

## GamerGate: keep calm and respect women in gaming

Disaster has struck. The princess has been kidnapped, and now you, the valiant hero, must rescue the powerless victim. Sound familiar? Anita Sarkeesian, host of the web series Feminist Frequency, thinks so.

A few months ago, Sarkeesian released a video that critically analyzed the role of female characters in games. The video enraged many a gamer who disagreed, crying that games will be games. Behind the moniker GamerGate, Sarkeesian critics lit up message boards everywhere.



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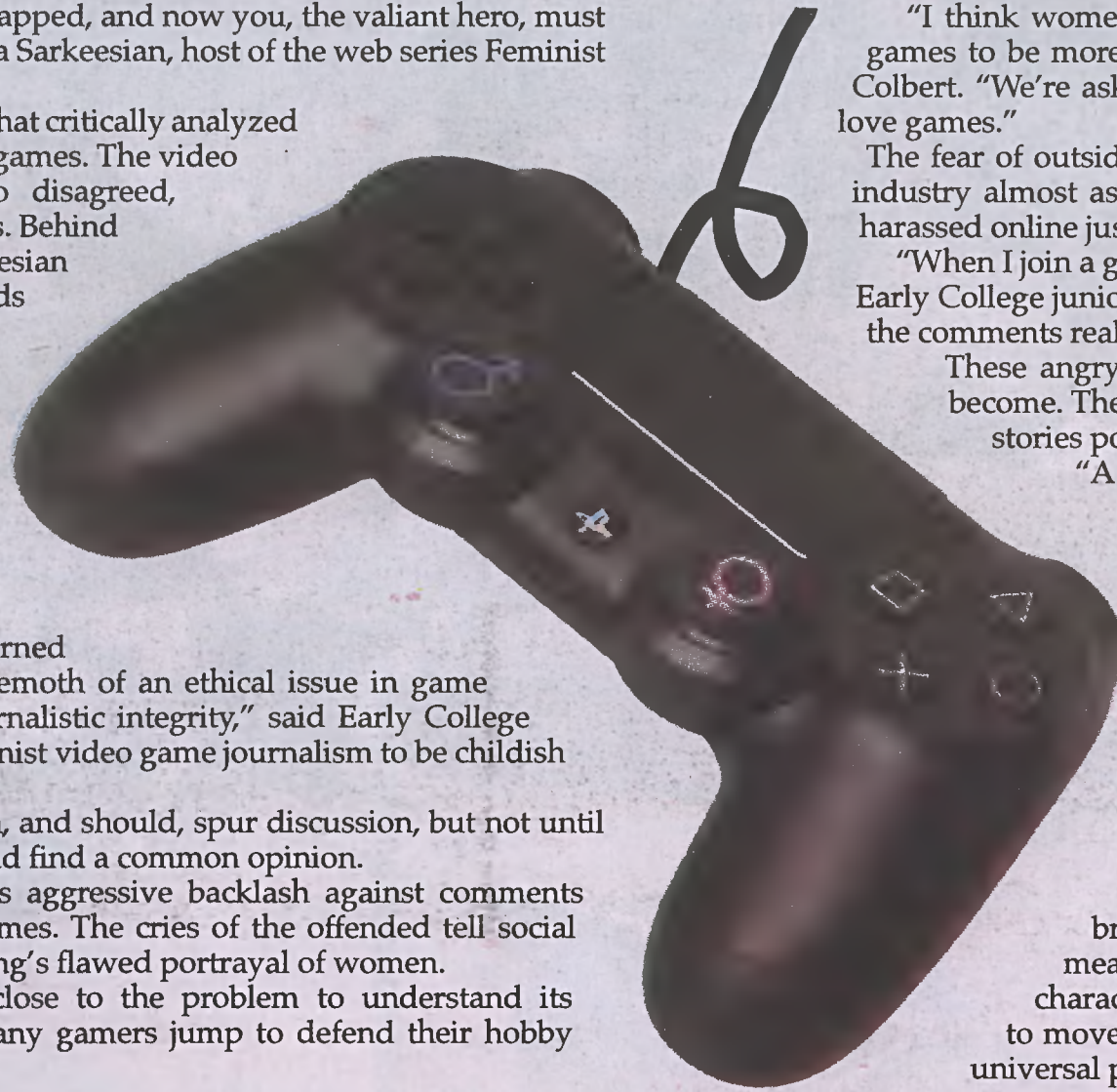
Arguing that no change should be made to accommodate the swelling number of female gamers fails to acknowledge important evolution in an industry that desperately needs progressive change.

