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Assignment #4 – Major project
Option 1 – Sandbox assignment using Minecraft



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One of the most important features of any learning tool for students is whether it is fun or motivating. Generally speaking, if an activity has these or promotes these, students will actively engage and that is where we can push our content. Good coaches have always done this – they disguise skills/strategies within the parameters of a “game”.

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47 Comments

Minecraft passes 100 million registered users, 14.3 million sales on PC

Original PC version of open-ended sandbox game reaches new milestone; 14.3 percent of total users have bought the game.

by Eddie Makuch on February 26, 2014

As it says above, Minecraft has over 100 million registered users. This “sandbox, indie game” offers players two basic ways of playing: [Creative mode and Survival mode](#) – the link takes you to a wiki which explains it using a great metaphor. This plays into (bad pun) what Chris Goetz describes as a compelling fantasy: "Play in the real world is often about exploring the unknown world around you and then returning home where you feel safe. Minecraft is a place where kids can work through those same impulses. It's like kid utopia." (Stuart, 2013) Regardless of which mode is played, the experience has become amazingly popular and offers affordances that we as educators can leverage. One of the reasons that Minecraft has endured (with so many other games and consoles to play) is that it is utterly malleable – it offers limitless possibilities for players/students to create and build and perhaps, even problem solve. (Stuart, 2013)

As far as this assignment goes, this is a very “exploratory” or “experiential” endeavor where I am looking for you to accomplish a few outcomes. However...all students have different levels of expertise and experience.

You may choose to do this assignment fully using a screencast/video where you include all your “answers” or you may wish to do a combination of a document and a screencast. It is up to you. Please submit any documents as PDFs please.

Watching a few videos first may help you to decide if this option “is for you”. I really hope you choose this one because Minecraft is awesome! If you are into personalization, then you will love what this game can allow students to do in terms of representing their learning. So, check these out:

First, [“Minecraft Trailer”](#) – lovvve the music – short, sweet and motivational in my world. So wickedly good!



And...



[“Why Play Minecraft?” by Capp00](#) – well explained.

Outcomes/Requirements for this assignment:

A) Familiarize yourselves with one of the most pervasive and open-ended gaming environments available that allows for the creation of knowledge (for the very young and adults) that you could use in your classroom using “creative mode”. (as opposed to “survival” or PVP)

B) Some may be familiar and experienced in using Minecraft and some may be total “newbies”. If you are “experienced” then using the crafting tools to build will not be a big issue. What I would propose is to demonstrate to me some of the features you would use to teach an activity or lesson to a class of your choice. Include the overall learning outcomes and show some of the structures, signs etc. that you might use or include what you might get students to build. You might be telling me what you envision. Also tell me why Minecraft is a good fit for your class or students – what are the affordances/opportunities that it provides? Consider the evaluation rubric you developed in Assignment #3 – how does Minecraft rate overall?

If you are a newbie then I would suggest finding someone who is “experienced” to work with you, i.e. a son/daughter, niece, neighbour’s kid etc. Don’t laugh, they are really good at explaining and showing. They could help you build some simple structures or signs and show you how to craft simple things. What I would like you to do is tell me how you envision Minecraft being used in terms of a class you teach. Are there opportunities there for students to visually represent their learning? What did you think about the whole minecraft experience? Consider the evaluation rubric you developed in Assignment #3 – how does Minecraft

rate overall?

C) Understand the advantages/disadvantages of using the original [Minecraft](#) vs. [MinecraftEdu](#) environment (and briefly comment on this – could be in a separate document or in your screencast video). An online search will provide you with much on this...

D) You will create a 5min (minimum) screencast where you narrate a video showing your world and some of the features you have created within it. Whether “experienced” or new to Minecraft, walk and talk me through what you experienced. [Screencast-O-Matic](#) and [Jing](#) are two programs that allow you to screencast fairly easily. Both are free and if you are using them, try recording at a lower resolution – 1200x900 for instance.(sometimes when you go to upload a screencast shot at “full HD” it does not show up well on something like [VIUTube](#) or [YouTube](#)) You will need a microphone (many webcams come with one) to narrate the video. This need not be a “professional” presentation requiring video editing. Rather, you will walk me through what you have created or see in a world of your choice. You may post this video to one of the above sites (**so you would provide a link to me** – remember your privacy settings if this is important to you but I need access).

I don’t expect you to be a “game designer” or to create something that takes weeks by someone who does this sort of thing full time. What I am envisioning is not so much a game but a walkthrough of a learning activity that takes place in a “game environment” or a world where creation and building is the norm. It is a sandbox assignment – explore and experience and show and tell this to me. It may be a tool you embrace and want to learn more about or it might be “Nahhh!”.

References:

Stuart, K. (2013, September 5). Minecraft at 33 million users – a personal story. The Guardian.com. Retrieved February 11, 2014, from <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/sep/05/minecraft-33-million-users>