



## Call for Papers

Outside the Box - Ropecon 2021 Academic Seminar

<https://2021.ropecon.fi/programme/academic-seminar/>

<https://2021.ropecon.fi/ohjelma/akateeminen-seminaari/>

July 30, 2021, Virtual / Helsinki, Finland

### Important dates:

Abstract deadline: May 16, 2021

Notification of acceptance: May 23, 2021

Full Paper deadline: July 16, 2021

Role-playing is not only *Dungeons & Dragons*, indie role-playing is not only *Powered by the Apocalypse*, streaming is more than *Critical Role*, there are other collectible card games than *Magic: the Gathering*, board games are not always on Euro, miniaturizing is more than *Games Workshop*, and wargaming is not always card-driven. The public discussion and scholarly pursuits (Coavoux et al., 2017) often focus on the hegemonic games and dominant discourses in game cultures, while overlooking the underrepresented demographics (e.g. Pobuda, 2018) of players, developers, content creators, scholars, and other actors in the field, thus bypassing many interesting and influential, but less renowned phenomena worthy of recognition. Ropecon Academic Seminar acknowledges this bias, and with the theme “*Outside the Box*”, invites authors to participate in a discussion about less known elements of gaming cultures and scholarship.

In this seminar we shift focus from the general, the common, and the default to the particular and specific. Studying the mainstream currents of game cultures is important in understanding the latest trends in gaming, yet it is equally important to pay attention to the idiosyncratic exceptions, alternatives, and undercurrents in order to recognize the diversity of games, play, contents, practices, players, designers and other creators in the field. What makes various role-playing game systems stand out compared to *D&D*? How do we understand these minority games and practices on their own terms -- and not just in relation to the hegemony? What can we learn from curious game mechanics and design solutions? The variety of games is also seen in the numerous practices in game design. How have certain particularities affected the design of specific games?

We are also interested in specificities and minor elements within game cultures. Several subcultures within gaming have escaped critical attention, although some of them have existed long before, and influenced the mainstream popularity of gaming. What kind of values do the subcultures of gaming support? Who are the 18XX game hobbyists? What are the defining features of *Diplomacy* societies?

“Outside the Box” can also be about the styles and traditions of play. Often games are played “against the grain” – not as the designer intended, and the emergent ways of playing can inspire completely new games. How do specific house rules change game play experiences? What kind of hobbyist practices have inspired new game products? Further, on the peripheries of game cultures there exists specific practices that resemble or are closely related to game play, but are generally not considered as games, like improv theater resembling role-playing, or the similarities of card games and reading the Tarot cards. How do certain game-like activities influence game cultures?

We invite you to present on topics related to the theme “Outside the Box”. The list of possible topics includes but is not limited to:

- Specificities of non-dominant games and game systems
- Traditions of non-western gaming
- Underrepresented demographics of players, developers, and content creators
- Analyses and deep descriptions of specific poorly understood and documented game cultures
- Playing “against the grain”
- Curious game designs and mechanics
- Subcultures of gaming
- The history of forgotten role-playing games
- Practices similar to role-playing that are generally not called role-playing
- Alternative canons

Outside the Box is the 4th annual Ropecon academic seminar, organized as a collaboration between Ropecon ry and the Centre of Excellence in Game Culture Studies (2018–2025). The emphasis of the event is on multiplayer games that players engage in while being physically co-located as that is also the focus of Ropecon. Ropecon is a large, independent, convention devoted to role-playing games, larps, board games, miniature wargames, collectible card games, cosplay, and the like. The convention has been running annually since 1994.

The seminar focus is on working papers, and the presentations should encourage discussion. We want to encourage peer-to-peer discussion to refine and develop the papers further. Every paper will be presented for 10 minutes and discussed for 20 minutes. The seminar presentations should encourage discussion, instead of repeating the information presented in the papers. The sessions will be open for all Academic Ropecon ticket holders, but the presentations should be drafted with an academic audience in mind. We warmly welcome submissions from younger scholars and PhD candidates, as well as from more established researchers.

Due to the Covid-19 situation both, Ropecon, and the academic seminar might be organized as fully online events. We are hoping that the situation at the end of July allows us to have a hybrid onsite event with a possibility of attending online. However, we are preparing to organize the event fully online if the situation has not improved enough as the safety of the participants is an utmost importance for us.

## Submission guidelines

The papers to be presented will be chosen based on extended abstract review. The abstracts should be 500–1000 words (plus references). Abstracts should be delivered in PDF format. Full papers are distributed prior to the event to all participants, in order to facilitate discussion.

Our aim is that all participants can familiarise themselves with the papers in advance. Therefore, the maximum length for a full working paper is 5000 words (plus references). Submissions should be sent to: [academic.program@ropecon.fi](mailto:academic.program@ropecon.fi)

## Organizers

General Chair: Mr. Ville Kankainen, Tampere University Game Research Lab, Aalto University, Ropecon Program Team

Program Chair: Dr. Jonne Arjoranta, Center of Excellence in Game Culture Studies

Further information and inquiries: [academic.program@ropecon.fi](mailto:academic.program@ropecon.fi)

## References

Coavoux, S., Boutet, M., & Zabban, V. (2017). What We Know About Games: A Scientometric Approach to Game Studies in the 2000s. *Games and Culture*, 12(6), 563–584. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412016676661>

Pobuda, T. (2018). Assessing Gender and Racial Representation in the Board Game Industry. *Analog Game Studies*, 5(4). <https://analoggamestudies.org/2018/12/assessing-gender-and-racial-representation-in-top-rated-boardgamegeek-games/>