

# Akil Fletcher, Ph.D.

## Curriculum Vitae

Cotsen Postdoctoral Fellow in the Society of Fellows, Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology, Princeton University

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## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

2023 - 2026                      Cotsen Postdoctoral Fellow in the Society of Fellows, Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Princeton University

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## EDUCATION

2023                              Ph.D. Anthropology, School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine  
Fields: Digital/Virtual Anthropology, Black Communities, Game Studies, Internet Studies, social media, online platforms, Online Gaming

2016                              B.A. Anthropology, The City College of New York, CUNY, Minor in Sociology

2014                              A.A. Liberal Arts, Kingsborough Community College, CUNY

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## DISSERTATION

Title:                              “Playing in Color: An Exploration of Black Gaming Communities and Practices.”

Committee:                      Tom Boellstorff (Chair), Damien Sojoyner, Kishonna Gray.

Research funded by:              National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program, National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant, UCI Presidential Fellowship

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## PUBLICATIONS

### *Journal Articles (peer-reviewed)*

- 2024 (Under-Review) Fletcher, Akil. "Reformatting Blackness: Creating Black Identity in Final Fantasy XIV and Anime."
- 2020 Fletcher, Akil. "Esports and the Color Line: Labor, Skill and the Exclusion of Black Players." Proceedings of the 53rd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.  
<https://doi.org/10.24251/hicss.2020.325>.
- 2020 Fletcher, Akil. "Teaching Race through the Lens of Gaming." Teaching and Learning Anthropology Journal.  
<http://teachinglearninganthro.com/2020/01/>.

### *Book Chapters (peer-reviewed)*

- 2024 (Under-Review) Fletcher, Akil. "Gaming Beyond Death: Black Grieving and Restoration in League of Legends." Emerging Genres, Bloomsbury Approaches to Game Studies
- 2022 Fletcher, Akil. "Black Gamers' Refuge: Finding Community within the Magic Circle of Whiteness." Routledge Companion to Media Anthropology.

### *Book Reviews*

- 2024 Fletcher, Akil. "Resurrecting the Black body: Race and the digital afterlife By Tonia Sutherland, Berkely, CA: University of California Press. 2023.2014"  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/maq.12845>

### *Public Scholarship*

- 2024 Fletcher Akil, Kimberely Hassel, John G, Russel, "Stranger Than Fiction?: Yasuke and the Assassin's Creed: Shadows Controversy" Journal of Critical Asian Studies  
<https://criticalasianstudies.org/commentary/2024/9/23/commentary-kimberly-hassel-akil-fletcher-and-john-g-russell-stranger-than-fiction-yasuke-and-the-assassins-creed-shadows-controversy>

2020	Fletcher Akil, "Why Gamers Should Read Black Authors." UCI Publications Esports. <a href="https://esports.uci.edu/why-gamers-shouldread-black-authors/">https://esports.uci.edu/why-gamers-shouldread-black-authors/</a> .
2019	Fletcher, Akil. "White Fans, Liberal Ideologies, and the Erasure of Black Stories in Gaming." Platypus. <a href="http://blog.castac.org/2019/05/white-fans-liberal-ideologiesandthe-erasure-of-black-stories-in-gaming/">http://blog.castac.org/2019/05/white-fans-liberal-ideologiesandthe-erasure-of-black-stories-in-gaming/</a> .

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## GRANTS, AWARDS, HONORS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

2024	Nominated for the Social & Economic Change Award by Black in Gaming
2024	The Magic Grant for Innovation, Princeton University (\$40,000)
2024	The Council on Science and Technology Annual Call, Princeton University (\$12,000)
2022 – 2023	President's Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCI (\$48,139.96)
2021 – 2022	National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (Grant ID: 2049474) (\$13,914.00)
2021	Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship (Honorable Mention)
2020	Nominated for Best Paper HICSS-53, Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences
2019 – 2023	National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (Grant ID: 2019286927) (\$102,000.00)
2019 – 2022	Nevin's Graduate Endowment Fellowship, UCI (\$10,000)
2018 – 2022	Social Science Merit Fellowship, UCI (\$20,700)
2018 – 2022	Graduate Opportunity Fellowship, UCI (\$17,000)
2018 – 2019	Diversity Fellowship, UCI (\$10,000)

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## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2022 – Current	Book project: Playing in Color – How Black Gamers Build Worlds
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2020 – 2022	Primary Investigator “Gaming Blackness” Dissertation Research, UCI
2018	Competitive Edge Summer Researcher, UCI
2015 – 2018	Research Assistant, University of John Jay College of Criminal (Special thanks in Trinch, Shonna, and Edward Snajdr “What the Signs Say: Language, Gentrification, and Place-Making in Brooklyn” 2020)

