

Toward Leveling the Playing Grounds: Anti-Racism, Decolonization, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (ADE) for Games Research and Creation

Creating meaningful opportunities for anti-racism, decolonization, equity, diversity, and inclusion in games research and creation requires active knowledge sharing and community-building. The last decade has witnessed the emergence of critical game studies and critical games user experience research, coinciding with the proliferation of initiatives advancing EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) in institutions of higher education in the last five years. But the critical tools, ways of thinking, and best practices for incorporating anti-racist, decolonial, and EDI frameworks are not being promoted and circulated in parallel to the discourses valorizing these approaches. Drawing on a year-long speaker and workshop series focused on applying cutting-edge research towards actionable and equitable change, this workshop synthesizes insights from leading voices from equity-deserving groups working in games research and/or creation to help games researchers, educators, makers, and students adopt equity-oriented principles and practices. Participants will come to the workshop with an ongoing or upcoming project in mind and leave with an ADE plan to embed anti-racism, decolonization, and EDI into the research questions, execution of project (including methodologies and organization of the lab or team), and knowledge dissemination strategy.

Content

This 4 hour workshop will feature seminar style presentations, large group discussion, and small group discussion. Participants will 1. hear reports on A. established, emerging, and overlooked lines of ADE-oriented inquiry in games scholarship, B. research and scholarship on white, heteropatriarchal presumptions and biases in games and play research, and C. best practices and new avenues for embedding ADE values and practices in research. Participants will also 2. engage in discussion facilitated by workshop leaders A. about how ADE is and/or is not taken up in their subfields and the disciplines in which they were trained, B. to collaboratively develop and generate feedback on select sample ADE plans, and C. in breakout groups to create ADE plans for each participant before reporting their plans to the large group for further feedback from other participants and workshop leaders.

Sample Schedule

- 1:00 Welcome, Introductions, and Overview
- 1:20 Seminar on established, emerging, and overlooked lines of ADE-oriented inquiry in games scholarship
- 1:50 Discussion of how ADE is and/or is not taken up in participants' subfields and the disciplines in which they were trained
- 2: 20 Bio Break
- 2:30 Seminar on research and scholarship on white, heteropatriarchal presumptions and biases in games and play research
- 2:50 Discussion to collaboratively develop and generate feedback on select sample ADE plans
- 3:20 Seminar on best practices and new avenues for embedding ADE values and practices in research.
- 3:40 Bio Break
- 3:50 Discussion in breakout groups to create ADE plans for each participant
- 4:20 Reporting ADE plans for feedback from the large group and workshop leaders

Participants

The workshop is for games user researchers, game studies scholars, and game creators at any career stage, including those who do not yet but would like to incorporate ADE principles and practices in their work as well as those who would like to expand their knowledge and capacities in this area. It will accommodate up to 30 participants, who will be invited to sign-up on a first-come basis through a google form that will also collect data about their professional, personal, and scholarly experience with ADE issues. The form will ask participants to provide a description (no more than 200 words) of the project they will develop in the workshop, which will allow the organizers to select 2-3 samples for the large group to collaboratively develop and to determine the composition of the breakout groups.

Workshop Leaders

Dr. Kishonna L. Gray (she/her) is an Associate Professor in Writing, Rhetoric, & Digital Studies and Africana Studies at the University of Kentucky. She is an interdisciplinary, intersectional, digital media scholar whose areas of research include identity, performance and online environments, embodied deviance, cultural production, video games, and Black Cyberfeminism. Dr. Gray is the author of *Intersectional Tech: Black Users in Digital Gaming* (LSU Press, 2020). She is also the author of *Race, Gender, & Deviance in Xbox Live* (Routledge, 2014), and the co-editor of two volumes on culture and gaming: *Feminism in Play* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2018) and *Woke Gaming* (University of Washington Press, 2018). Dr. Gray has published in a variety of outlets across disciplines and has also featured in public outlets such as The Guardian, The Telegraph, and The New York Times.

Dr. Gerald Voorhees (he/him) is Associate Professor in the Department Communication Arts at the University of Waterloo. He is a mixed race Asian-American settler in Canada researching games and new media as sites for the construction and contestation of identity and culture, focusing on questions about multiculturalism and cultural difference, technology and masculinities, and agency in games and games research. Dr. Voorhees has published in leading communication, media, and game studies journals and has edited four books: *Masculinities in Play* (Palgrave MacMillan 2018), *Feminism in Play* (Palgrave MacMillan 2018), *Dungeons, Dragons, and Digital Denizens: Digital Role-playing Games* (Continuum 2012), and *Guns, Grenades, and Grunts: First Person Shooter Games* (Continuum 2012). Gerald co-edits Bloomsbury's Approaches to Game Studies book series.