"GamerGate has concerned itself with tackling feminism, the supposed behemoth of an ethical issue in game journalism, rather than paying any mind to journalistic integrity," said Early College junior Harris Billings. "I find their attacks on feminist video game journalism to be childish and completely degrading to their image."

The controversial movement's other points can, and should, spur discussion, but not until those supporting the argument can calm down and find a common opinion.

The predominant pillar of GamerGate creates aggressive backlash against comments made concerning the treatment of women in games. The cries of the offended tell social justice advocates and feminists not to touch gaming's flawed portrayal of women.

Many supporters of GamerGate stand too close to the problem to understand its implications. Critics point to a problem, and many gamers jump to defend their hobby before they can even hear what is wrong with it.



"I think women are perceived as threatening because we are asking for games to be more inclusive," said Sarkeesian in an interview with Stephen Colbert. "We're asking for games to acknowledge that we exist, and that we love games."

The fear of outsiders, and the bullying that results from it, has plagued the industry almost as long as it has been around. On a daily basis women are harassed online just for being women.

"When I join a game of Call of Duty, the comments are usually sexual," said Early College junior Laura Williams. "No one takes me seriously, and some of the comments really make me feel gross."

These angry, offensive gamers refuse to see how bad the sexism has become. These gamers often treat female players as badly as the games' stories portray female characters.

"A lot of games' themes and characters are geared toward men," said junior Ryan Siebens. "They focus on bulky males and over-sexualized women. Developers should look to make games that show women in a more equal light."

The movement also targets the gaming press, throwing out accusations of sex scandals to push up review scores.

"I think that is a compelling way to reframe attacks on women," said Sarkeesian in her Colbert interview. "(Problems with) ethics in journalism isn't what's happening; it's actually men going after women in hostile aggressive ways."

Those who really support GamerGate need to take a breath and calm down. The complaints of these critics do not mean the next Elder Scrolls game will not have attractive female characters, but it does mean the industry needs to take some steps to move away from the "boys club" mentality and toward a more universal platform.

## Letter to the editor: considering Edwin Black's lecture and "free" speech

Lately, I have been thinking about academic freedom, freedom of speech and protected speech. Steven Salaita's case has made me keenly aware of the ways in which protected speech is not so protected and academia is not so free. In fact, it can get pretty expensive. It cost Salaita his livelihood, his security and the security of his family.

While many on campus were offended by Edwin Black's impending lecture, aghast at Guilford's hosting of him for a second time and confused by our providing a space for ideas potentially threatening to the dignity and humanity of community members, no one entertained the thought of silencing Black. Concerned students simply decided not to listen. They walked out. Black was free to speak, and the students were free not to engage. Their decision to do so, in the manner of a walk-out, meant that they were actively not listening. This is very different from simply not showing up, a passive gesture with no overt communal intentionality.

As the students filed out in silence, a high-level administrator, who interacts with students on a daily

basis, shouted at them. Black then shamed the students who left and praised those who stayed. According to Black, "Guilford should not be happy that this was the first time in (my) career that anyone has orchestrated (a walk-out from one of my talks)." The students made their protest in silence, but the response, from people with power over them no less, was anything but. There was not even the customary moment of silence to begin the talk.

