

Michele Zorrilla Interview:

How would you describe your area of study to a novice?

I like to focus on social interaction in video games – how people talk to one another, how relationships are built, what a person’s character in-game says about who they are. Video games are for everyone, and everyone plays them for different reasons, so it’s really fascinating to see how people come together.

What is your primary motivation for persevering through graduate school?

I really wanted to conduct my own research to answer questions I’ve had while gaming. I’ve followed the work of a few video game scholars, and I would love my work to join theirs in the published world!

Do you think there is any value in social networking with other graduate students in non-related fields?

I think there is value in social networking with anyone. Professionally, social networking allows you to connect across industries and organizations, and it provides those connections that are so valuable in getting your foot in the door. Personally, I think the more people you know, the greater the ideas you will come across along with having a richer cultural experience.

What is your favorite stress-reduction technique?

I play games in my free time; sometimes it’s for fun, and other times it can almost feel like work. If gaming doesn’t relieve my stress, I will read instead or do some stretching.

What is the last book you read strictly for pleasure and how long ago was it?

I am currently reading Anne Rice’s Vampire Chronicles. I’m working my way through The Vampire Lestat and have Queen of the Damned to read after. After this, I have some World of Warcraft novels to enjoy!

Please describe your most meaningful academic relationship.

I have had two very meaningful academic relationships during my educational career. First, my communication teacher in community college was really the person who sparked my interest in communication; I wouldn’t be where I am if I hadn’t taken five of her classes. Second, Professor Steve Jackson of Central Washington University showed me that my interest in video games and communication could really be turned into a future job. He also helped bring me to Radford and has been a mentor in my research.

What surprised you the most about graduate school?

I knew graduate school was going to be a lot of work, though I think I was still surprised by just how much work it turned out to be. It has been very rewarding though!

If travel to Mars happens in your lifetime, would you want to be one of the scientists on board? If yes, what would you contribute to the mission?

I would love to travel to Mars or another planet! Considering how closely the crew would have to work together, I would be happy to help facilitate communication and maintain positive relationships between everyone. I also would love an excuse to brush up on my geological skills and survey the landscape!

What is your favorite comfort food and why? How often do you consume it?

My top comfort food is Shin Ramyun, a spicy Korean instant noodle (ramen). You can’t find it in Radford, but I will buy a box or two when I’m visiting my fiancé in Connecticut and bring them down! I eat it at least a couple times a week.

If you hadn't been admitted to graduate school, what do you think you would be doing right now?

I would more than likely be working back in California, or trying to find a job that would break me into the video game industry.

When do you expect to complete your degree?

I am looking forward to graduating in May 2013!