

During my tenure at Old Dominion University I have learned a great many things and I wanted my Electronic Portfolio to reflect as many of those skills as possible. I am majoring in Game Studies and design, which is a very interdisciplinary field of study as it incorporates both technical and creative skills. I feel that the skillsets that I have both gained and expanded upon are great contributors to my overall career readiness, I have a strong understanding of the various aspects of the Game Design and development field and I am capable of contributing my skills to organizations and personal passion projects alike.

For my electronic portfolio the three skills I selected to represent myself are not just the ones I feel are strongest but also the ones that I enjoy using and developing the most. Those skills are Creative Writing, 3D Modeling & Art, and Game Design and Rhetoric. These skills spawned from the pursuit of things that I actually enjoy, the things that I feel like I could live a fulfilling life if I were able to find a career in which I could make the most out of these skills. I have a passion for video games and the stories that they are capable of telling, and my goal in life is to create games that immerse people in amazing worlds and inspire them to make the most of their lives, and thus a career in that very field is what I have chosen to dedicate my life to.

The first skill I will discuss is Creative Writing. I have enjoyed writing stories and creating worlds long before I made it to college, so I feel that this skill is the one I would be most willing to show to people as it is now. The first artifact I used to demonstrate this skill is a short story I was tasked to write as an assignment in my Writing for Games class. I have titled the story, "*Misfortune*" as it is about three pirates who wash ashore a deserted island after their ship is destroyed by a terrible storm that ends with a

mysterious cosmic twist. The assignment had no restrictions on what I could write or how long it had to be, so I ended up with nine pages of raw creativity. I became very proud of my work with this artifact as I feel the total freedom I was granted in the creation of it allowed me to let my writing skills run loose. For a career in the Game Development field the ability to write an original story is a valuable one that people often overlook in favor of proper coding skills, but it is valued by those within the industry and in many cases it is equally if not more valuable than technical skills. In the book, "Game Writing: Narrative Skills for Videogames" by numerous authors including Chris Bateman and Richard Boon, Boon says in his chapter that, "As such, capable storytellers are required to develop the narrative language of the medium with the goal of expressing meaningful, entertaining stories. (Boon et al., pg.45, 2007)"

The next artifact I have featured under my Creative Writing section is a link to my [itch.io](https://itch.io) page where the game "Distant Planet" is hosted. I could have used this as an artifact for my Game Design and Rhetoric skill, but I felt it best suited the creative writing skill as the gameplay is rather bare-bones given its status as a proof of concept rather than a full demo, but I feel that the story I created for it is demonstrative of my writing ability. *Distant Planet* was created as part of an assignment for, Ironically, a class called Game Design and Rhetoric in which I was tasked to create a small game that argued a belief or position. The story of *Distant Planet* is about a colony on, as the title suggests, a planet in the far reaches of space and is told from the perspective of the optimistic Jack who must comfort his companions after receiving news that Planet Earth was caught in the crossfire of a war with an alien civilization and was destroyed. Each character has a unique personality and the interaction to be had with each one is meant

to represent how different people deal with grief in different ways, some are sad but pushing onwards, some act like nothing has changed, some break down in tears, and some drown their sorrows in the bottle. This more character-oriented approach to storytelling is important for stories in games, and author Michael Breault says, “Game writers must learn to focus on the characters in their games’ stories, rather than the events, because characters are what truly interest people. People care less about events than how characters react and change in response. (Breault, 2020)” Thus *Distant Planet* demonstrates my ability to create unique characters that immerse the player in the world by offering them different reactions to events, and as such the value of my skills in writing a story for video games.

The third artifact under the creative writing section is a compilation of two assignments that I have done for a Narrative Worldbuilding Class that I am currently taking as of the writing of this reflection. These two assignments are both related to the fictional world that I have been creating as part of the class, one being a world map and the other being a short description of three races found in this world. I chose these assignments as they demonstrate my ability to give additional details to the stories that I write. Creating various regions for a world map can be challenging, especially in a fantasy/sci-fi setting since every different race has to interact with the environments in the same way, meaning that there has to be some reason that the alien race that lives underground cannot enter the volcano region just like everyone else. Coming up with unique cultures for alien civilizations is fun since anything is possible under the umbrella of sci-fi and hyper-advanced technology, but challenging in actually being unique and not making them too similar to humans.

The second skill I will discuss is Game Design and Rhetoric. This skill has a rather broad scope and most of my assignments have contributed to it, but the three I chose to represent the skill in the portfolio are what I feel most proud of in terms of demonstrating my originality with design and ability to understand and analyze rhetoric.

