Rhetorical Analysis of a Serious Game

For our first major paper, I would like you to write a rhetorical analysis of a serious game. Serious games are games that aim to promote some sort of learning, or social awareness through playing a game. You may analyze a video, board, or card game, but it must have a purpose beyond entertainment such as persuasion or learning. You may choose a game from among the list provided on the Persuasive Games website, the Water Cooler Games site, or another game approved by me. Serious games are a form of gamification, the use of play and game ideas to promote learning or engage audiences. Gamification is a growing issue in both academics and professional work, and by analyzing a serious game as a specific example of gamification, you are commenting on a trend that is having real effects on college campuses, schools, workplaces, advertising/marketing, and social engagement.

 In your rhetorical analysis, explore why this game is effective or persuasive with its target audience (or perhaps why it fails). For example, you might explore how Darfur is Dying fits the humanitarian crisis of war into the narrative/play structure of a game. Key to analyzing these serious games is discussing the way the medium helps or hinders the message. Would the message of the serious game work better if it wasn't a game? Reflecting on your parallels essay, how does your serious game differ from the actual experience the game is trying to emulate? How is the serious game effective or persuasive? Or, if you think the game is not persuasive or effective, why does it fail?

Your rhetorical analysis should describe/summarize the game and offer relevant background information about the game's developer and/or subject matter. Then, use the rhetorical concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos to analyze the game and explain how it works. Briefly define and explain ethos, pathos, and logos, because your readers may have never heard of them before.

Later in your rhetorical analysis, offer a broader discussion of whether you find serious games effective or not. How does the medium of "a game" affect the message these games are trying to make? Would the message be more effective as a video, website, or article? What is unique about the way serious games interact with their audience? What kinds of broader conclusions can you draw about using games to persuade, teach, or editorialize?

Your rhetorical analysis should be written to appear in a popular print or online blog like Ian Bogost's Water Cooler games and use the document design techniques we have discussed in class. In other words, don't make this look like every other academic essay.

In this assignment, your objectives are to—
- Demonstrate that you can write rhetorical analysis
- Define a subject
- Form and use a solid thesis statement
- Use a clear introduction, body, and conclusion to organize your writing
- Interpret the rhetorical elements of a text
- Use of document design (HATS)
- Explain why a text is persuasive or effective (or not) and use logos, pathos, and ethos as your method of analysis.

Your rhetorical analysis should run 1200-1500 words, and it should include images, links, etc and incorporate document design.