



Prof. A Everett

Dr. Anna Everett is a Professor of Film, Television and New Media Studies, and Chair of the Department of Film and Media Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara. She has published numerous books and articles including *Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black Film Criticism, 1909-1949*; *The Revolution will be Digitized: Afrocentricity and the Digital Public Sphere*, *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality* (with John T. Caldwell), the recently completed manuscript *Digital Diaspora: A Race for Cyberspace*; among her articles are "The Other Pleasures: The Narrative Function of Race in the Cinema," "Lester Walton's *Ecriture Noir*: Transcoding Cinematic Excess," and "Serious Play: Playing with Race in Computer Games." She is a principal co-organizer of the two Race in Digital Space conferences. Dr. Everett organized two conference on blackness and technology: the 2004 AfroGEEKS: From Technophobia to Technophilia, and the 2005 AfroGEEKS: Global Blackness and the Digital Public sphere conference. She founded and edits the new journal *Screening Noir: A Journal of Film, TV and Digital Culture*. Dr. Everett received her Master's Degree from UCLA, School of Theater, Film and Television, Critical Studies, and her Ph.D. from USC's School of Cinema-TV, Division of Critical Studies. She began her teaching career at the University of Colorado at Boulder, in the Film Studies department. She has been a professor at UCSB since 1997.

Abstract

**Serious Play: Further Thoughts on Race and Gender in Computer Games
Prof Everett**

This talk explores the phenomenal rise in computer games as an increasingly influential cultural force. In the past decade, the computer gaming industry has developed into a formidable rival to other cultural forms such as films and television. Leading up to the current war in Iraq, U.S. news media (particularly television) reported on the favorite computer games of Saddam Hussein, and images of Osama Ben Laden have been incorporated into online games since September 11, 2001. As a result of computer gaming's growing popularity, power and influence, there is concern and alarm about the social consequences of this entertainment form. Indeed, arguments about computer game messages being more harmful than other media because of the interactive and participatory nature of the games rules of play. This lecture and discussion will focus on how African Americans and other racial minorities are represented in popular, violent computer games. We will analyse images and discourses of race and gender using the critical methodologies of contemporary literature and film studies, which includes structuralism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, cultural studies, feminist theory and critical race

theories. A central component in the debates about the dangers of gaming cultures centers around the question of whether or not racist, sexist, and violent perform a social good because they are deemed cathartic (or enabling game players to act out fantasies in games rather than in real life)? Conversely, there are fears that the addictive qualities and role-playing natures of these games produce anti-social and other destructive behaviors. We will consider these and other important issues surrounding the emergence of computer games as powerful global media industry and cultural force.