

# 10 CLASH OF REALITIES

10th International Conference on the Art, Technology and Theory of Digital Games

November 19-21, 2019 | Cologne Game Lab, TH-Köln



## PLAY, GAMES, MENTAL HEALTH

The Young Academics Workshop at the Clash of Realities 2019

Tuesday, November 19, 2019

**Guest Scholar:** Isabela Granic (Radboud University, GEMH lab)

**Committee:** Su-Jin Song (CGL), Michael S. Debus (ITU), Curtis Maughan (Vanderbilt), Federico Alvarez Igarzábal (IGPP)

Organized by the Cologne Game Lab, TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences (Germany) in cooperation with IT University of Copenhagen (Denmark), Vanderbilt University (USA), and the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP, Germany).

## CALL FOR PAPERS

This year, the Young Academics Workshop will explore the connection between mental health and the act of play, whether it is free or structured by rules. We want to discuss claims that play and games, or a lack thereof, can have a significant impact on our psychological well-being; the potential of play to treat psychopathologies; and the numerous technical and artistic ways in which play can represent or reflect a spectrum of psychological states, among other topics.

Video games tend to be a matter of social concern, especially among parents and educators who often pose questions like: Are kids gaming too much? How much is too much? What consequences can excessive gaming have on an individual's development? Current claims about video game addiction and related disorders notwithstanding, research on the effects of video games on mental health is still inconclusive. Despite this persisting gap in our knowledge, the medium is often blamed for making players antisocial, addicted, or depressed. At the same time, arguments for the possible benefits of gaming are put forward with lesser frequency. This might come as a surprise when we consider that many contemporary titles deal directly with mental health issues, such as depression (*Depression Quest*), grief (*That Dragon, Cancer*), and psychosis (*Hellblade Senua's Sacrifice*).

The Young Academics Workshop's aim in 2019 is to discuss mental health and play from a wide range of perspectives. Since video games are not an isolated phenomenon, the

workshop will frame the issue broadly—including free play, and both analog and digital games—while paying attention to the ways in which these activities, or an absence thereof, might impact mental health.

We are happy to announce that Isabela Granic—Professor and Chair of the Developmental Psychopathology department at Radboud University (the Netherlands) and director of the GEMH (Games for Emotion and Mental Health) Lab—will be joining this year’s workshop. Granic’s groundbreaking work integrates psychological research with game design to create games to treat and study psychopathologies such as depression and anxiety. With her unique expertise, Granic will accompany us in a day of stimulating discussion and close the workshop with a talk.

Possible submission topics **might include**, but are **not limited to**:

- The impact of play in child and adolescent development
- Video games and addiction
- Gamification of mental health treatments
- Digital and analog games as therapy
- Representations of mental disorders in games and play
- Game design as a way to cope with mental or emotional strain

We welcome contributions from scholars from all academic fields and disciplines (psychology, media studies, art history, philosophy, neuroscience, play and game studies, etc.) and from game developers and game development students (future game artists, game designers, game programmers, and all other students learning to make games). As this is a Young Academics Workshop, we invite all those who have recently entered the academic world, including Bachelor, Master, and PhD students, as well as Postdocs.

Applicants should focus on the relationship between play, games, and mental health from the unique perspective of their home discipline.

Participants will hold 15-minute presentations followed by 15 minutes of discussion.

Applicants should submit abstracts (no longer than 300 words) along with a bibliography/ludography to [youngacademics@clashofrealities.com](mailto:youngacademics@clashofrealities.com)

All submissions will be assessed by a peer-review committee.

## IMPORTANT DATES

Deadline for submissions: July 31

Notification of acceptance/rejection: September 7

Young Academics Workshop: November 19

Clash of Realities Conference: November 19-21

## CONTACT

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