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## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2024	ANT 354/HUM 373: Digital Anthropology: Methods for Exploring Virtual Worlds, Spring 2024, Department of Anthropology, Princeton University, Instructor of Record
2023	ANT 437/ AAS 437: Gaming Blackness: The Anthropology of Video Games and Race, Fall 2023, Department of Anthropology/African American Studies, Social Science, Princeton University, Instructor of Record
2019	SOC230A: Race and Ethnicity, Winter 2019 Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine, Teaching Assistant
2019	SOC230A: Race and Ethnicity, Spring 2019 Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine, Teaching Assistant

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## CONFERENCE PAPERS & PRESENTATIONS

2024	“Reimagining Gaming Blackness” Innovation forum, Keller Center, Princeton University
2024	Panel “Playing Beyond the Academy: Playgrounds as Sites for Alternative Community” Panel Chair and discussant with Cody Mejeur, Reginald Gardner, Kishonna Gray, and David Nemer.
2024	“How Gaming Has the Transformative Power to Change Real Lives” Panel Discussant with Shamiel Moore, Erica Ford, Havoc, and Malcolm Coley for the GAMING 4 PEACE SYMPOSIUM

- 2024 "Future of Education in Gaming Panel" Panel Discussant with Dr. Katryna Starks, Jihan Johnston, and Kiersha Howard. Black in Gaming Fest/ Game Developers Conference.
- 2023 "Playing in Color: How Black Gamers Build Worlds," Presentation for the Society of Fellows at Princeton University.
- 2023 "Panel on Emerging Voices in Black Game Studies" Panel Discussant with Steven Dashiell and Cyan Deveaux. ADE for Game Communities Speaker Series 2023.
- 2023 "Educators Summit: Incorporating Black Game Studies in the Classroom: Benefits to Everyone" Panel Discussant with Lindsay Grace, Latoya Peterson, and Jay Justice. Game Developers Conference 2023 (GDC 2023)
- 2022 "Black Joy. Black Pain: Exploring Narratives of Survival in Gaming" Panel Discussant with Kishonna Gray, Reginald Gardner, Javon Goard, and Joan Miller. Meaningful Play 2022 Conference.
- 2022 "Black Gaming: Exploring Community within the Magic Circle of Whiteness" Doctoral Consortium Foundations of Digital Games 2022 (FDG 2022)
- 2022 "Studying and Speaking to Industries: A Game Studies Roundtable" Panel Discussant with Amanda Cote, Kishonna Gray, Christopher A. Paul, Kelly Bergstrom, Alison Harvey, Christine H. Tran. Console-ing Passions 2022.
- 2022 "Black Gamer's Refuge: Finding Community within the Magic Circle of Whiteness." Games+Learning+Society Conference (GLS 2022)
- 2021 "Gaming in the Dark." Panel Discussant with Stephanie Jones, Aaron Doughty, Reginald Gardner, and Stephanie Ortiz. Society for Cinema and Media Studies 2021 (SCMS 2021).
- 2020 "Esports and the Color Line" Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences 2020 (HIICS 2020).
- 2019 "The Quotidian Practices of Streaming." American Anthropology Association 2019 (AAA 2019).
- 2018 "Summer Research Symposium." University of California, Irvine.

2016 "John Jay Student Research Symposium" John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

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## INVITED TALKS

- 2024 Fletcher, Akil. Black Representation in Modern Video Games: Looking Beyond the Veil, Department of Anthropology/ Anthropology Club, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.
- 2024 Fletcher, Akil. "From Toonami to Final Fantasy: Exploring the Impacts of Japanese Media in U.S Black Communities, Global Japan Lab, in conjunction with Princeton University and the University of Tokyo
- 2024 Fletcher, Akil. "Black Movement: Black Stillness" African American Studies Faculty and Graduate Seminar, African American Studies Department, Princeton University.
- 2023 Fletcher, Akil. "Esports and the Color Line in Game Studies" Guest Lecturer, Georgetown University.
- 2023 Fletcher, Akil. "Black in the Magic Circle of Whiteness," PLASMA speaker, University at Buffalo.
- 2023 Fletcher, Akil. "Black Fantasy: Reformatting Black Identity in Final Fantasy XIV," Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).
- 2023 Fletcher, Akil. "Creating Blackness: Identity in Final Fantasy XIV", Invited Speaker, Purdue University.
- 2023 Fletcher, Akil. "Graduate School: Defining Your Interest", SSARC's Graduate School and Research Team, UCI
- 2022 Fletcher, Akil. "Exploring Race through VR and Embodiment", Guest Lecturer, Colgate College.
- 2022 Fletcher, Akil. "Black Fantasies: Defining A Digital Double Consciousness in Final Fantasy XIV," Invited Speaker, University at Buffalo.
- 2022 Fletcher, Akil. "Analyzing Race in Video Games," Guest Lecturer, University at Buffalo.
- 2022 Fletcher, Akil. "Reformatting Blackness: Black Identity in Final Fantasy XIV" Colloquium Speaker, UCI.

