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Taking Games Seriously

A Colloquium Presentation By
Jennifer S. Light

Jointly Presented by the Departments of History and Geography

February 5, 2009 3:30-5PM Buchanan Hall, Rm. 1930



Above: Urban planners playing METROPOLIS, c 1960; University of Michigan

Abstract: Historians documenting the expanding influences of “systems thinking” in the United States during the Cold War period have emphasized the role of computers in spreading the gospel of systems to professional audiences while neglecting another simulation technology in broader use. This presentation will examine efforts to teach systems analysis to the communities served by the federally-organized Model Cities program of the 1960s and 1970s using that overlooked innovation: operational games. The story of the Model Cities games suggests new directions for the history and historiography of systems analysis and simulation.

About the speaker: Jennifer S. Light is Associate Professor of Communication Studies, History, and Sociology, and Director of the Media, Technology and Society PhD program at Northwestern University. She is the author of two books: *From Warfare to Welfare: Defense Intellectuals and Urban Problems in Cold War America* (2003) and *The Nature of Cities: Ecological Visions and the American Urban Professions, 1920-1960* (2009), both with Johns Hopkins University Press.

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