Notes on Playing and Obtaining *World of Warcraft*

This section of Narrative and Technology will spend considerable time playing a videogame both in class and out. Playing videogames in a class setting presents a number of challenges and difficulties not usually encountered in other classes, so I have provided this handout to help assuage some of those difficulties. As with anything technology-related, there will be a few speed bumps along the way, but I hope that everyone will be patient with such problems. I will also be handing this out later in the term when we get closer to playing the game.

Play
Students will be expected to seriously and critically play *World of Warcraft* (2004-2015). Though students will not be assessed on their ability to play this game, achieving some amount of adeptness with it will be vital for the student's ability to critically engage the material of the course. As such, students will note that the equivalent of a page requirement for *Warcraft* is achieving a certain level (e.g., getting to level 10 in *Warcraft* by the first Thursday we play the game). These activities are important not only for the student's understanding of the text but for their ability to participate in class. During *Warcraft*, for example, some Thursdays will be devoted to in-class play, and students will not be able to participate if they have not achieved the appropriate level. So it is expected that students will spend considerable time playing this game outside of class and be as prepared as they would be with the assigned readings.

Access
Students will be asked to purchase *World of Warcraft* (see below). It is expected that students have access to their own computer, and this game should run on even older equipment. But if students do not have regular access to a PC or Mac connected to the internet, there will be open hours in which the English Department's computer lab, CL 435, will be available for students to come in and use the computers. *World of Warcraft* has been installed on all these computers and can be played during these hours. It is also expected that the leveling assignments will be able to be completed during these open hours. Arrangements are still being made regarding when CL 435 will be open, so I will alert students to these open hours later in the semester. Obviously, however, students are highly encouraged to play these games on their own computers and, if possible, to bring their laptops to class on the Thursdays when we will be playing in class.

Purchasing *World of Warcraft*
The version of *World of Warcraft* we will be using contains the game's first four expansions: *The Burning Crusade* (2007), *Wrath of the Lich King* (2008), *Cataclysm* (2010), and *Mists of Pandaria* (2012). There are a few ways that you can get your hands on *Warcraft*. You can obtain a physical copy. But it is easier to just download it. Please go to Blizzard's website, https://us.battle.net/shop/en/product/world-of-warcraft to do so.[1] You can purchase and download the game directly from this site. When you buy the game, you will be given a month of

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[1] Note: this link works as of December 30, 2014, but it may be different by the time you get around to purchasing the game. In that case, I imagine that you can navigate through http://us.blizzard.com/store with little difficulty and find the correct version of the game. Further note: there is a "free to play" trial version of *Warcraft*, but it lacks many of the features that will be essential for us to play it as a class. So make sure you get the version that contains all 4 expansions and not another version of the game. Students are *not* required to purchase the new expansion pack, *Warlords of Draenor* (2014), as we will not be getting to this content.

free play, so *do not purchase Warcraft until Monday, March 23rd at the earliest and Tuesday, March 24th at the latest*. *Warcraft* is $19.99 plus tax.[2]

   After you have purchased *Warcraft*, install it on your computer. It is a fairly big game, so allow some time both for the initial installation and for updates. (*Warcraft* is also an older game, so most of you should have not have too much trouble running it on whatever computer you own. And it is available for either Mac or PC.[3]) You should have purchased the game, downloaded it, launched it, have created a character, and have logged on to that character by Tuesday, March 24th. Further directions will be provided on how to do all this when we get closer to playing it.[4]

   Warcraft will be installed on the computers in CL 435, so you will be able to log on to the game from your desktop. Students who will not be playing *Warcraft* on their own computer, but principally in CL 435 during open hours, can purchase game time at GameStop (there is one in Oakland).

I think that covers everything, but if I have left anything out, please feel free to come to me for help with anything. I will also be playing *World of Warcraft* along with you, as will our Undergraduate Teaching Assistant, so either our TA or I will help you if you have any problems playing. The study of video games is a new and emerging discipline. As such, those of us who critically research videogames are still in the process of figuring out how best to teach them. I thank you in advance for your patience.

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[2] Also, if you do not choose to keep playing the game after we are done with it for class, remember to cancel your account, or else you will be charged for an additional month.

[3] That said, *Warcraft* has been updated considerably in the past year, so certain students had some difficulty running the game this past semester. (People with older laptops or the MacBook Air had the most problems. The MacBook Air has a very small hard drive, and the game can eat up a lot of space.) If anyone has problems, again, the computers in CL 435 will be available for your use.

[4] For those who might be interested in advance, we will be on the server "Galakrond," and we will all be making characters on the Alliance side.