In recent years, the professional psychiatric community has examined the compulsive playing behavior of some video game enthusiasts, in an effort to determine whether their social isolation and intense focus upon fantasy worlds constitutes an actual addiction. This debate is still ongoing, but it is generally recognized that excessive indulgence in video games may be associated with other mental disorders, such as depression or social anxiety. Among the symptoms associated with this behavior are:

- Persistent thoughts of video game playing, to the point of preoccupation.
- Use of video games to escape problems or to relieve a bad mood.
- Need for increased time spent playing in order to achieve satisfaction.
- Inability to control, stop, or diminish one’s video game playing.
- Restlessness or irritability when prevented from playing.
- Lying to friends or family about the extent to which one plays.

Consider the following issues related to this topic:

- Have you experienced or observed these symptoms with respect to video game playing? Do you interpret such behavior as an indication of a mental disorder? Are there certain personality types that seem to be more prone to video game overindulgence?
- Video game addiction has been blamed for many societal ills, from the antisocial behavior of today's youth to increased violence among teens. Are these legitimate claims or, as the game industry often suggests, are society's problems systemic and too complicated for such simplistic efforts to blame video games?
- What aspects of games make them addictive? Are certain types of games (e.g., massively multiplayer on-line role-playing games) particularly addictive?

All students should come to class on Tuesday, October 23, 2007, prepared to discuss these issues. The two panel members listed above will be expected to lead this discussion. Each panel member should:

- Consider each issue thoroughly, preparing specific examples to support the opinions that will be expressed during the discussion.
- Discuss the issues with other panel members, determining who will be the principal discussion leader on each issue.
- Prepare some brief opening remarks about the issues, as a means to prompt discussion about them.