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"Power to the People" or the Role of Ideology in Persuasive Games

This paper talks about the role of ideology in persuasive games and about possible ways to use current game design/prototyping tools to encourage students to make their own (persuasive) games. Persuasive games, as part of the serious games movement (cf. Gee 2008, Prensky 2001), demonstrate how existing social and cultural positions find their way into games. On one hand, we can see that the content, rules, challenges and goals of these analogue and digital games often support radical or fundamental attitudes, values or beliefs, but on the other hand, it is also possible with persuasive games to question common sense thinking and encourage critical thinking. Therefore the paper will discuss not only the rhetoric (cf. Bogost 2007) and specific ideologies (cf. Gramsci 1971) of religious e.g. Left Behind. Eternal Forces, military-related e.g. America's Army or political games e.g. JFK. Reloaded, but also share my experiences in building analogue and digital prototypes of persuasive games with different groups of students.