The first artifact is a slideshow that acts as a pitch deck for a game demo I created called "*Crackout Catastrophe*." The game itself was made in my freshman year as part of a class contest which I won, and the pitch deck was made for a Digital Writing class in junior year. *Crackout Catastrophe* was made in RPG Maker MV, a simple and easy to use engine, and the game is similar to classic fantasy RPG games like *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* with a fantastical setting and turn-based combat but with a comedic twist of featuring numerous iconic game characters parodied as cats.

Entertainment value is a very important aspect of video games, it tends to not matter how incredible the story is if the gameplay is as boring as watching grass grow. One article from Dr Mata Haggis titled, "Video Games and the value of entertainment" states in relation to the entertainment provided by video games that, "The ability to engage with the world playfully is a critical function of a healthy individual(Haggis, 2016)" and the entertainment value provided by *Crackout Catastrophe* with how it blends classic gameplay styles with humor and parody undoubtedly contributed to my first-place win, as it appeals to the human desire for something fun and silly.

The second artifact is another game I made for an assignment in a Game Mechanics class with Dr. Moberly, though instead of running digitally on a computer it is a simple board game made from posterboard and cardstock. The game is called *Rhythm of Steel* and it is a grid-based tactical battle simulator with rock-paper-scissors

mechanics, for example, each player has red, blue, green, and grey units that each have different qualities pertaining to how they move and what pieces they can take, red beats green, green beats blue, blue beats red, and grey beats and can be beaten by anything but have limited movement and attack from an extra space away. This design philosophy centering around rock-paper-scissors mechanics is common amongst strategy games, but my iteration opts for a more analog and symmetrical approach, with players having equal numbers of pieces, spaces with different colors act as terrain that can be used to an advantage, and there is absolutely no random chance. What I learned from making this game is the importance of rules in the design process.

The third artifact is not a game I made or contributed to but a video essay analysis of one of my personal favorite video games, Xenoblade Chronicles 3. I decided to include the video in the portfolio because the creation of it had me apply the things I had learned in class to something I was already familiar with to look at it from a completely different viewpoint. The class was Game Design and Rhetoric, and the primary definition of rhetoric as applied to game design is how a game uses various mechanics and gameplay elements to argue its moral belief and tell its story. Xenoblade Chronicles 3 is a game about an eternal war and the small group of people from both sides of the conflict coming together to fight against those in power perpetuating the war. An article by Ian Bogost called "The Rhetoric of Video games" argues that "video games do not simply distract or entertain with empty, meaningless content. Rather, video games can make claims about the world. But when they do so, they do it not with oral speech, nor in writing, nor even with images. Rather, video games make argument with processes.(Bogost, 2008)" In my video essay I analyzed how Xenoblade

Chronicles 3 uses the processes of its gameplay loop of adventuring through the world liberating the people so that they may join the cause, thus arguing the game's position against war and advocacy of unity.

The third and final skill is Art & 3D modeling. Originally, I was only going to list 3D modeling skills but ultimately decided to include some examples of my Art skills to show a diverse skill set and make the portfolio more interesting. The first artifact is a collection of some projects from the 3D modeling class I took, the ones I chose to put in the portfolio are the ones I felt were most complex and required me to learn how to properly use the software to achieve the desired effect, for example, creating the shape the expo marker's cap was a major learning process given its irregularity.

Next is a collage of torn magazines and construction paper meant to recreate the painting, "Merchant ship sailing in full moonlight" made in 1890 by James G. Tyler. The painting is currently on display at Barry Art Museum. What I learned from creating it was how to make use of color and texture to communicate meaning visually.

The final artifact is a gouache painting of a meteor with small pieces of black and grey cardboard meant to represent the greyscale spectrum. This artifact demonstrates my ability to portray shape and texture without reliance on color with use of darker shades around the edges and softer greys in the middle as the fire surrounding the meteor fluctuates.

The relevance of this skill stems from the importance of art direction in games, as a game holding a unique visual identity can be as important as its story or gameplay, especially as in recent years big name developers opting for more interesting and artful visuals over realism has become more common. Author Chris Solarski states in the

book, "Drawing Basics and Video Game Art: Classic to Cutting-Edge Art Techniques for winning video game design" Solarski discusses various drawing techniques and how they contribute to creating art for video games, stating, "The straightforward quality of the drawing medium will allow you to easily identify skills that need improving and will help you develop a higher level of dexterity and understanding of artistic principles when creating artwork for video games(Solarski, pg. 12, 2012)." This shows that my drawing skills contribute to the multidisciplinary of my degree and allows me to offer a more diverse and flexible set of skills.

The development of Video Games is a multidisciplinary field, and over the course of my college career I have taken a broad range of classes to cultivate an equally broad set of interdisciplinary skills. From writing skills to make meaningful and interactive stories, the ability to implement design philosophies both original and iterative, and an understanding of rhetoric and visual arts to practical modeling and programming skills my portfolio is meant to demonstrate all of my skills and what I can contribute in a professional environment.

### Works Cited

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