What interests me about Black's visit, besides the highly telling silences of those refusing to listen, the resounding sounds of those refusing to be silenced and perhaps, more importantly, refusing to be unheard, is the way it was packaged for us, the remaining audience members. In both the introduction and conclusion to his talk, Black's visit was cast as an exercise in multiple perspectives. Given the bloody summer in Gaza, we were reminded how important it is to listen to different perspectives. So does it follow that because Black represents a "different" perspective it is necessarily valuable? Is difference

all we aspire to, the most important requirement in determining the value of a perspective? And is what he says more important than how he says it?

Representing a multiplicity of perspectives is a noble goal, especially at a place like Guilford, where our core values ought to quicken and invigorate our actions. But we must endeavor to humanize everybody and not dehumanize anybody. I am afraid, however, that nobody was humanized by Black's talk, whether in the content of his speech or in the spectacle of its performance. The students who walked out were dehumanized. The Palestinians who, according to Black, use their children as human shields and train them to harass Israeli soldiers in "riots," peaceful protests, against the Israeli "establishment," Occupation, and demand to be sprayed with sewage water, were dehumanized. The audience members questioning Black's statements, and whom Black harangued and all but accused of racism and ignorance, were dehumanized.

It is often the case that opposing views are dehumanized. However, in Black's lecture, everyone was. The man who tragically lost a daughter to a terrorist bombing in Jerusalem and was, in talk-show fashion, called upon from the audience to give his testimonial and broke into tears, was dehumanized as a prop in Black's magic-show extravaganza. Black even managed to dehumanize himself. By frequently positing himself as the center of all knowledge and meaningful experiences, emphasizing the superiority of his perspective above all others and talking over audience members whom he himself called upon to speak, Black distanced himself from us as an individual with whom one could engage in civil and useful discourse.

Black's talk, from beginning to end, was a performance. This makes sense as it was actually part of a promotional tour for his new book and, hence, a free lecture offered to the College. But perhaps in the pursuit of "multiple perspectives," we ought to aspire to more than just free difference. After all, there is free speech and then there is speech for free. Perhaps we ought to aspire to difference that allows everyone to be free — free to speak, to be silent and to dialogue.

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## This Week's STAFF EDITORIAL

### The rhetoric of the War on Terror is akin to terrorism itself

We craft this editorial on Veteran's Day, reminding ourselves of the scars left on several generations by the ubiquitously termed "War on Terror."

The word "terrorism" has become meaningless, used by the United States' government to support a perpetual war that has left too many of our brothers and sisters needlessly maimed.

We would like to raise them into the light by acknowledging their sacrifice.

We also wish to point out that the word "terror" has become, itself, a form of terrorism.

It is a bandied-about term that has been misused by pro-war elements of our society to instill fear in the American citizen of an overmatched enemy.

Violence is always a threat in a free society, but from Guantanamo Bay to Abu-Ghraib prison, it appears terrorism is coming from within our society.

The label of terrorist is not applied universally. Often the term is linked to extreme groups in the Middle-East as a means of othering.

This claim lacks nuance, approaching complex systemic violence with mere name calling while distracting us from trying to understand the motivations behind the violence.

The terminology has been used throughout history to this effect. The term terrorism can be traced back to the Roman Empire in 105 B.C. and was translated as "to frighten."

The word became synonymous with the Reign of Terror, led by Maximilien Robespierre, under the French Revolution.

During the American Revolution, British officers fighting the colonists referred to the American militia's tactics of evasive combat as acts of terror.

Terrorism is meant to frighten and intimidate an enemy, while the term terrorist is meant to objectify and vilify.

Our veterans have served valiantly in the service of their nation.

However, we have reached a point where we are embroiled in a war with no seeming end, against an enemy that is still undefined.

Perhaps those who use the word so carelessly are instilling a form of terrorism into the culture of our nation.

We can think of no greater way of serving our veterans than helping to expose this truth, and to highlight the fact that the word terrorism has, itself, become a form of terrorism.

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