###### English 2770 Setting Analysis Essay

Due: (See Syllabus)

Worth 50 Points

Length: 5-6 full pages

**Description:**

As we have read, for many games, world-building is everything. What would *Myst* be without its empty, mysterious temples? How would *Red Dead Redemption 2* mourn the loss of the pre-industrial era without its dusty trails and singing coyotes? Setting is as much a defining feature of many games as the characters themselves.

For this essay, we are going to use comparative technique to investigate some shared aspects of what makes these settings tick. **As such, this essay assignment is a *5-6 full page* comparative essay that examines how a particular setting type is explored across three different games.** This could be, for instance, the way “the shop” is depicted in *Resident Evil 4*, *Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, and *Rise of the Tomb Raider*. Or it could be the way outer space is defined in *Dead Space*, *Mass Effect 2*, and *No Man’s Sky*. Write about the games that you play. The task is to identify this *particular* setting type, dig into how a few specific games bring that setting to life, and come to a larger understanding about the role that setting may play in the game experience. How does that setting type offer affordances and constraints to matters like representation (race, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.), narrative potential, cultural or societal issues, or a particular philosophical/rhetorical issue?

**Process Suggestions:**

* As with all of our assignments, you will want to prepare by spending time in the games themselves. If this is not possible for whatever reason, then you may study commentary-free playthrough videos on YouTube for the most objective access.
* In identifying aspects of the setting, you will benefit from looking for the nuanced and unexpected. More obvious aspects of setting, like cities having lots of buildings, are going to lend themselves to less engaging analysis than the subtle sounds of clinking coins in auction houses, for example.
* Remember that setting consists of visual, auditory, and tactile experiences for the player. Try to avoid limiting your focus to just one of those categories to find the most complete picture. The way in which the player can (or must) interact with that setting through particular button presses or cutscenes, for example, could be something worth exploring.
* Avoid focusing too much on one game at the cost of the others. For a proper comparative approach, the essay should treat the three games in relatively equal measure.

**Suggested Format for the Essay:**

* Opens with a lead-in introduction and ends with a big-picture conclusion (i.e. a thesis)
* Identifies select qualities of the chosen game setting
* Describes those qualities using objective detail
* Compares the way in which those qualities manifest in the chosen games, *and why that is important (to your overarching thesis*)
* Employs logical progression of ideas and presents them in a coherent fashion.
* Makes appropriate use of sentence structure, word choice, grammar, spelling, and punctuation that enables clear and effective communication.
* Meets the minimum page length requirements without being more than 1 page over the page limit

**RUBRIC**

*This assignment is worth 50 points total. The below categories are general ranges for scoring. Depending on where a particular essay falls within a particular category will result in a +/- grade, in order to give you a more specific sense of the essay’s success.*

**An ‘A’ paper (90-100 points)** is 5-6 full pages which utilizes proper formatting and strong stylistic polish. The essay has an engaging opening, establishing the setting to be explored and potentially the games to be used, if appropriate. The body of the essay examines the presentation of that setting through comparative analysis, drawing on specific examples from each game and appropriate use of secondary sources. In the end, the essay connects its findings to a larger conversation about the setting’s role, both in the games themselves and the player experience.

**A ‘B’ paper (80-89 points)** is a solid essay that does much of what an ‘A’ paper does, but without the same level of depth, consistency, and polish. It may suffer from balance issues, letting one game’s focus overshadow the inclusion of the others, or not push as much as it could have into the complexities of its discoveries. Alternatively, it may be strong in terms of content, but not always express its ideas in a clear, sophisticated way.

**A ‘C’ paper (70-79 points)** is a reasonable comparative analysis. While it addresses the assignment prompt accurately, the paper may have issues with organization, unpack its ideas in a limited fashion, and/or have difficulties controlling its comparative approach. Such a paper may also suffer from frequent stylistic errors or run short, as a result of insufficient development.

**A ‘D’ paper (60-69 points)** tends to suffer from a presentation of a setting without any interpretation, or not employing enough primary sources to have a comparative discussion. Such a paper therefore often runs short and may also have serious presentation issues in terms of grammar, spelling, or tone.

**Below that**, a paper which completes less than 60% of the required length or fails to meet even the basic assignment requirements will receive between 1 and 59 points, depending on the success of the existing material. Most often, these kinds of papers occur due to time management issues and can be avoided by proper planning.