Introductions
TAs, reader/tutors, faculty
If you want to add this class

- We have a capacity of 275 – 14 on waiting list
- If you have questions, start by posting to the class piazza forum, which TAs and reader/tutors will monitor: https://piazza.com/class/htc5b43kdz417v
Teams and sections

- Games are made in teams of two — if you want to make a game with someone, get them to add the class!
- You should be in the same section as your teammate
What’s important in games like *Combat* and *Journey*?

Class discussion.
Play is the fundamental experience of games. This is what makes Combat and Journey engaging. Trying things out, seeing what happens, pretending to be something we’re not, learning to do new things.

Sometimes that play is fun. Sometimes it isn’t — like being persistently beaten in Combat. But play is deeply engaging. Its the power of games.
Every computer game has a formal system, which is expressed in its software.

But even non-computer games have formal systems. Playground games have rules (Red Light, Green Light) and winning conditions and standard ways of setting up the play area, even if they are renegotiated and people cheat and so on.

Traditional games like Poker and Chess have some equipment, but that equipment can be replaced, because the core of the game is the formal system. You can play Chess by mail.

One of the interesting things about computer games is that, because you have the computer operating the formal system, the players don’t have to understand and operate the system the same way as with non-computer games.

In Combat the system is pretty obvious. There are variations on the shots fired and the wall behavior, there are points, there is a time limit. Journey, on the other hand, deliberately builds on its ability to keep the system secret. One of the fundamental experiences of Journey is discovering how the system impacts your interaction with other players.
Every game is set in a world of some sort. It might be a really abstract world, like Tetris, or a really concrete one like the Uncharted games.

Obviously the world relates to the game’s theme and fiction. But it also relates to gameplay.

Changing the world for Combat makes the game experience really different. It is about maneuvering around obstacles, looking for a good firing angle — or is it about opening fire and heading straight for the enemy?

Similarly, imagine if Journey’s formal system was the same but the world had a bunch of deadly pits for you to fall into? This would be a very different play experience.
Both of these games are deeply tied to particular technology.

Combat is actually one of the two games that the Atari 2600 was built to make possible (Pong is the other one). Almost everything the 2600 can do is on display here.

Journey, on the other hand, is built to show off the PlayStation 3. You think all that sand is there for no reason? It’s showing off what the seven processors can do inside the PS3.

Which also points us to economics. Both these games were economically supported by the platform owner — Atari and Sony, respectively — to produce something that would show off the hardware, shape people’s perception of the hardware, and ultimately increase their inclination to buy the hardware.
Obviously, competition is at the heart of Combat. It feeds into some of our deepest drives, to succeed, to win. The rush of winning, wanting to try again when we lose, getting bored by winning or losing too much... Lots of games do this.
Obviously, Journey has cooperation at its core, which also feeds into some of our deepest drives. The feeling of accomplishing something together, of helping someone else. Strangely, one of the more similar games might be the very different-seeming Left 4 Dead. And social games also do a version of this, and tap into these basic drives, though much more lightly.
But both of these games, even if they do it differently, are deeply social experiences. They’re both about companionship on some level. Competition can be friendly. Cooperation can be grudging. But they bring us together, which is an important thing that games have been doing forever — probably longer than we’ve had language as a species.
Both of these games are made to be accessible to people who aren't already gamers.

Combat was the game that came with the Atari 2600, so people had to be able to sit down and play it to figure out what they'd bought. But it also built on genre and history — based on the arcade game Tank.

Journey is a game meant to appeal to people who are looking for a new kind of game. If Combat is a spiritual ancestor of Team Fortress 2 (by which I mean, multiplayer games about shooting other players) it’s hard to see, immediately, the ancestors of Journey. What’s another game about taking a walk with someone?

So Journey does a lot of work to teach people how to play. And, at the same time, it is also a game building on a lot of history. It builds on pretty standard platforming gameplay (by which I mean, games about jumping around environments and moving through levels) and even uses standard tropes of platform level design (e.g., powerups hidden in out of the way places)
Only one of these games has a fictional world that is deep.

But even Combat puts us into the fictional world of being tank commanders. The game would be harder to interpret, and harder to play, if we just used colored squares.

And for Journey the fictional world provides context that makes our actions more engaging — and also provides one of the reasons to keep playing: we want to know what happens next to these characters, and we also want to know the backstory of this world which is being revealed through play (both the play spaces and the cutscenes).
Yes, one of these is much more aesthetically beautiful, certainly visually. But the aesthetics of games goes beyond the visual and the aural to include the system that structures and affords interaction. This is the unique aesthetics of games.

All the things we’ve been discussing add up to an experience of being a player of a game. That is an aesthetic experience. Games are a form of art. This class assumes they are the major emerging artform of our time.
That’s what this class is about
Making and understanding games

• Game design is central — how formal rules and tuned mechanics produce play in worlds (fictional, documentary, abstract)
• A way to understand games — and to use understanding of games
• Requires understanding technology, from high-level concepts (e.g., collision detection) to basic computer science (e.g., variables) and more
Course overview
Course basics

• Syllabus online: http://courses.soe.ucsc.edu/courses/cms80k/Spring14/01
• Lecture: T/Th 2:00-3:45pm, Classroom Unit 002
• Labs: weekly, starting today,
Grade components

• Making a game: 56% — using Game Maker, no programming experience required!
• Game analysis: 18% — one-page mechanics analysis and comparative essay
• Quizzes: 15% — given at lecture, using i>Clicker, covering readings, lectures, section topics, lowest three dropped
• Also tutorials (7%) and final presentations (4%)
If you have a Mac, like I do, you can run the Windows version under VMWare, Boot Camp, etc.

Don’t try to use the Mac version — you won’t be able to demo in section, etc.
What can you make with Game Maker?
There is help available every step of the way. We don’t just throw you in and say, “Make a game by the end of the quarter!”
Sections

• Each includes one TA and 2 reader/tutors (who did well in 80K earlier years)

• This week’s section takes you through everything you need to know for the first assignment (the first tutorial)

• This week’s section is also a chance to get to know other people in your section, look for potential teammates
Sections

Tue 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM Jennifer Parish
Wed 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM Topher Maraffi
Wed 8:00 PM – 10:00 PM Peter Mawhorter
Thu 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM Topher Maraffi
Thu 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM Jennifer Parish
Thu 8:00 PM – 10:00 PM Peter Mawhorter

Bold ones are the ones with the most space
Lectures

• Readings from *Game Design Workshop* Third Edition in bookstore
• Lectures by professor and visiting researchers/developers
• Lecture slides posted afterward to aid review — don’t need to write down everything on the slides
Now there are around 700 games in collection
Reaching us

- 80K piazza forum (linked from syllabus): https://piazza.com/class/htc5b43kdz417v
- TA email addresses on pages linked from syllabus
- Office hours — Michael Thursdays 4:30-5:30 and Fridays 4-5 in E2 373. Check SoE profile page for changes/cancelations

TA email addresses are on online syllabus

Do not email Michael except in case of dispute with TA. Can’t correspond with 275 people and run class :-(
Questions now?
Upcoming

• Attend section this week
• Buy the book, Game Design Workshop (3rd edition) and i>Clicker. Should be at Bay Tree
• Register i>Clicker by next Tuesday (quiz on Tuesday)
• Watch video (will be posted) on Thursday
• Read a chapter (will be posted) for Tuesday
• Start the first tutorial (due in section next week)
• Look over the syllabus, start experimenting with Game Maker — play some GM games?
10 weeks is limited time to make a game. Start thinking about concepts, and looking at the Yo Yo Games site, now. Also, start looking around your section for good possible teammates.