Creativity, Imagination and Play
essential elements in university learning

Finn Stone: Lego Stilettos

Professor Alison James, University of Winchester
National Teaching Fellow, PFHEA
Professor Stephen D. Brookfield
John Ireland Endowed Chair,
University of St Thomas, Minnesota
“Where does the play of imagination come from? When are sounds music? When are patterns and colors art? When are words literature? When is instruction teaching?

(Nachmanovitch, 1990:5)
Unroll your scroll

one task at a time
6 Tasks to complete in 10 minutes in pairs or groups as instructed

(but ignore some of the paper instructions...)
Off you go!
Let’s look at your labels…

(...or your pieces of paper)

https://www.amazon.co.uk/100pcs-Brown-Kraft-Paper-Wedding/dp/B00LM5JGSE/ref=pd_lpo_vtp_h_200_l_pi_img_3?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=VZ4HHH2YNE3ZNEE3ACGJ
How do we define play?

Go to

www.todaysmeet.com/play
It’s fun and without predetermined purpose (Brown)
Can encompass pastimes, recreation, entertainment, hobbies (Sutton-Smith)
All play means something (Huizinga)
It’s not a matter of idleness or diversion but about “taking reality lightly” (Kane)
There are too many types of play to name them all (Fagen)
Play is defined by context – not what we do but how we do it (Nachmanovitch)
What is play for?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Huizinga</strong></th>
<th><strong>Brown</strong></th>
<th><strong>Kane</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is central to navigating human existence</td>
<td>For fun</td>
<td>Play as a generator of originality, growth and new development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older than culture</td>
<td>For healthy brain development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals knew how to do it before civilisations emerged</td>
<td>To ensure healthy socialisation and combat deviancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Nachmanovitch</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sutton Smith</strong></th>
<th><strong>Plato</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for self expression and creativity: “everything in nature arises from the power of free play sloshing against the power of limits”</td>
<td>Survival: It is ambiguous and not always innocent 7 (contrasting) Rhetorics of Play</td>
<td>One of the quickest ways of learning about someone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How many types of play can you think of?

Go to www.todaysmeet.com/play
For example, biologists, psychologists, educators, and sociologists tend to focus on how play is adaptive or contributes to growth, development, and socialization. Communication theorists tell us that play is a form of metacommunication far preceding language in evolution because it is also found in animals. Sociologists say that play is an imperial social system that is typically manipulated by those with power for their own benefit. Mathematicians focus on war games and games of chance, important in turn because of the data they supply about strategy and probability. Thermonuclear war games, it appears, can be either a hobby or deadly serious. Anthropologists pursue the relationships between ritual and play as these are found in customs and festivals, while folklorists add an interest in play and game traditions. Art and literature, by contrast, have a major focus on play as a spur to creativity.

*Brian Sutton Smith, The Rhetorics of Play* chapter in the Game Design Reader, Salen and Zimmerman
The science of play
Neoteny

Play sculpts the brain

Play and brain size correlation

Rat research

Otters
Challenge A:
Fiddlers and Thinkers
Brick Visualizer Challenge Sheet.

This is one view of a stack of bricks...

...this is another view of the same
Did yours look like this?
The hidden door festival in Edinburgh explores how we use disused and abandoned public spaces. There's a vibrant and imaginative feel, with both daytime and evening events populated with art, music, cinema, food and drink. It makes for an ideal learning environment, and shows what you can achieve with collaboration, and a vision.
Exploring Play in Higher Education

Issue Number 2A

CREATIVE ACADEMIC MAGAZINE Issue 2A June 2018 http://www.creativeacademic.uk

Exploring Play in Higher Education

Issue Number 2B

CREATIVE ACADEMIC MAGAZINE Issue 2B June 2018 http://www.creativeacademic.uk
Taking improvisation strategies from music and interweaving them into law
Analysing simulation-based medical education using computer games
Reinforcing concepts within wildlife conservation (zoology) with a tabletop board game
Outdoor learning centres and pop up “playscapes”
Raft-building, sheep dog handling (team/leadership building)
Pattern and play in mathematics
Playful public engagement activities led by students (chemistry) which encourage audience participation
Juggling in functional biology and plant science classes
Building 3D threshold concepts in English/Engineering/Other
Labyrinth walking (creative writing, music, law, dance, other)
PLAY AND CREATIVITY FESTIVAL
MONDAY 3 APRIL - FRIDAY 7 APRIL 2017

The Festival is an opportunity to showcase the ways play and creativity permeate our teaching, research and professional activities. Whether physical, game-based, digital, imaginative, communal, noisy, quiet or solitary, play makes an important contribution to University life.

Throughout the week of the Festival, we will offer an array of activities, including a play map and passport, talks, active play sessions, board games, performance, imaginative trails, making sessions and LEGO model building to explore wicked problems.

We would like every programme and department to offer a play activity for the Festival. We also want you to take part!

To find out about the event and how to join in/discuss your ideas please email:

play@winchester.ac.uk
Our aims

To enliven and cheer
Boost curiosity
Intrigue and challenge
Address complex issues
Bring people together
Shed new light
The Power of Play in HE: creativity in tertiary learning

Alison James and Chrissi Nerantzi (Eds)
Palgrave Macmillan
2018
“Whoever wants to understand much, must play much”

Gottfried Benn, German Poet and Essayist, 1886-1956
Innovating in the creative arts with LEGO

Dr Alison James

This report focuses on the use of LEGO® and LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® as tools for exploring complex questions in any discipline. It outlines the pedagogical and theoretical basis for using three-dimensional and metaphorical building and discussion activities and shares vignettes of practice. In particular, the report argues for playful and imaginative alternatives to traditional ways of learning and engaging. It also stresses the need to recognize these as valid and appropriate for higher level study. Although these vignettes come from a creative arts institution, the techniques discussed originated outside the creative arts and are applicable within any discipline.

To talk to us about play...

Alison.james@winchester.ac.uk
@alisonrjames
S.D.Brookfield@stthomas.edu
www.stephenbrookfield.com