

DSI Lecture Series Presents

Playing Like an Asian: Race Gender, & Athleticism in Esports

PLAYING LIKE AN ASIAN: RACE, GENDER, & ATHLETICISM IN ESPORTS

Tara Fickle in Conversation with Huan He

**WEDNESDAY,
MARCH 29
4:00 PM EST**

How can people make a living out of playing video games? Who would want to watch them? And why?

Esports — video gaming as a spectator sport — currently boasts an estimated global viewership of 500 million and an annual revenue of over US\$1 billion. Tara Fickle examines esports' perceived novelty through the lens of its history and popularity in East Asia, particularly South Korea and China. Fickle argues that the continued success of global esports ultimately depends on a toxic set of "mini-games" which bring together old and new modes of inter-racial competition, ideas of masculinity and athleticism, and American nationalism against the backdrop of a rising China.

HUAN HE

TARA FICKLE

CART will be provided.

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ID: A gamer with headphones on. Pink and purple glitch art accents to accompany the details of the event.

EVENT ABSTRACT

March 2023

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How can people make a living out of playing video games? Who would want to watch them? And why?

Esports — video gaming as a spectator sport — currently boasts an estimated global viewership

4:00pm - 5:30pm EST

perceived novelty through the lens of its history and popularity in East Asia, particularly South Korea and China. East Asian players continue to profoundly dominate today's global esports scene, even while the video games that they excel at are American-made. The drama (and the profitability) of this global virtual competition depends on a potent set of fantasies about race, gender, national identity, and ideal "sportsmanship." Esports both interrupts and reproduces stereotypes of Asian and Asian American men as unathletic, nerdy, "cheap," hyper-competitive Others. This talk argues that the continued success of global esports ultimately depends on a toxic set of "mini-games" which bring together old and new modes of inter-racial competition, ideas of masculinity and athleticism, and American nationalism against the backdrop of a rising China.

Tara Fickle is David M. and Nancy L. Petrone Faculty Scholar and Associate Professor of English at the University of Oregon. She is Affiliated Faculty of the Department of Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies, the Center for the Study of Women in Society, and the Center for Asian & Pacific Studies. Her first book, "The Race Card: From Gaming Technologies to Model Minorities," (NYU Press, 2019, winner of Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award), explores how games have been used to establish and combat Asian and Asian American racial stereotypes. Fickle's current research projects include the racialized dimensions of esports, virtual currency harvesting in video games, and a digital archive of the canonical Asian American anthology,

**Virtual
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**In-person
Registration**

Huan He is a Curriculum Development Postdoctoral Fellow at the DISCO Network Michigan Hub and holds a Ph.D. in American Studies and Ethnicity from the University of Southern California. Drawing from literature, art, and archival sources, his book project currently titled "The Racial Interface" explores the racial associations linking Asian/Americans and information technology in the early digital era. The project interrogates how myths of racial and technological progress converge in the shadow of U.S. liberal capitalism. He is also interested in the relationship between race, gaming, cheating, and scams and pursuing a second project on these topics. His scholarly writing has been published in "College Literature: A Journal of Critical Literary Studies" and "Media-N" and is forthcoming in an anthology on Asian/American game studies. He is also the author of the poetry chapbook, "Sandman" (2022) and has poems in "Beloit Poetry Journal", "A Public Space", "Colorado Review", and "Gulf Coast".

We want to make our events accessible to all participants. This event will be a hybrid event with both a physical meeting space and an online meeting space. Please register in advance for the online Zoom Webinar here: <https://bit.ly/3ZmW9Qw>

Please register for the physical meeting space at the University of Michigan's Central Campus: <https://myumi.ch/W2Q5k>

CART will be provided. If you anticipate needing accommodations to participate, please email Eric Mancini at dsi-administration@umich.edu.

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