One major criticism of video games is the perceived stereotyping that takes place in many games, with violent images of black and Latino youths committing street crimes and women portrayed as sexual objects or helpless victims. Some of the most popular games of recent years (e.g., the Grand Theft Auto series, BMX XXX) have been accused of reveling in such racial and gender stereotypes and contributing to an overall desensitization of the impressionable young people who are exposed to such images.

Consider the following issues related to this topic:

- Game developers frequently respond to accusations concerning stereotypes in games by saying that the games are a reflection of society, not an effort to propagate stereotypes. By portraying all Asians as martial artists, all Arabs as terrorists, all Italians as mobsters, etc., many game industry representatives claim that the games merely reflect the cultural standards of the day.

- The gaming population has become much more diversified in recent years. For example, women now account for over one-third of that population. Will such increases result in a corresponding increase in characters that reflect more positively on women and racial minorities?

- The vast majority of game developers in the United States are white males. To what extent can such a non-diverse group be expected to produce game content that is devoid of racial and gender stereotypes?

All students should come to class on Tuesday, October 30, 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.