CMPS80K, Spring 2013, Section 01: Schedule (List View)

Monday, April 1, 2013

03:30 PM
Location: Thim Lecture 3

**Intro to Class. Games as an Expressive Medium**

**Reading:**
"Formal Abstract Design Tools" by Doug Church.

Wednesday, April 3, 2013

03:30 PM
Location: Thim Lecture 3

**Permission Not Needed / Game Industry Structure**

**Reading:**
"I Have No Words & I Must Design" by Greg Costikyan.

Friday, April 5, 2013

03:30 PM
Location: Thim Lecture 3

**A Language for Game Design**

**Reading:**
MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design http://www.cs.northwestern.edu/~hunicke/MDA.pdf

**DUE:** Purchase course book, Challenges for Game Designers
Grade components.
- Regular quizzes (given at lectures, lowest three dropped): 15%
- Two Game Maker tutorials: 7%
- Game mechanics analysis: 3%
- Multi-game analysis paper: 15%
- Project team selection: 1%
- Project simple concept and physical prototype/storyboard: 9%
- Project design document and schedule: 9%
- Project computational prototype: 9%
- Project progress updates: 2%
- Playtestable project: 3%
- Completed project (game, instructions, and demonstration): 20%
- Midterm, final, and participation in final presentations: 7%
Game Analysis - due 4/12/13

Overview
Just as filmmakers learn to watch film differently — seeing the structure of shots — and writers learn to read differently, game designers learn to play differently, seeing the structure of the games they play. Two of our class assignments are aimed at this. First, you will write a brief analysis of the mechanics of one game. Just learning to see and analyze game mechanics is important. However, many times, the unique qualities of a game are only apparent when contrasted with other similar games, or with earlier or later games in the same series. In the second assignment, you will compare and contrast at least three games to better understand their game design.

Of course, correct spelling and grammar are expected. Assignments not written at a college level of expression will be returned without grade for revision. Assignments must be typed, and submitted printed out on paper in section. Handwritten assignments will be returned, but not for submission. Emailed assignments will be returned without a grade for resubmission in section. Assignments must be original, and in your own words. You must properly cite all quotations, including those from web sites. The games analyzed must be complete, public, not designed by you, and play only include the non-digital game unless your TA gives specific permission.

One Page Mechanics Analysis
Due week 2 in class on Friday 4/12/13. For this assignment, choose a game, then identify and describe at least three mechanics of the game. Argue for at least one of them as a "core mechanic" of the game. For extra credit, argue for dynamics that arise from one or more of the mechanics you identified. (Game mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics will be covered in class lecture.)

For example, if you were writing about chess (which is, of course, because I'm doing it here), you could identify "defined, differentiated, and randomized piece movement," "not turn-based," the space occupied by an enemy piece," "checkmate," and "casting" as mechanics. You could argue that the first two are core mechanics and that they result in a dynamic of "projecting force across the board" (because enemies avoid any space to which the other could potentially move a piece).

When doing this assignment, a good idea would be to check out from the library a game that interests you for your multi-game analysis essay (see below) and spend some time the first week of class playing it attentively, making notes you can use for your full paper in addition to this assignment.

Another good idea is to choose a game for this assignment that uses mechanics related to the game you hope to build for your class game project. Deeply analyzing a game with related mechanics will be very helpful when designing and iterating your own game.

This assignment should be one page, or roughly 400 words.
Playing a game assignment due Friday

Hello everyone! I was wondering what the name of the game is that we need to play before class on Friday? :) Also, I am caught up with the article readings that are posted but what chapter(s) in the BOOK should we be reading? Is it just a chapter a day ......

the students’ answer, where students collectively construct a single answer

The game is called Passage by Jason Rohrer.
You can get the normal version here (free) http://hcssoftware.sourceforge.net/passage/ or if you have an iOS device, it’s on the app store for 0.99.

- An instructor [Mark Gerow] endorsed this students' response -

the instructors’ answer, where instructors collectively construct a single answer

As far as the game goes, I believe it was Passage.

followup discussions, for ingesting questions and comments

Resolved  Unresolved

Donovan Alexander  (14 hours ago) - Is it necessary to do any kind of write up for Passage? Or are we just supposed to play and experience the game?

Wyatt Sanders  (instructor)  (13 hours ago) - Pretty sure you just had to play/experience the game. If you find out there was a write-up, you can blame me.

Write a reply...

Click to start a new followup discussion
Registration for IFOG: Interactive Storytelling is now Open

Posted on March 5, 2013

We’re thrilled to announce that registration for Inventing the Future of Games: Interactive Storytelling is now open. Please click here to begin your registration.

We are finalizing our speaker line-up and will have more information posted soon on sessions, speakers, demos, and other exciting content!
Worst Company In America Semifinals: EA Vs. Ticketmaster

April 5, 2013
Orthy @adam_orth
Sorry, I don't get the drama around having an “always on” console. Every device now is "always on". That's the world we live in.
#dealwithit

Manveer Heir @manveerheir
@adam_orth Did you learn nothing from Diablo III or SimCity? You know some people's internet goes out right? Deal with it is a shitty reason

Orthy @adam_orth
@manveerheir Electricity goes out too.

