

# Portrayals of the Greco-Roman World in Contemporary Tabletop Gaming

Name: Nina Houle

SFU Faculty/Major: Faculty of Arts and Social Science, History

## Presentation Description:

Popular media is a powerful tool for introducing the general public to ancient history and mythology. By analyzing a selection of tabletop games based around ancient Greece and Rome, this project explores our often complicated relationship with the distant Mediterranean past.

## Abstract:

Over the last 30 years, tabletop or board games such as Settlers of Catan and Carcassonne have exploded in popularity. Many popular games draw inspiration from historical settings; in addition to introducing the general public to exciting settings and events from the past, they shed light on how people in the 21st century perceive history. This is especially true of games set in ancient Greece and Rome, including Downfall of Pompeii, Attika, and 7 Wonders. My project closely analyzes the mechanics, visuals, and settings of a selection of Greco-Roman themed games. Using a blend of ancient primary sources, theoretical scholarship on historical reception, and analyses of how the ancient world appears in popular culture, I invite academics and tabletop gamers alike to critically examine the way history-based media reflects 21st century ideals and anxieties. I examine representations of class, race, sexuality, and gender in tabletop culture, and critically dissect the militarist and imperialist implications of many popular games. Given the visual nature of tabletop gaming as a medium, I draw attention to the aesthetics of Greco-Roman-inspired works. This component of my project will be especially exciting in my presentation video; I can use the games as props to illustrate my arguments surrounding aesthetics and Greco-Roman reception. Given the massive popularity of tabletop games and my pop-culture analysis approach, this project is entertaining and accessible to specialists and non-specialists alike.