

KEY AREAS OF CURRENT ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON HISTORICAL DIGITAL GAMES SET IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

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Recent scholarship has identified several core areas of inquiry into the ways digital games represent the ancient world. These areas reflect an interdisciplinary engagement with history, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and gender studies, emphasizing the medium's potential to shape public understanding of antiquity. A central concern in the scholarship is how ancient civilizations—such as those of Egypt, Greece, and Rome—are reconstructed in digital games. While these portrayals often draw on historical research, they are frequently shaped by contemporary cultural frameworks and commercial imperatives. Scholars critique the selective use of historical material, noting the tension between entertainment and historical fidelity.

The depiction of race and ethnicity in games set in antiquity has drawn considerable attention. Researchers argue that modern racial ideologies are often retroactively imposed onto ancient societies, leading to oversimplified or distorted representations. Studies have highlighted how titles such as *Assassin's Creed: Origins* attempt to navigate cultural diversity while sometimes failing to convey the historical complexities of identity and hybridity. The representation of gender and sexuality in historical games has emerged as a significant area of critique. Scholars have examined how gender roles are often portrayed through reductive or stereotypical frameworks, justified by appeals to historical authenticity.

Games are increasingly analyzed as instruments of national myth-making. Through selective representations of the past, certain titles promote narratives that align with nationalist ideologies. Postcolonial theory has provided a critical lens through which to examine the persistence of imperial narratives in games set in the ancient world. Scholars argue that many such games reproduce colonial logics, presenting conquest and domination as inherent aspects of historical progress. This critique highlights the ideological continuities between ancient imperialism and modern colonial discourses.

Beyond narrative and aesthetics, research has increasingly turned to game mechanics as carriers of ideological content. Mechanics that prioritize expansion, resource control, and technological superiority are understood to reflect underlying assumptions about historical development, often reinforcing militaristic, patriarchal, or ethnocentric worldviews.

Finally, some researchers extend their focus beyond the games themselves to examine the broader cultural and industrial context in which these games are produced and consumed.

Together, these areas of research highlight the complex interplay between digital games, historical knowledge, and contemporary cultural politics. As interactive media continue to shape public engagement with the ancient past, scholarly attention to their narrative, structural, and ideological dimensions remains essential.