**Design Project 3**  
**Character Design**  
*GAM 224, Prof. Robin Burke  
Winter 2005*

**What is it:**  
Design a non-player character for a role-playing game.

**Scenario:**  
"Treasure of Picacho Peak" is a role-playing game with strong action elements. It is a game of survival, greed and betrayal, set in a hostile 19th century American West. The player leads an unruly team of mercenaries in search of a lost gold mine. They must contend with unforgiving nature, unfriendly local populations, rival gold hunters, and most dangerously, each other.

The game begins with the player's character obtaining a map, a bag of gold dust and a few mumbled instructions from a dying prospector, who has mistaken him for his son. Driven by the visions of riches painted by the old man, the player sets out to find the lost mine. The first phase of the game requires the player to assemble his band, acquire the necessary equipment and provisions, and improve his abilities at drinking, shooting, fist fighting and other essential skills. As it becomes clear that there are others seeking the lost mine, the adventurers must leave the comforts of civilization for their trek across the desert.

One important feature of the game is its leadership mechanic. Like most RPG games, each member of the group gains individual experience points in combat and other tasks, but in this game, the player must be careful to maintain his position relative to the others. Members of the group who outlevel the player may challenge him for control. The internecine battles that result will weaken the group for the conflicts ahead. In the second part of the game, the struggles within the group combine with the challenges of survival in the open desert including predators both animal and human, shortages of supplies, and harsh weather.

The third part of the game begins when the adventurers stumble into Fort Yuma, the last outpost before they head towards their secret destination in a remote canyon. The player knows that they are in the right general area from the prospector's words, but the map is incomplete. He must get more precise information from someone who knows the territory before they can leave town to search for the mine.

At this point, the player encounters a woman who says she can help him. But can she really be trusted? Is she working for the competition? How much will the player have to reveal to get her aid? What will be her price?

Your task is to design this character: her name, personality, appearance and role in the game.

**Design issues:**  
You will need to decide

- Who is this character? What is her name, background, life story? How does she make a living and otherwise cope with life in a frontier town? What is her personality and relationships with others in the town?

- What is her role in the narrative of this game? Is she a peripheral character or does she become important to the plot? How does she interact with the player and his comrades? In what setting(s) do we encounter her?

- How does she look: general appearance, race/ethnicity, demeanor, clothes, hairstyle? Does she change over her different appearances in the game?
The outcome of your work will be three deliverables:

- A 2- to 3-page backstory document. This should answer the questions above and give a profile of the character.
- A 2- to 3-page description of the first level in which the player encounters this character including a script for the first cut-scene(s) in which she speaks.
- A 3-page concept art portfolio for the character. You do not have to draw in order to do this part (although it wouldn't hurt.) You can instead create a collage with images from magazines, movies, Internet sites, etc.

What to do:

Each member of the team will have a specific responsibility:

- Leader / Game designer: Responsible for coordinating the work of the group and recording and disseminating design decisions made by the group and by individuals.
- Writer: Will further develop the design decisions made by the group and assemble the backstory document.
- Level Designer: Responsible for designing the scene in which the player first encounters the character.
- Artist: Responsible for creating or assembling the concept art portfolio for the character. This can be done through collage, so artistic skills are not strictly necessary.

If a team has three members, the Leader will take on the tasks of the Level Designer.

What to turn in:

- 3/1: Submit a draft of the backstory document to the Course On-Line site under the heading "Design Project #3: Draft design." It is the designated group leader's responsibility to do this.
- 3/5: Submit your PowerPoint slides for a 6 minute presentation to the Course On-Line (COL) site under the heading "Design Project #3: Presentation." I will download these presentations and have them available on the in-room computer during class on 3/6.
- 3/6: Submit a zip compressed file with the three documents (back story, level description, concept art) to the Course On-Line site.

Hints and Notes:

- There will be points for originality in your character design here. Try to get past the standard videogame (and Hollywood western) stereotypes in developing your character.
- Feel free to invent additional details beyond those in the scenario above. If you want to add additional strands to the plot that help develop your character, do so.
- Remember that you are not making a movie, but rather a game. Gameplay possibilities should be foremost in your mind when developing this character. What sorts of interesting decisions revolve around her?