Course Overview
Class details online

- Syllabus online at
  - courses.soe.ucsc.edu/courses/cmps170/Fall14/01
- Piazza
  - https://piazza.com/class/hwislw6stla5rv
- Office Hours
  - Tuesdays, 4:30-6pm, Engineering 2, room 273
The year-long game design studio sequence

- **CS 170**
  - Game brainstorming
  - Individual concept development
  - Team formation and game design

- **CS 171**
  - The heart of making the game
  - Course is process-based, providing a series of milestones for completing game
  - Some game design work will continue
  - Focus on software engineering issues

- **CS 172**
  - Emergency design revisions (the “oh my god” moment)
  - Build out game content (level design)
  - Final playtesting and tuning
  - Finish game
  - Win awards at indie game competitions
Learning Goals

- Evaluation of game pitches
  - Ability to quickly evaluate a game pitch
  - Understanding of elements that comprise an effective game pitch

- Game concept brainstorming
  - Ability to develop novel game design ideas

- Create game pitches
  - Ability to develop a game design idea into an effective game pitch
  - Ability to present a game pitch to a group
Learning Goals (more)

- **Game design**
  - Ability to refine a game pitch into a more detailed game design
  - Ability to perform digital and non-digital prototyping of the game design concept
  - Ability to present a game design to an audience

- **Resume and portfolio**
  - Ability to create a professional resume and portfolio site
  - Ability to assess and critique a resume and portfolio

- **Team formation**
  - Ability to evaluate people as potential team members
  - Ability to develop an interview guide
Your TAs

- Ben Spalding (Friday section)
  - DANM MFA student
  - Background in cultural theory, creative writing, and game design
  - Experience as DM in table top role playing
  - bspaldin@ucsc.edu

- Leland Dawson (Monday section)
  - Computer Science MS student
  - Completed the 170 sequence last year (Forsaken)
  - Has made games for an Australian mobile games company
  - lsdawson@ucsc.edu

- TAs will have offices hours (TBD)
Google Drive

- We’ll be using Google Drive and Google Documents during the quarter
  - For homework submission
  - For providing feedback on game pitches given in class
  - For presentation of game pitches

- On the signup sheet, please indicate your preferred Google email address for using Google Drive
  - This is typically your @ucsc.edu email address
Upcoming deadlines

- Saturday, October 4, 10am
  - Saturday class session, Engineering Lecture Hall

- Sunday, October 5 (11:59pm)
  - Homework #1 – Summer Game Evaluation

- Sunday, October 12 (11:59pm)
  - Homework #2 – Game Pitch Evaluation

- Thursday, October 16 / Saturday, October 18
  - First game pitches in class

- …more on the homework later
Class expectations

- You are required to attend sections
  - Each section will have a graded assignment associated with it
  - Assignments can be completed in the section timeslot
  - No sections this week, or week of Thanksgiving

- You are required to attend the Saturday class sections
  - With prior approval, can miss a session for attending game-related conference or a hackathon/gamejam.
  - Saturdays we will meet: October 4, October 18, November 8, and December 6

- You are strongly encouraged to attend regular class sessions that are lectures
Classroom expectations

- If you’re attending lecture, you should be “mentally present” and engaged
  - Fine: Quick checks online for a related fact, or to find a game reference.
  - Not OK: (all are actual observed behavior from prior 17x students): Being on the web the entire class. Watching TV. Playing a game. Programming your game. Falling asleep consistently.

- In lecture, students should generally remain seated
  - Fine: Go to the bathroom, answer an **important** phone call, go to front for presentation or class exercise
  - Not OK: Getting up and wandering around the classroom for long periods of time.
  - Not OK: Walking into the “professor space zone” at the front of class while I am presenting.
  - If you start feeling so antsy or cooped up you can’t stay seated, you can go outside for a few minutes
Classroom expectations (2)

- Asking questions is fine, and encouraged
  - Please either raise your hand or wait for a pause in my lecture
  - Not OK: asking so many questions it becomes disruptive
  - Not OK: interrupting the professor or TAs while they are talking with a question
  - If things go on too long, I’ll ask that we continue discussion at the end of class, or in office hours

- Treat people with respect, and encouragement
  - I will work hard to be respectful of all of you
  - Giving presentations about rough-hewn game ideas is hard
  - Public speaking is really tough for many people
Game Design Values

- Here at UC Santa Cruz, we value:
  - Experiences that explore the boundaries of games as an expressive media.
  - Games that feature one or more forms of (radical) innovation.
  - Novelty in all its aspects.
  - Games consistent with a broad ideal of diversity.
Tradeoffs

- If forced to make a decision, we prefer:
  - Design risk over conservative designs
    - Though we do not seek to be reckless.
    - Design risk combined with risk evaluation strategies is best.
  - Novelty over fun
    - We like fun games, and ideally every game should be fun and novel.
    - Making a fun game without novelty is inconsistent with our design values.
  - Innovation over mass market appeal
    - We hope your games are wildly popular. But, conservative design solely to achieve mainstream appeal is inconsistent with our design values.
Implications

- A game with one novel mechanic, explored exceedingly well, is ideal.

