



Education Board Prize 2021

Laureates:

**Dr Gwennie Debergh
Prof. Jeroen Puttevils
Prof. Kurt Vanhoutte**

Nominator:

Prof. Luc Herman

If I tell you that about 70% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are into gaming, you will understand that university lecturers can use games to connect with students. And indeed, during the lockdown, three of my colleagues at the Faculty of Arts used games to turn the loss of face-to-face connection with students into didactic gain.

Jeroen Puttevils took History students in the programme component 'Middle Ages: politics and institutions' to feudal Europe through the real-time strategy game *Crusader Kings II*. The students met in this digital environment as kings, dukes or counts and had to make political choices to increase or at least consolidate power. Arrange a marriage or start a war: this is how you learn how fragile power is and how historical development can be the result of impulsive decisions, frustration and a dose of luck.

In the programme component 'Theatre Science: fundamentals', Kurt Vanhoutte alternated the online lectures in Blackboard with online lectures in the game environment of *Red Dead Redemption II*, an action-adventure game set in the Wild West in 1899. You can imagine hearing the wagon with which the lecturer arrives to class, and you can imagine seeing the sunset against which Van Houtte, in Lucky Luke style, disappears into the scenery at the end. More important than these fine details, of course, is the fact that through the game the basic question of the course ('What is theatricality?') could be addressed.

Finally, Gwennie Debergh developed a so-called serious game for a programme component to discuss the complex novel *De verwondering* (The Astonishment) by Hugo Claus. *De verwondering* is a masterpiece, but it is indeed not simple and it also deals with a theme – wartime collaboration – with which students are usually not familiar. A serious game is aimed at increasing understanding through questions and answers. By using this type of game in this course, the complexity of Claus's novel was preserved by allowing the students gradually gain access to the book.

Kurt, Jeroen and Gwennie not only made media headlines with their use of games (from *De Standaard* to the 7 o'clock news on VTM), but they also showed that our faculty is fully committed to digital humanities, the research practice that uses all possible digital and technological resources to do human sciences.

For the aforementioned reasons, I ask Rector Herman Van Goethem and Vice-Rector Ann De Schepper to honour colleagues Jeroen Puttevils, Kurt Vanhoutte and Gwennie Debergh with the Education Board Prize 2021 of the University of Antwerp.