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Anthropology 150: Multicultural America

Assignment: "Why Don't They Just...?"
Digital Humanities tool/method: Twine, a browser based, open-source tool designed to create branching narratives

Description:

This assignment is the final assignment for Anthro: 150, one of the Cultures & Communities capstone courses. In groups of 2-5, the students *create narrative games* under the underlying theme "Why Don't They Just...?" modeled after the common (and privileged) questions often heard when discussing societal problems: Why don't they just get a job? Why don't they just go to the doctor? Why don't they just study harder?

The goal for the students is to create a sense of empathy for people in situations that the player may never experience. In each case the player is asked to play the role of a character attempting to accomplish some task: forming good study habits, raising kids as a single parent, or dealing with addiction, to name a few examples.

As game designers, the students need to understand the choices people make under the circumstances being presented in order for them to successfully model them. Therefore, in creating the game the students are also gaining empathy and a deeper understanding of the various realities people in the city of Milwaukee live in.

All of the games are based on the students' experiences while completing 20 hours of service learning work through CCBLLR (Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership, and Research).

Learning outcomes:

- Observe the world around them
- Have empathy for people in different situations
- Understand that most choices involve seen and unseen factors (i.e., the complications that the questions like "Why don't they just…" erases)
- Contribute to their communities in meaningful ways

Sample assignments: http://philome.la/studentsgames