1) Explain the terms **diegetic** and **extra diegetic** as used in “A Touch of Medieval”.

Diegetic, in film, refers to all the elements of the film that the characters are aware of while extra-diegetic refers to everything else that the characters are not aware, such as the camera angle or background music. The same concept applies similarly to role-playing games with diegetic elements referring to everything that relates to physical gameplay such as monsters approaching, moving characters, a forest of trees, etc. Extra-diegetic game elements would be things like a loading screen, error message, pause menu, etc.

2) Explain what is described as the central paradox of immersive narrative and computer technology.

The central paradox is that players are immersed in this magi-medieval world full of mages, monsters, and warriors yet high-end technology is used to modify and interact within this world. This is best-illustrated through game artifacts, which can come across as visual artifacts (experienced by pixalition of a dungeon wall) to linguistic artifacts (when player chats with another real player using technical terminology to facilitate information sharing) to artifacts of interaction (speaking to a NPC that can only repeat a limited amount of phrases). Another insightful example of this paradox is using 3rd party software/technology to change gameplay or, in essence, cheat. Such allows winning a game or mission significantly easier for the “cheater”.

3) From your own game playing experience, describe specific examples of the following narrative elements: a sanctioned artifact, a technological artifact, a gamerplayer artifact. In addition, describe an example of a metaphorically patched artifact.

Sanctioned artifact: an anomaly that was accidentally or intentionally placed within the original game design but never removed; serving little to no purpose for the game’s narrative. Example—in Pokemon (Blue and Red Version) if a player swims along the edge of a specific island, the skeleton of the Pokemon Aerodactyl appears as a bug, always retrieving the data of the last Pokemon seen or used.
Technological artifact: an accidental modification to the narrative due to a technological anomaly. Example-in completing a mission, a player would ordinarily speak to a NPC to “pass” the round, however, with a technological artifact, the NPC is disabled or unresponsive, preventing the the player from completing the mission.

Gameplayer artifact: an unsanctioned modification to the game in order to facilitate level-gaining or object retrieval. Example-using 3rd party software to make one's character to repeat the same task for an extended period of time.

4) Following the example and cultural arguments made in “A Touch of Medieval ..” for the emergence of magical fantasy games as a dominant genre, locate what you consider to be a common narrative game structure (for instance: particular historical wars, science fiction, city planning, sports gaming, arm chair general, horror…) and make a cultural argument as to why you believe this particular genre has emerged as a dominant game genre or theme.

A genre that has been dominant in gaming for the past 20 someodd years has been World War II games. WWII games range from RPG to RTS to FPS games, including the Medal of Honor and Company of Heroes series. Why, we often wonder, are we so fascinated with WWII reenactments? Firstly, I believe that there is truth to the claim that many Americans derive their sense of national identity and pride from the WWII victory as many Americans sacrificed their lives in the liberation of Europe from Nazi control. This sense of good vs. evil (U.S. vs. Germany) gives many game creators an easy route to channel the dynamics that construct a game. In addition, players are drawn to these games because they gain a connection to the battles in which many of their forebearers fought on distant lands. And today as the population of living WWII veterans quickly decereases, WWII video games offer a window in which we can relive past memories.

Another important question is why has WWII and not other wars like Vietnam, Iraq or Afghanistan emerged as the dominant war genre? The answer is quite simple: WWII is not as controversial to the extent the other wars. Also, to many Americans, WWII is the few example of the stark contrast between good and evil,
something from which we derive a great sense of pride. The other wars, however, are still hotly contested and subject to debate.

5) What do you think is the difficulty with designing a game that may be categorized as a “romance” game? This is a common genre found in film, theater, music and literature – why do believe games have not embraced this narrative structure?

I believe that the inability for the romance genre to grow, particularly in the U.S., comes from the fact that dating games remain a social taboo for the “socially awkward”. In addition, I think that many people might be uncomfortable with feeling attracted to a digitally animated character. A personal testament to this is a friend who thought Lara Croft was sexy but decided not to share it with anyone for fear of ridicule and mockery.

6) Following up on the previous question – what do you think are the limitations of the game medium in comparison to writing, film, television?

Although the game medium is very advanced technologically, which allows it to spread complex messages, its proliferation as a “serious” media channel remains limited by the social stigma that video games can only cater to kids, geeks, and those ten minutes in your boring office. For this reason, I believe it is important that game creators work to bridge the gap and alter public perception for both the commercial and artistic future of the medium.