

# Foundations of Interactive Game Design (80K)

week five, lecture two

# Today

- Demo, *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* and *Braid*
- Competition and cooperation
- Play — what is it?
- Play — how do we experience it?

*Prince of Persia:  
The Sands of Time*

<http://jordanmechner.com/prince-of-persia/>

# *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*



# *Braid*

<http://braid-game.com>

# *Braid*



What is similar about  
these games?

What's different?

# Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

- 2003 entry into long-running *Prince of Persia* series, first designed by Jordan Mechner since original (1989)
- The ability to rewind time (and slow, etc) is added to 3D platforming/combat mechanics
- Time manipulation is a resource to be collected, saved, and spent

# Braid

- Engages the long history of 2D platformers (Mario, original PoP, etc) but is a new game largely created by Jonathan Blow
- The ability to rewind time is added to platforming mechanics
- The ability to rewind is infinite — but some elements are “out of time” (creating time-oriented platforming puzzles)

# *PoP:SoT* and *Braid*

- A connection between the mechanics and the fiction
- In *PoP*, the same events explain the new mechanics and provide the story momentum (and reason to kill NPCs)
- In *Braid* the mechanics are thematically related to world's backstory and motives (as made clear in level-entry texts)

# Competition

# Competition is fundamental to games

- Competing against the game system
- Competing against a previous achievement (e.g., your high score or another's)
- Competing against another player once (win/loss) or over time (changing positions)
- Competing to get a high score (win/loss)
- Competitive acts against other players (attacking another, bogarting resources)
- Games have goals and players — both fundamental sources of competition

# Cooperation

# Cooperation is fundamental to games

- The basic fact of a multi-player game is that you are cooperating to play
- It could be that games focused on competition and win/loss reinforce negative social attitudes
- Or the joy of play and struggle with/against others go together
- The “new games movement” didn’t eliminate competition, but put new focus on cooperation in design
- Many computer games are designed for cooperative play — MMOs, *LotR* board game — or team-based cooperation/competition

Design game goals with  
competition and  
cooperation in mind

Play

# S&Z on Play

- *Play* is clearly fundamental to games — so what is it?
- For Salen and Zimmerman: “Play is free movement within a more rigid structure.”
- From the “play” of a steering wheel to the “play” of language to the “play” of a game

# S&Z on Play

- Three categories of play, broad to narrow:
- Being playful — from games through slang, wacky hairstyles, etc
- Ludic activity — include games and also all other “play” (tossing a ball, animal play, etc)
- Game play — play within rules, toward a goal, with a quantifiable outcome

# Transformative play

- While S&Z see play as free movement within a more rigid system, play is also more — which they call “transformative”
- Play can change the structure — slang becomes part of the language, new strategies motivate new game rules, etc
- Play can use the structure to other ends: machinima, game art, etc
- And play changes players...

# Theorists of play

- Roger Caillois a very influential theorist of games/play (not differentiated in French)
- We discuss ideas from: *Man, Play, and Games*, Roger Caillois, 1958
- In some ways a response to: *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Johan Huizinga, 1938

# Huizinga vs Caillois

[Play is] a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious” but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules... [and promotes *social groups*]

- Free (not obligatory)
- Separate (in limits of space & time)
- Uncertain (outcome unknown, player innovation)
- Unproductive (creates nothing)
- Governed by rules
- Make-believe (not real life)

# Caillois's “fundamental categories” of play

- Agôn: Competitive play (most game play)
- Alea: Chance-based play (gambling)
- Mimicry: Role-playing and make believe (from theatre games to tabletop RPGs)
- Ilinx: Vertigo and physical sensation play (from “ring around the rosie” to skiing)
- Padia & Ludus: Improvisation and joy vs. gratuitous difficulty

# Caillois's play matrix

	Paida	Ludus
Agôn (competition)	Unregulated athletics	Boxing, Chess, <i>Starcraft</i>
Alea (chance)	Counting-out rhymes	Betting, lotteries
Mimicry (simulation)	Masks, disguises	Theatre, ritual
Ilinx (vertigo)	Horseback, waltzing	Skiing, tightrope walking

# Play in games

- From the rules perspective, we have mostly been looking at games as *agôn*, with some *alea* thrown in
- When we started looking at players, things like *mimicry* (e.g., in MMOs) came in
- More generally, the Wii has brought more focus on *lilix* into mainstream game design

Think about the  
varieties of play your  
game supports

Full office hours today:  
3:30–5pm  
(must see me for DRC  
accommodation)