

“Rhetorical Peaks: Gaming in the Writing Classroom” Abstract

Gaming has been increasingly incorporated as a pedagogical tool in college rhetoric and writing classrooms. From Massive Multiplayer Online Role-playing Games such as World of Warcraft to Alternate Reality Games, instructors have found useful and inventive ways to help students appreciate how the landscape of rhetoric and writing changes in new – often digital and virtual – worlds and literacies. At the University of Texas at Austin, the Computer Writing and Research Lab has been developing a game specifically designed to help students with introductory rhetorical concepts and to broaden their writing skills with reference to digital environments. We have successfully integrated *Rhetorical Peaks* into first-year classes and are continuing to develop the game.

At the MLA Roundtable, we will demonstrate two versions of *Rhetorical Peaks*. In the Flash version, students are confronted with the mysterious death of Lisa Sophist, the best speaker in the town of Rhetorical Peaks. They have the opportunity to meet a few of the town’s citizens, and the information garnered from these interviews allows the students to practice a number of rhetorical skills, from making arguments to analyzing various rhetorical appeals. The Second Life version is still being developed, but we will demonstrate how we plan to incorporate it into a class this spring. This virtual environment will allow students to engage the world of Rhetorical Peaks in a more immersive and interactive fashion by developing their own characters within the game, role-playing interactions within the broader community, and staging a trial. Through this, we hope to increase students’ awareness of their own rhetorical choices and various writing endeavors in the virtual worlds that are already shaping their lives.