- Should achieve novelty in design, visual, story and audio aspects.

- Games with smaller scope are better than games with larger scope.
Game selection process

- Week 2: Pitch 1
- Week 4: Pitch 2
- Week 5: Pitch 3
  - Everyone in the class makes a game pitch during the three pitches
  - ~240 ideas generated, 36 go forward (12 each round)
- Week 6: Second Chance Pitches
  - Optional: for existing game concepts or late-breaking ideas
  - Another 9 selected, for a total of 40-45
- Week 8: Greenlight Semifinals
  - Reduce by 50%, down to 20-25
- Week 9: Greenlight Final Pitches
  - Reduce by 50%, down to 10-15 greenlit games
Game selection

- During pitches, instructor and/or one or more of the TAs may indicate they like the game idea
  - Only one: game joins that person’s team
  - Multiple: pitcher gets to choose which team to join
  - None: sorry, not selected to go forward (try the second chance pitches if you’d like)
- Instructor and TAs will work with people on their teams to improve their games and pitches
- Will have a friendly competition to see who has the most greenlit games

- There will be an external panel of judges for the semifinals and the finals
  - Panels will be different for each
Game categories

- Open category (4 games)
- Social media game (3 games)
  - Game that makes non-trivial use of a social media platform (Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Instagram, possibly even Twitch)
- Game using non-traditional/custom hardware (2 games)
  - Custom controller/cockpit/hardware element
  - Also includes Kinect games
- Standup arcade game (2 games)
  - Game that would be played at a classic arcade
- Virtual reality/augmented reality game (2 games)
  - Occulus Rift, Seebright, etc.
Game categories (more)

- Game designed around specific visual art style (2 games)
  - Where the art style is the thing determined first, and the entire rest of the game is built around that style

- Game designed around a specific audio track or style (2 games)
  - Where the audio track/style is the first thing determined about the game, and the entire rest of the game is built around it
  - I.e., pick a specific song, and build a game that represents that song
  - Think game as music video
  - Or, make a game about Flamenco, or some unusual musical genre
  - NOT: a category for generic rhythm games that can have any music plugged into the game
  - Example: Vessel
Game categories (more)

- Innovation in an existing genre (2 games)
  - A game firmly rooted in conventions of an existing genre
  - But, is innovating in a non-trivial way
  - Example: for shmups, Everyday Shooter (clearly a 2d shooter, but visual style, music, and gameplay differ markedly from other games in genre)

- Will not fill every category
- We reserve the right to change the number of games accepted in a category
  - For example, if we have a large number of really outstanding game concepts in one category
Team formation

- Compared to past 170 classes, teams will form late in the quarter
  - Teams will likely not be completely formed by the end of the quarter

- Individuals will pitch until they pass the semifinals
  - At this point, they can bring one more person onto their team

- Games that are greenlit (pass the finals) then will have a formal application process for team members
Interview process (Week 10)

- Open, transparent application process
  - Where to apply, what to submit for the application
- Select people for interviews
  - Have posted interview questions
- Take and submit notes during interviews
  - These will be submitted
- Notification of selected people
  - All on the same day
- Acceptance period
  - People accept/decline offers from teams
Interview Outcomes

- Some teams may not have sufficient people
- Some people may not be on a team
- Will have another interview round at the start of Winter

- People who are not on a team will have an alternate assignment path in CS 171
  - Hard game programming assignments
  - Maximum grade on this path is a B+

- Games with clearly too few people on the team will be cut

- For teams, there is a tradeoff between being selective, and getting enough people.
Homework #1: Summer Game Evaluation

- Pick five games from the Summer Games List
  - List is posted on Piazza
  - At least 3 games have to come from the “Really Want You To Play” list
  - The remaining two can come from any category in the list
- Play the five games
  - It’s fine if you limit the gameplay time to an hour maximum
  - Some games don’t require even that much time
- Write 1-2 paragraphs describing your subjective evaluation of the game
  - No right or wrong answers
  - Write these under the particular game in the “Summer Games Megathread”
- Due Sunday, October 5, by 11:59pm
Homework #2: Game Pitch Evaluation

- You will review 75 game pitches found on Steam Greenlight, Kickstarter, Indiegogo, or other crowd funding/voting site.
- Develop your own scheme for evaluating game pitches
  - Needs to have at least five elements
  - Can be numerical ratings (recommended), short written statements, etc.
  - Describe your evaluation scheme in a document
- Evaluate the 75 game pitches according to your evaluation scheme
  - I.e., use a spreadsheet to record your evaluations.
Homework #2 (more)

- Pick your top 3 and worst 3
  - Write those, and a brief explanation in a post to Piazza
- Evaluate the evaluation scheme
  - 2-3 aspects that worked well, or didn’t work well
  - Write in a document (i.e., at the end of the evaluation scheme description)
- Due Sunday, October 12, 11:59pm
- See class website for grading scheme