- 2022 Fletcher, Akil. "An Anthropological Look at Gaming Communities" Guest Lecturer for ICS 60 Games and Society, UCI.
- 2022 Fletcher, Akil. "Digital Anthropology: Virtual Gaming and Black Experience." Guest Lecturer, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, Department of Anthropology, Pomona College.
- 2022 Fletcher, Akil. "Fieldwork Preparation Bootcamp." Invited Speaker, Anthro in Transit (AIT) Workshop, UCI.
- 2021 Fletcher, Akil. "Racial Representation in Esports and Gaming." UCI Esports Center, UCI.
- 2021 Fletcher, Akil. "Digital Anthropology and Race in Gaming." Guest Lecturer for Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, Department of Anthropology, Pomona College.
- 2021 Fletcher, Akil. "Revisiting Esports and the Color Line." Guest Lecturer for The Cultural Politics of Visual Representation (ANTH250A), Department of Anthropology, UCI.
- 2021 Fletcher, Akil. "Success in Grant Writing." Guest Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, UCI.
- 2020 Fletcher, Akil. "Black Faces in Gaming Spaces." Invited Speaker at UCI Esports Arena.
- 2020 Fletcher, Akil. "Race and Gaming." Guest Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Science Fiction and Anthropology, Ithaca College.
- 2019 Fletcher, Akil. The narrator for "Splinters of a Broken Alphabet." Play written by Roxanne Varzi, Department of Anthropology, UCI.
- 2019 Fletcher, Akil. "Digital Anthropology and Video Games." Guest Lecturer, Introduction to Anthropology, Department of Anthropology, UCI.

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## PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP & MEDIA APPEARANCES

- 2024 Graduation Speaker For New York Public Schools, City Polytechnic High School of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology

2024	Appearance on Nerds @ Work with Tsuderi Podcast
2023	Appearance on Our World Openly with Antoni Kalkowski
2021	Career Day Speaker for NY Public Schools, City Polytechnic High School of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology
2020	Graduate Student Spotlight, UCI School of Social Sciences
2019	Graduate Student Spotlight, Department of Anthropology, UCI

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## WORKS REVIEWED

2024	Article reviewed for the Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology (ETHOS)
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## DIVERSITY & SERVICE IN INDUSTRY

2024	“Gaming For Education” Black Girl Gamers Online Summit, Black Girl Gamers.
2024	“How Gaming Has the Transformative Power to Change Real Lives” Panel Discussant with Shamiel Moore, Erica Ford, Havoc, and Malcolm Coley for the GAMING 4 PEACE SYMPOSIUM
2024	“Future of Education in Gaming Panel” Panel Discussant with Dr. Katryna Starks, Jihan Johnston, and Kiersha Howard. Black in Gaming Fest/ Game Developers Conference.
2023	Program Coordinator and Director of “Camp CRECE—Youth Esports and Gaming Camp” sponsored by Niantic, Inc., and the University of Kentucky.
2022	Program Coordinator & Director of “Camp Kiki – Youth Esports and Gaming Camp” sponsored by Niantic, Inc, and the University of Kentucky.

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## DIVERSITY & SERVICE IN ACADEMIA

2024	Conference Program Chair, BIPOC Games Conference
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2024	Graduation Ceremony Speaker for Kingsborough Community College
2023	Guest Speaker for Kingsborough Community College, College Discovery, The Journey After College
2023	Graduate Advisor & Treasurer for BGXS, UCI Black Gxming Society
2022	Graduate Advisor & Treasurer for BGXS, UCI Black Gxming Society
2021	Executive Committee Member of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion for the Esports Conference, UCI
2020	Guest Speaker at Kingsborough Community College, College Discovery, Freshman Orientation
2019	Guest Speaker at Kingsborough Community College, College Discovery, Career Development Day
2019 – 2020	NSF & Ford Grant Editor, UCI
2019	Peer Mentor, Competitive Edge Program, Graduate Division, UCI
2018	Guest Speaker at Kingsborough Community College, College Discovery, Graduation