Reflections on the Gamification of a Seminar-Style Psychology Course

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Gamification Features

- Experience points and levels
- Leaderboards and level-up notifications
- Quests
- Achievement badges
- Avatar creation
- Polyhedral dice (d20s)

XP and Levels

Level	XP required to reach level	Final Grade
Level 1	0	
Level 2	15	
Level 3	50	
Level 4	100	
Level 5	160	F
Level 6	230	
Level 7	310	
Level 8	400	
Level 9	500	
Level 10	600	D-
Level 11	630	D
Level 12	670	D+
Level 13	700	C-
Level 14	730	C
Level 15	770	C+
Level 16	800	B-
Level 17	830	B
Level 18	870	B+
Level 19	900	A-
Level 20	930	A
Level 21 (Epic Adventurer)	970	A
Level 22 (Mythic Hero)	1,000	A

+ Leaderboard

XP **Leaderboard** (as of May 6th, 2014*)

| Rank	TOTAL XP	Level	XP Needed to Level Up
1	742	14	28
2	740	14	30
3	730	14	40
4	716	13	14
5	679	12	21
6	662	11	8
7	661	11	9
8	641	11	29
9	640	11	30
10	635	11	35
11	633	11	37
12	629	10	1
13	614	10	16
14	593	9	7
15t	590	9	10
15t	590	9	10

Level-Up Notification
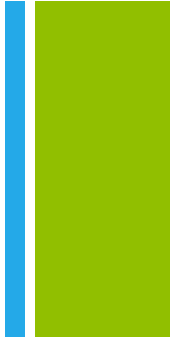
From: **Douglas C Maynard**

Dear Corey -

Congratulations! You've just leveled up in the Psych of Gaming seminar. **You have reached Level 9**, and need <u>just 88 XP to get to Level 10</u>.

Sincerely,
~Doug

+ Quests
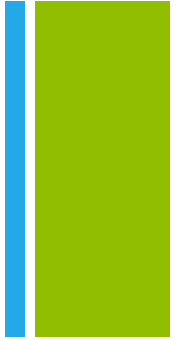
In-Class Quests

- **Attend class (5 XP per class period).** This is for being in class for the entire duration (seated by the time attendance is taken and staying until 2:55pm). Students who arrive late or leave early may earn up to 3 XP, depending upon the amount of class time missed.

- **Participate in class discussion (10 XP per class period).** Each week, you can earn XP by actively participating in class discussions. The amount of XP you earn in a particular class depends upon both the quantity and quality of your participation, but you will earn at least 2 XP for any participation.

- **Lead a class discussion on a particular reading (10 XP per reading).** At various times during the semester (determined randomly), you will also get the opportunity to lead the class in discussing a particular reading that was assigned for the week. Completing this quest will earn you between 5 and 10 XP, depending upon how you do.

+ Quests

Writing Quests

- **Create your course avatar (20 XP).** Each student will create an avatar to represent them during the semester. This includes a name, an image (which you can create yourself, or can be taken from the Internet or other source if properly cited), and a one-page description of the avatar's back-story and up to one page.
- **Complete a writing quest (100 XP each).** During the first half of the semester, you will complete two short (3-5 page) written assignments related to the course content.
- **Complete the EPIC writing quest.** The most important project for the course is the development of a significant paper directly relevant to the psychology of gaming. There are many approaches to this, including (a) a conceptual or theoretical paper exploring a particular topic in depth, (b) a proposal for an actual research study on gaming, or (c) an analysis of a particular game or gaming culture. Below is the breakdown of maximum XP that you can gain from each phase of the quest.
    - **One page proposal (50 XP)**
   - **First full draft (150 XP)**
    - **Final version (250 XP)**

+ Quests

Team Quest

- **Review the violent video games literature (100 XP).** We will attempt to gain insight into the common supposition that violent video games have negative effects on those that play them (e.g., aggressive behavior, desensitization to real violence). The class will explore the literature on this topic together and present their findings on April 2nd. The amount of XP earned will be determined by performance during the presentation as well as a peer review process.

Achievement Badges

AVATAR
TRAILBLAZER

GUEST
MANAGEMENT
SPECIALIST
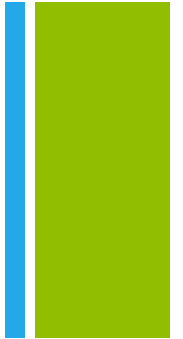
+ Successes

- Quests ➜ XP ➜ Leveling up
  - Greater acceptance of high standards

- Leaderboard and level-up notifications
  - *"I like the comparing of XP to other classmates. It allows me to see where other people stand in the class and adds more motivation to do well."*
  - *"I enjoy getting the email – it prompts me to check out where I am and what more I could be doing… everyone likes to hear that they've leveled up."*

- Weekly knowledge quests (i.e., quizzes) with "honesty box"

# + Challenges
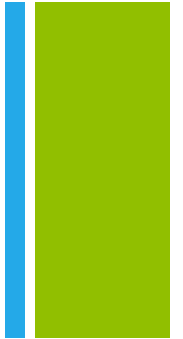
- **Unpopular Quests** – e.g., discussion leader

- **Distribution of Quests/XP/Levels** over the semester
  - *"It seems as though reaching a higher level and grade is very difficult based on the scaling between levels, regardless of if this is the case."*
  - *"I think there should be more opportunities to gain XP because it takes a long time to get out of the failing range."*

- **Underdeveloped or Disconnected Features**
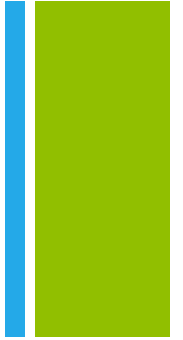 - Avatars, d20s, achievement badges

Recommendations
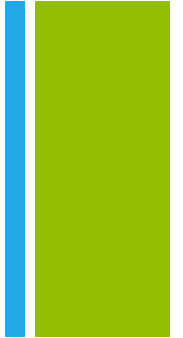
- Use gamification features to support content and learning objectives

- Plan for more time than you think you need

- Carefully consider timing of quests and level structure

- Check in with students regularly!

References & Acknowledgements

- Nicholson, S. (2013, June). Exploring gamification techniques for classroom management. Paper presented at Games +Learning+Society 9.0, Madison, WI.

- Sheldon, L. (2012). *The multiplayer classroom: Designing coursework as a game.* Boston, MA: Cengage Learning

Thank you to my students for their enthusiasm and honesty!