Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (University of the Fraser Valley, 2016)

“Digital Worlds: Performativity and Immersion in VR Videogames”

Department of Geography

Wednesday, December 4, 2019
10:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B017

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Reuben Rose-Redwood, Department of Geography, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Jentery Sayers, Department of English, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. James Ash, School of Arts and Culture, Newcastle University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Karen Courtney, School of Health Information Science, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Virtual reality (VR) and videogames present, enable, and constrain human engagement with what may broadly be called digital worlds. Videogames have already become a global force in popular culture. Although VR technologies have existed for 50 years, it is only during the past decade that VR has become more widely accessible to the public beyond the confines of research institutions and industry use. Very little scholarship has examined the interconnections of videogames and VR as co-extensive cultural forces that shape ideas and feelings about inhabiting digital worlds. This thesis specifically examines the often-employed lexicon of immersion, presence, or feelings being inside of computer-generated contexts as they exist across videogames and VR. By analyzing 15 participants’ interactions with a contemporary VR videogame and interviewing them about this experience, I discuss how immersion, presence, or being inside of a digital world is performative beyond what the technology affords. Instead, engagement with digital worlds intersects with other performances, actions, and previous engagement with objects or other digital worlds to make sense of creating meaning in VR.