Foundations of Interactive Game Design (80K)

Lecture 5
Today

- Quiz
- Prior 80K game demo
- Game innovation: theme
- Grow a Game cards
- Prototyping
- What’s coming up
- We will not get through it all
Demo:

Void

by  Ruben Telles
& Brian Gabin
You can’t just re-use known solutions -- or not only do this -- unless you’re working on the safest possible thing. And you’re only going to do something exceptional, while staying safe in design, if you push execution/production to a new level through vast resources. Sometimes works for EA, won’t work for you.
Player centric design

- You are creating an aesthetic experience for the player – all design considerations must flow from the questions:
  - What does the player do? (mechanics)
  - What experience (dynamics) does this create for the player (aesthetics)?
- You are not your own typical player
- The player is not your opponent

How to design an innovative audience experience -- but a game in particular
Iterative design

- Rapid iteration, with something working all along the way, is a widespread design idea

- Fullerton calls the designer “an advocate for the player” — but it’s easy to lose sight of new player’s perspective

- Her approach: rapid iteration, with input from playtesters at every possible step
Playcentric design

- Start with player experience goals — aesthetics — e.g., need to trust and distrust other players (strategic), always almost out of control movement (feel), etc.
- Generate ideas, formalize ideas, test ideas, evaluate results
- Eject, repeat cycle, or accept current ideas
- Brainstorming, prototyping, design, production, testing
Your game projects
These are not the only kinds of games worth making — but they’re right for the scope of this class!
Game innovation

- One level is mechanics innovation
- You can change the action
- You can change the larger system to which it is articulated
- Another level is theme innovation
- Largely-familiar mechanics w/ new theme
Changing the action

- Adding a new action
- Changing how action works
- Re-defining fundamentals of the genre (first-person, space)
Changing the system

- Familiar action in new system context is a new mechanic
- Two player to single, turn based to continuous, etc.
- A way to revisit classics

Plasma Pong
Consider these *Pong* variations
Plasma Pong
Steven Taylor (2006)
Here’s another game that may meet the same fate

Pongs takes the actions of Pong and does something else

Let’s have a demo! (2 Players)

[2D Pong, Memories of Pong, and Laser Pong?]

Yes, it’s about thinking through the design space around Pong, showing many ways its core action can be rethought
Game innovation
Game innovation

• One level is mechanics innovation
  • You can change the *action*
  • You can change the larger *system* to which it is articulated
• Another level is theme innovation
  • Largely-familiar mechanics w/ new theme
Changing the action

- Adding a new action
- Changing how action works
- Re-defining fundamentals of the genre (platformer)

Portal
Changing the system

- Familiar action in new system context is a new mechanic
- Two player to single, turn based to continuous, etc
- A way to revisit classics

Plasma Pong
Changing the theme

- Taking a known game system
- A new theme that matches core aesthetics
- Adjustments to rules

Disaffected!
Adjustments to rules, like having your coworkers put things in random places

It makes the game more frustrating (fitting the aesthetics of the theme) and expresses something about how Kinko's/FedEx shops (don’t) work
SHAVING IS HUMILIATING

Wario Ware and Dys4ia
Let's have a demo!
What did you notice?
Bejeweled and Layoff

• Fundamental mechanics are the same
• Familiar gameplay and dynamics put us in the mindset of “making matches”
• But we see theme: the stories of workers, putting people in unemployment line, news
• Then we start to understand the new rule: bankers fill all the spaces — we’ve “saved” away the rest of the economy

Only major mechanics difference is that matches don’t always automatically disappear — feels a little less juicy, but also makes me think “Why don’t they just go away without me doing anything?” which might be something a layoff-focused consultant or takeover artist might think

Eventually you start to think, “How much do I have to ‘save’ anyway? What’s the goal here?” Especially as bankers fill up the space. Matches get harder and harder to find. You keep seeing matches you could make and then realizing they’re bankers.
Theme innovation

- The in-context actions (mechanics) still matter — making sets
- The feeling (aesthetic) of gameplay still matters — looking for big opportunities
- The rules of the system still matter — the matched sets disappear
- They can be used to connect to a new theme, putting players in different positions relative that theme (prompting thought)
- But often new rules make theme work
Generating game ideas
Game ideas

- Gameplay: a puzzle game, a party game, a game like *The Sims*, a game like *Super Mario*
- Technology: a particle effect game, an asynchronous multiplayer game, a specific tool trick
- World, theme, story: HP Lovecraft, environmental education, espionage
Game ideas

- Brainstorm multiple ideas connected to your strengths/interests
- “A 2D Sims-style game set in an HP Lovecraft world”
- “A Diplomacy-style game of conflict and allegiance set in a suburban mall”
- “A hidden-object game in which players are uncovering power brokers, using data gathered from littlesis.org”
But where to start?
Fullerton on brainstorming

- Get together to brainstorm!
- Have a challenge for the session
- No criticism
- Vary the method
- Playful environment
- Put it on the wall
- Go for lots of ideas
Upcoming

- Game concept due next week
- Physical prototype due next week