

AN EXPLORATION OF VIDEO GAMES ON INFORMATION SCIENCE AND THE  
MESSAGES THEY CAN CONVEY

By

ANTONIO SAMUEL GALINDO

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Approved by:

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Drew Castalia

Department of Social & Behavioral Sciences

## **Abstract**

The evolution of video games from their humble beginnings as simple arcade games to the current global phenomenon that they are today has been a remarkable development over the last few decades. With the economic impact and pop culture influence that video games have had, there is no denying the widespread growth and success that they have experienced over the last few decades. As time has passed, they have also become far more advanced and intricate providing many more possibilities to portray various ideas and creative expressions. Seeing how video games have emerged as a popular form of entertainment, they have attracted the attention of artists and scholars alike as a potential medium for conveying information and messages. This honors thesis project explores the potential of video games through the use of information science to see how they can be utilized to convey messages and ideas. To this end, a small-scale video game was created as the main focus of this project. The game revolves around ideas related to secretive military operations and government conspiracies in a time of global conflict which provides a way to subvert the perception of players. It puts them in a situation where the line between what is real and what is not is blurred and players must think for themselves to find a way to uncover the truth.

## Artist Statement

For this honors thesis project, I chose to create a small-scale text-based video game that tells a story that can change based on player decisions. The game is of a more artistic and narrative-focused design that aims to convey certain ideas related to secretive military operations, government conspiracies, and the way we are made to perceive information. This is a game that falls in the genre of science fiction, and it is titled *The Combat Simulator Program*. Twine is the development program that was used to create this game.

The main premise of the game is that it is set on Earth in the future during a time of war. The player takes on the role of new recruit in the armed forces who is going through combat training at a secret base and is taking part in a specially designed combat simulator program that has been developed by the military. The training puts the player through various computer-generated combat scenarios where they will have to make certain decisions on how to approach these situations. However, while this is going on not all is as it seems to be at the base and there could be more to the program than you are led to believe. It is left up to the player to decide if they want to investigate things further or leave things as they are. The choices that players make throughout the game can end up leading them down different paths and experiencing alternative series of events. The game has four possible endings.

My goal in creating a game such as this was to create a compelling game experience that drives players to question the things that they are presented with and to think for themselves about how they should approach the situations and choices they are presented with. In many ways, this game can be seen as a commentary on how people view authority and how in many cases information presented to us by authority figures can be taken at face value without further consideration. People who are told what to do and how to think and agree to go along with that tend to lack agency and the will to think for themselves. The setting and premise of this game provide players with a way to question their surroundings and rethink their position in the world around them.

## Final Reflection

In this project, I would say that I was able to achieve my goal of creating a compelling game experience that drives players to investigate it further. I have had a great fondness for the medium of video games for many years and having the opportunity to create one of my own while expressing my own creative vision was a great experience. However, there are other things that I wanted to implement or explore in greater detail with this project that I, unfortunately, was not able to get to before the final deadline.

For instance, something that I had originally planned to do as a part of this project was to have many people play the game and later provide their input and feedback on how they felt the experience was for them. I would have liked to take this information and further analyze it to see how the game was received. It is certainly possible that various aspects of the game could have been altered, adjusted, or improved based on player feedback if I had been able to reach that stage. When it comes to the game itself there are certain features that I would have liked to implement. Elements such as sound effects and image visuals would have been nice additions to make to the game. I would have also liked to make further adjustments to the text design and layout of the project as well.

Part of the reason I could not get to these aspects of the project relates to some of the setbacks I experienced in my time developing the game. There were times when I

fell ill and that set back my work progress by a fair amount. In the beginning, it also took a fair amount of time for me to fully establish the ideas I wanted to focus on in the game and how I would present everything. The scope of the game did end up being slightly larger than I had originally considered, which meant it needed more time to develop but this is something that turned out to be fairly beneficial in the end. Considering this project as a whole this was the first time, I had developed a game of this size and by myself as well. It was certainly a challenge at times, but I took the project in stride and I remained determined to see it through to the end, doing the best I could in the time provided to me.

Overall, I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work on a project such as this for my honors thesis. It was a creative endeavor in which I was able to utilize one of my favorite artistic mediums to create a video game of my own. Through this experience, I was able to further explore the video game development process and learn more about the ways in which video games can be created through various engines and programs. Its project was a highly informative and enriching experience, and I was glad to have had the chance to take part in it. I am sure that the lessons and skills I have learned from this will help me in achieving my goals for the future.

## **The Game**

I have published this game project on itch.io. If you would like to try it out here is a link to the game page.

<https://nocits.itch.io/the-combat-simulator-program>