3 primary sources
  - 3 secondary sources

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## Preliminary Bibliography

- primary sources
  - game counts
  - reference
    - "Checkered Game of Life", 1860 (as cited in Augustyn , Frederyck J. (2004) Dictionary of Toys and Games in American Popular Culture. New York : Haworth Reference Press.)
- secondary source
  - source of rules counts (Parlett, Bell, patent, ...)

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