Manveer Heir @manveerheir
@adam_orth You've lived in LA, SF, Seattle... very connected places. Try living in Janesville, WI or Blacksburg, VA

Orthy @adam_orth
@manveerheir Why on earth would I live there?
Microsoft Creative Director Adam Orth on Always Online Consoles: 'Deal With It'

Microsoft has yet to acknowledge the existence of its next-gen Xbox, but that hasn’t stopped endless debates over rumors that the console might block used games, or that it would require a constant internet connection. While this mostly involves internet comments and anonymous sources, the most recent combatant is a little closer to issue — he’s a creative director at Microsoft Studios named Adam Orth.

Adam Orth tweets can’t be great news for Microsoft’s PR. He starts out tone deaf, telling anyone who doesn’t want an online-only console to “deal with it.” It gets worse from there. When Bioware’s Manveer Heir told him that he’s only lived in highly wired cities, saying: “try living in Janesville, WI, or Blacksburg, VA,” Orth responded with “Why on earth would I live there?”

And people say the tech world doesn’t care about middle America. His tweets are now protected, but NeoGaf has the screenshots.
• How your choices are affected if you have a partner

• Loneliness.

• Score.

• Chasing riches.

• Seeing it all before you. Compression past/future.
Developing a Vocabulary

- Greg Costikyan’s “I Have No Words & I Must Design”
- Published in 1994
- Height of industry’s inability to talk to itself

http://www.costik.com/nowords.html
What is a game?

- Interactive
- Has goals
- Not linear
- Has rules
- Requires participation

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
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“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Our goal is to keep players’ brains busy. Think about that as we go through these concepts.
What is a game?

- A game is a form of art which participants, termed players, make decisions in order to manage resources through game tokens in the pursuit of a goal.

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Decision Making

- Meaningful interaction
- Key decision points in games
  - Align with one group to the exclusion of another (Wizardry)
  - Making ethical decisions (Ultima)
  - Minding City A while City B goes to hell (Civilization)
- Based on goals, opposition, resource management and information.

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Decision Making

- What makes decisions meaningful?
- Examples of meaningful game decisions?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Goals

- Makes decisions meaningful.
- “Struggling” toward a goal.
- Holds player’s attention.
- Provides emotional connection.

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Struggling toward a goal
Opposition

- What makes games a struggle?
- What “struggles” can you think of in games?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Managing Resources

- Hit points, money, food, bolts
- Must have meaning in game world
- Must manage efficiently to achieve goals

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Managing Resources

- “What resources does the player manage?”
- “Is there enough diversity in them to require **tradeoffs** in making decisions?”
- “Do they make those decisions interesting?”
- Examples?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Game Tokens

- Avatar
- Means of managing game resources
- Must have meaning in game world
- Must manage efficiently to achieve goals
- Fewer they are, the more detailed they must be.

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Game Tokens

- “What are the player’s tokens?
- What are these tokens’ abilities?
- What resources do they use?
- What makes them interesting?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Information

- If the player doesn’t know it, it doesn’t matter.
- Designer having more fun than the player.
- Must be able to reasonably act upon it (amount of info vs. time to make decision)

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Information

- Given the decisions players are required to make, what information do they need?
- Does the game provide the information as and when needed?
- Will reasonable players be able to figure out what information they need and how to find it?
- Examples of too much or too little?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Other things that strengthen games

- Diplomacy
- Color
- Simulation
- Variety of Encounter
- Positive Identification
- Roleplaying
- Socializing
- Narrative Tension

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Diplomacy

- Games are strengthened if they permit and encourage diplomacy.
- Alliances, trading of resources
- Non-exclusive goals

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Color

- Pageantry and detail and sense of place can greatly add to a game’s emotional appeal.
- Wrappings we put on games – medieval, futuristic, wild west

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Color

- How does the game evoke the ethos and atmosphere and pageantry of its setting?
- What can you do to make it more colorful?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Simulation

- A means of providing color
- Simulate what your game is about
- Improves character identification
- Allows insight into a situation narrative
- alone cannot
- Examples?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Variety of Encounter

- Players like the unexpected.
- Provides continuity of challenge.
- Examples?

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Positive Identification

- Alliance versus Horde (WoW), Elf, Allies, Dark Side, Dallas Cowboys
- Identification with “side” in game
- Provide Clear point of view

... not to be confused with...

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Roleplaying

- Occurs when in some sense, you take on the persona of your position.
- “What would my character do?”
- Improves position identification
- Improves color (suspension of belief)
- Excellent method for socialization

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Roleplaying

- How can players be induced to roleplay?
- What sorts of roles does the system permit or encourage?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Socializing

“I have to believe that the solitary nature of most computer games is a temporary aberration, a consequence of the technology, and that as networks spread and their bandwidth increases, the historical norm will reassert itself.”

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
How can games better encourage socialization?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Narrative Tension

- Tension makes for better games
- Tension throughout
- More at the end
- Examples?

“I Have No Words, and I Must Design” – Greg Costikyan
Why is WoW a great game?
Why is WoW a great game?

- Provides many decision points
- Multiple, non-linear goals
- Provides plenty of opposition
- Multiple, defined resources
- Single, highly defined avatar
- Good presentation of information
- Facilitates and welcomes diplomacy
- Loads of color including player created fiction
Why is WoW a great game?

- Simulated monsters, NPC groups, NPCs and economy
- Loads of monsters, NPCs
- “Side identification”: Alliance vs. Horde
- Allows players to roleplay their characters.
- Encourages socializing through guilds and chat.
- Provides narrative tension through quests and combat