Introduction

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GAM 224
Fall 2007
Outline

- Introductions
- Class organization
  - Resources
  - Assessment
  - Reaction papers
  - Analysis project
  - Design project
- Games and play
- Design
  - Meaningful Play
  - Choice
  - The Magic Circle
  - Systems
- Primary Schemas
  - Rules
  - Play
  - Culture
Me

- Professor Robin Burke
  - Helped create the GAM degree
  - Designed this class
  - Got A&L credit for this class

- Other classes
  - GAM 206: History of Games
  - GAM 376: AI in Computer Games
  - GAM 392: Game Mod Workshop

- But
  - not a game developer by training or experience
  - Background in artificial intelligence
    - e-commerce and information retrieval
Contacting me

- Email is best
  - rburke@cs.dePaul.edu
  - I am not on campus every day
  - When I am on campus, I am not always in my office

- Office hours
  - Office: 453
  - 10:30 – 12:00 pm Tue
  - 2:00 – 3:30 pm Wed
  - alternate hours possible – just ask!
Introductions

- Name
- Major
- Favorite computer (or non-computer) game
Class Organization

- Studying games
  - as designed systems
  - as interactive experiences
  - as cultural artifacts
- Fun!
  - Also, work
  - Quite a bit of writing
Resources: Readings

- Text
  - Salen & Zimmerman, "Rules of Play"
  - excellent text
  - We will draw heavily on the book
    - you are expected to do the reading before class
  - Chapters are short
  - We will skip around a bit
- A few other online readings
Resources: Game Play

- Game play materials
  - deck of cards
  - pair of dice
  - paper and pencil
  - bring to class!
- There may be unscheduled game play activities
Volunteers

- I will send out an email asking for game play volunteers
  - your job will be to demonstrate a game during class
    - not required
  - I'll need 8-10 over the course of the quarter
Resources: Information

- Course web site
  - (run by me)
  - Contains
    - lecture notes
    - homework assignments
    - quarter schedule
    - links to readings
    - the most up-to-date info

- But
  - site not up yet
Resources: Submit Homework

- Course On-Line site
  - (run by CTI)
    - http://dlweb.cti.depaul.edu/
  - Contains
    - homework submission links
    - grades
Resources: Analysis Papers

- turnitin.com
  - (contracted by DePaul)
  - http://www.turnitin.com/
  - Contains
    - plagiarism checker
    - all Analysis Papers to be submitted here
  - More details later in the quarter
Resources: Game Lab

- 7th floor, Rm 710
  - CTI Console Lab
  - Consoles
    - XBox, PS/2, GameCube
    - XBox 360s
    - PS/3
    - Wii
  - Many games
- 9th floor, Rm 920
  - PCs
    - 16 (?) PC workstations
  - Many games
- Open every day
  - http://defrag.depaul.edu/ for more details
- Students doing coursework have priority
Assessment

- Quizzes – 15%
  - Weeks 4, 6, Finals
- Reaction Papers – 15%
  - Six 1-page papers
  - Starting week 3
- Analysis Project – 30%
  - Two 5-page papers
  - Weeks 5, 7, and Finals (no final exam)
  - Three papers but you only have to turn in two
  - This is different from what the syllabus says
- Design Projects – 25%
  - Two group projects
  - Weeks 7, 10
- Homework assignments – 10%
  - Three assignments
  - Weeks 2, 4, 8
- Participation / In-class Activities – 10%
Reaction Papers

- Game syllabus
  - Grand Theft Auto 3, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, or Bully
  - Half-Life or Half-Life 2
  - Katamari Damacy or We Love Katamari
  - Age of Mythology, Civilization IV, Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle Earth (I or II), Total War(any) or WarCraft III
  - Guitar Hero, Guitar Hero II, or Dance Dance Revolution (any)
  - Gears of War, Rainbow Six: Vegas, or Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter (XBox 360 only)

- Submit a one-page reaction paper
- Should be tied to our readings and in-class discussion
Analysis Project

- In-depth study of one computer / video game
- Three different angles
  - Rules
  - Play
  - Culture
- Everyone will do a “Rules” paper
  - Second paper you can pick either “Play” or “Culture”
Analysis Project Milestones

- 9/12 (a week from today)
  - Pick game
- 10/3
  - Rules paper
- 10/24
  - Play paper
- 11/18
  - Culture paper
- Submitted to turnitin.com
Design Projects

- Two team projects
  - I will assign teams (randomly)
- Project #1
  - design a card game
- Project #2
  - design a game level
What to do now?

- Get the book
  - if you haven't already
- Get a deck of cards and a pair of dice
- Read the book
  - Ch. 1-10 plus essays
  - by Monday
- Start thinking
  - about what game you want to study
Games and Play

- What is this all about?
- Should we care?
  - What can we hope to learn by studying games and play?
- Three answers
  - design: we will be better able to design new games
  - appreciation: we will be better able to appreciate this media form
  - critical study: we will be better able to see how games give us insight into society
Why do we play?

