Foundations of Interactive Game Design (80K)

week six, lecture one
Today

- Quiz
- Announcement
- Games and rhetoric
- What’s next?
- Quiz
Quiz
According to Bogost, procedural rhetoric is:

A: a technique for understanding the politics of software comments, variable names, and other uses of language in code

B: a technique for making rhetorical statements with computational system behavior

C: a technique for understanding procedural arguments others create

D: A & B

E: B & C
According to Bogost, persuasive games are most closely related to

A: Fogg’s persuasive technology
B: Sutton-Smith’s rhetorics of play
C: Magie’s *The Landlord’s Game*
D: A & B equally
E: B & C equally
Announcement
Summer Class: Game Design Practicum

- CMPS 179: Summer Session, 8 weeks, 5 units
- Fulfills GE Code: PR-C and a Game Engineering Elective (for game major)
- Prerequisites: CMPS 20 and 80K
- Work with industry veteran (Maxis/EA) and game design research group from eBay
- If interested, contact: kcompton@soe.ucsc.edu
Games and rhetoric
What does this mean?

September 12th, newsgaming.com, 2003
What do you notice?
September 12th

Not an animation, but an interaction...
September 12th

- Fictional world: Village of civilians and terrorists, bomb targeting
- Rules: People move continually, bombs take time to fall, dead civilians inspire mourning, mourning inspires terrorism
September 12th

- **Gameplay:**
  - Targetted bombing hits civilians, sprouts as many new terrorists as it kills
  - Indiscriminate bombing creates a wasteland w/ more terrorists than others
  - Procedural rhetoric: Bombing is a poor tool for addressing terrorism
Other Sept 11th games

- **New York Defender**: Is arcade-style play an argument?
- **9/11 Survivor**: Rhetoric of randomness or disturbingly affectless?
Procedural rhetoric
What does this mean?

- *NRA Gun Club*, Crave Entertainment, 2006
- Realistic operation — discharge to reload
Procedural Rhetoric

• “Procedurality refers to a way of creating, explaining, or understanding processes.”

• “Rhetoric refers to effective and persuasive expression.”

• “Procedural rhetoric, then, is a practice of using processes persuasively.... persuading through processes in general and computational processes in particular.”
Interpreting rhetoric

- “Just as verbal rhetoric is useful for both the orator and the audience, and just as written rhetoric is useful for both the writer and the reader, so procedural rhetoric is useful for both the programmer and the user, the game designer and the player.”

- We may find procedural rhetoric at work in a game beyond that consciously intended
“To write procedurally, one author codes that enforces rules to generate some kind of representation, rather than authoring the representation itself.”
Procedural

• For Bogost “procedural expression must entail symbol manipulation, the construction and interpretation of a symbolic system that governs human thought or action.”

• Computers “are particularly adept at representing real or imagined systems that themselves function in some particular way ... The computer magnifies the ability to create representations of processes.”
Procedural

- We live in a world of systems, of procedures, only some encoded in software
- A fundamental question: *How does this work?*
- “Procedural representation explains processes with other processes.”
- Requires a procedural medium
Procedural figures, forms, and genres

• Operational logics (e.g., collision detection) are small and used in many ways.

• Procedural forms (e.g., game engines) are larger and determine more about use.

• Procedural genres (e.g., platformer) “similarities between the constitutive procedural representations that produce the on-screen effects and controllable dynamics we experience as players.”
On the other hand

- Bogost argues “procedures found the logics that structure behavior in all cases”
- Is this an unproven thesis (about cognition, culture, etc., as computational procedures)?
- Or is it a gesture to how broadly Bogost thinks we need to think of procedures?
- Should we differentiate the un/specifiable?
What does this mean?

Darfur is Dying, darfurisdying.com, 2006
What do you notice?
Darfur is Dying

Political awareness, and empathy, not policy
Darfur is Dying

- Fictional worlds: Water foraging & village, individuals (not “lives”)
- Water rules: Can run & hide, confrontation is death
- Water gameplay: Being slow, fearful works
- Water rhetoric: Just basic living harrowing
The Landlord’s Game

Elizabeth Magie, 1904

“intended to demonstrate how easy it is for property owners to inflict financial ruin on tenants”
Monopoly’s game

- Juul argues that gameplay emerges from player effort to achieve winning situation.
- In September 12th the presumed winning situation cannot be achieved, forcing reflection.
- We don’t know about The Landlord’s Game, but Monopoly can be won, though it often stops being fun first.
- See Flanagan’s Critical Play for great history!
Monopoly’s rhetoric

• Fictional world: Real-estate speculation and development, plus random events

• Rules: Land monopolies required for development, allows bankrupting rivals

• Gameplay: Buy land as fast as you can, trade aggressively, develop first, broken endgame

• Rhetoric: Strategies for capitalism? Parody?
Rhetorical coercion?

• In procedural rhetoric, the world operates according to certain rules

• Even if we disagree with this model of the world, we must go along to progress

• Impossible to respond *in situ*, change rules

• Is this more coercive than what is required to follow a complex argument in a book?
Persuasive games

- *September 12th* is a political game, making a policy argument

- What about other kinds of persuasion?
I encourage you to make games that inspire rhetorical readings
Make sure the world, rules, and gameplay fit together and serve your rhetoric
Upcoming

• There is online reading for next Monday (linked from syllabus)

• Computational prototypes and schedule/progress updates due in section this week

• Game help session this Friday, noon-1:30 in Jack’s Lounge

• Short answer mid-term this Friday, review lecture next Wednesday

• Multi-game analysis essays due in 2 weeks
Quiz
According to last week’s lecture, agency doesn’t require

A: A computational model of the play domain
B: An interface that sets appropriate expectations
C: Activities and participation that players find enticing
D: Balancing formal and material affordances
E: Transitioning players from initial expectation