

## **Mary Flanagan**

### **Values at Play in Digital Games**

All games express and embody human values, providing a compelling arena in which we play out beliefs and ideas. “Big ideas” such as justice, equity, honesty, and cooperation—as well as other kinds of ideas, including violence, exploitation, and greed—may emerge in games whether designers intend them or not. What about the value of Freedom? In what way is it inherent in the idea of play? In this talk, Mary Flanagan considers freedom in the context of Values at Play, a theoretical and practical framework for identifying socially recognized moral and political values in digital games. After developing a theoretical foundation for this approach, Flanagan will provide detailed examinations of selected games, demonstrating the many ways in which values are embedded in them. Flanagan will also discuss the Values at Play heuristic, a systematic approach for incorporating values into the game design process. Can better games enable a robust self and society?

### **SHORT BIO**

Dr. Mary Flanagan founded and directs the internationally acclaimed game research laboratory, Tiltfactor. She has written more than 20 critical essays and chapters on digital culture and play, and her recent books in English include *Critical Play* (2009) and *Values at Play in Digital Games* (2014) with Helen Nissenbaum. Flanagan has broken ground with collaborator Nissenbaum by investigating how games, interactive systems, and online activities can be redesigned to prioritize human values. In this work they have proven that using humanist principles to shape software and product development offers a profoundly important strategy for innovation. Flanagan’s work has been supported by commissions including The British Arts Council, as well as Science, Humanities, and health funding agencies in the US. She has served on the faculty of the Salzburg Global Seminar & the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy Academic Consortium on Games for Impact. Flanagan is the Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Professor in Digital Humanities at Dartmouth College.