- Many approaches to this question
  - evolutionary
  - psychological
  - sociological
  - cultural/historical
A Working Hypothesis

- Play is the exercise of our physical and mental capacities in a constrained, low-risk environment.
- To play is to learn to get better at something:
  - in an environment of reduced stress.
- Evolution has wired us to enjoy playing:
  - so that we work to master skills.
  - so that we learn a skill in a safe environment before needing it in a high-stakes one.
Requirements

- Play must be low risk
  - war is high risk
  - chess is low risk
- Play must be constrained
  - rules for what is and is not part of the game
- Play must provide feedback
  - otherwise no learning is possible
Characteristics of Play

- clearly separated from real life
  - primary outcomes non-consequential
- freely engaged
- governed by agreed-upon rules
- Examples
  - Tag, "House", "Cowboys and Indians"
  - Chess, Monopoly, Old Maid
  - Unreal Tournament, Sims
  - Götterdämmerung, Hamlet
Play ≠ Game

- Play as part of a game
  - a football "play"
- Play activities that aren't game-like
  - playing "house"
Characteristics

- Game-like (ludus)
  - Beginning and end
  - Fixed rules
  - Central objective

- Play-like (paidea)
  - No game objective
  - Rules may be improvised and modified

- Paidea without ludus
  - can seem pointless
    - although not always (Sims)

- Ludus without paidea
  - not fun
Definition

- Game
  - a game is a *system* in which *players* engage in an *artificial conflict* defined by *rules* that results in a *quantifiable outcome*
We will approach games from the standpoint of design

- What do designers of games do?
- What do they think about?
Designing a Game

"Design is a process by which a designer creates a context to be encountered by a participant, from which meaning emerges."

- Designer
  - individual or larger group
- Context
  - physical: spaces, objects
  - non-physical: behaviors, rules
- Participants
  - players
  - possibly spectators
- Meaning
  - the relationships between actions and outcomes
Meaningful Play

- Relationship between action and outcome
  - always present
  - the quality of this relationship makes the play meaningful

- We want to know
  - how design choices make play meaningful
Meaningful Play

- Indefinable term
- Different components
  - aesthetics
    - how appealing is a game's look and feel?
  - fun
    - what makes it enjoyable?
    - how does it present new pleasures?
  - learning
    - how does the game lead you to acquire abilities that seem worthwhile?
Choice

- Meaningful play consists of meaningful choices
  - small-scale choices that may add up to larger ones

- Tactics
  - individual actions and outcomes

- Strategy
  - the overall plan of action
Decomposing choice

- State of the game
  - what is the context in which the choice is available?
- Choice affordance
  - how does the player know what is possible?
- Action mechanism
  - how is the player's choice communicated to the game?
- Results
  - what are the results of the choice?
- Result expression
  - how does the player know the result?
Breakdowns of Interaction

- A game may fail because it doesn't manage choices well
- Problems
  - what do I do now?
    - affordance problem
  - arbitrary choice
    - results problem
  - unexpected failure
    - expression problem
Boundaries

- Distinction between games and other play activities
  - beginning and end
  - definite state of playing vs not playing

- Boundaries are crucial
  - "magic circle"

- Part of game design is to design the game's boundaries
  - when can you save?
"Magic Circle"

- A game is defined by its boundaries
  - space: court, game board, display
  - time: game clock
- To play the game
  - you enter
  - the "real world" is excluded
- When the game is over
  - you exit
  - real world takes over
Entering

- Entering the magic circle begins play
- The game system takes hold
- Objects inhere with their meanings signified by the game rules
- Outside objects are ignored
- You adopt the "lusory" (player's) attitude
Lusory Attitude

- Playing a game requires a certain attitude
  - willingness to adopt the rules
  - willingness to cooperate in keeping it "fun"
  - willingness to accept the experience as "just a game"
- Without the attitude
  - play breaks down: "spoilsport"
Example

- Monopoly
- To become a player means
  - not stealing from the bank
    - it might satisfy the game's goal but it is not part of the game
  - not quitting / disrupting when losing
    - prevents the other players from playing
  - not being vindictive afterwards
Boundary-challenging games

- Some games challenge the magic circle
- Extend the game through everyday life
  - "Assassin"
- Force players to interact with non-players
  - LARP
- Establish real-world consequences for game actions
  - gambling
  - professional sports
Game Design

○ What does the designer design?
  ● rules, yes
  ● but also materials, constraints, boundaries

○ The designer builds a game system
  ● a system of meaning
  ● rules are a part
Systems

- System
  - a group of interacting, interrelated elements forming a complex whole

- Components
  - Objects
  - Attributes
  - Relationships
  - Environment
Important

- No one feature of a game can be meaningful by itself
  - Example
    - Limited arsenal in Halo

- When we analyze a game
  - we have to think about the system at work
Systems at Different Levels

- **Formal systems**
  - defined by symbols / objects
  - the rules for their manipulation

- **Experiential systems**
  - the players
  - their experience of the game

- **Cultural systems**
  - the game itself
  - its role in society
Where do we go from here?

- Decompose the game design problem into dimensions
Primary Schemas

- Different ways to understand games
- Different considerations in design
- Schemas
  - Rules
    - what is the formal structure of the game?
  - Play
    - what is the players' experience of the game?
  - Culture
    - what are the cultural contexts in which the game is embedded?
Our Units

- Rules
  - 9/10 – 9/26
  - Quiz
  - Analysis paper
  - Design project

- Play
  - 10/1 – 10/22
  - Quiz
  - Analysis paper
  - Design project

- Culture
  - 10/24 – 11/18
  - Quiz
  - Analysis paper
Monday

- Game play exercise
  - bring cards and dice
    - especially dice!