Foundations of Interactive Game Design (80K)

week six, lecture one
Today

- Demos of September 12th, Darfur is Dying, and Disaffected!
- Procedural rhetoric
- Preview of this week
What do games mean?
How do games mean?
What does this mean?

*September 12th, newsgaming.com, 2003*
What does this mean?

Darfur is Dying, darfurisdying.com, 2006
What does this mean?

Disaffected!, persuasivegames.com, 2006
What do you see in these games?
September 12th

Not an animation, but an interaction...
September 12th

- Fictional world: Village of civilians and terrorists, bomb targeting
- Rules: People move continually, bombs take time to fall, dead civilians inspire mourning, mourning inspires terrorism
September 12th

- **Gameplay:**
  - Targetted bombing hits civilians, sprouts as many new terrorists as it kills
  - Indiscriminate bombing creates a wasteland w/ more terrorists than others
  - Procedural rhetoric: Bombing is a poor tool for addressing terrorism
Other Sept 11th games

- **New York Defender**: Is arcade-style play an argument?
- **9/11 Survivor**: Rhetoric of randomness or disturbingly affectless?
Darfur is Dying

Political awareness, and empathy, not policy
Darfur is Dying

- Fictional worlds: Water foraging & village, individuals (not “lives”)
- Water rules: Can run & hide, confrontation is death
- Water gameplay: Being slow, fearful works
- Water rhetoric: Just basic living harrowing
In one view, an “anti-advergame” — using brand power toward social comment, also...
Service Games

• From *Diner Dash* to *Disaffected!*
• Coworkers move things randomly, customers come in already exasperated, etc
• Bogost: “the player is stripped of the power to service customers successfully.... Instead, he is forced to perform under the powerlessness of alienated labor.”
Procedural rhetoric
What does this mean?

• *NRA Gun Club*, Crave Entertainment, 2006
• Realistic operation — discharge to reload
Procedural Rhetoric

• “Procedurality refers to a way of creating, explaining, or understanding processes.”

• “Rhetoric refers to effective and persuasive expression.”

• “Procedural rhetoric, then, is a practice of using processes persuasively.... persuading through processes in general and computational processes in particular.”
Interpreting rhetoric

• “Just as verbal rhetoric is useful for both the orator and the audience, and just as written rhetoric is useful for both the writer and the reader, so procedural rhetoric is useful for both the programmer and the user, the game designer and the player.”

• We may find procedural rhetoric at work in a game beyond that consciously intended
To write procedurally, one authors code that enforces rules to generate some kind of representation, rather than authoring the representation itself.
Procedural

• For Bogost “procedural expression must entail symbol manipulation, the construction and interpretation of a symbolic system that governs human thought or action.”

• Computers “are particularly adept at representing real or imagined systems that themselves function in some particular way ... The computer magnifies the ability to create representations of processes.”
Procedural

- We live in a world of systems, of procedures, only some encoded in software
- A fundamental question: How does this work?
- “Procedural representation explains processes with other processes.”
- Requires a procedural medium
Procedural figures, forms, and genres

• Operational logics (e.g., collision detection) are small and used in many ways.

• Procedural forms (e.g., game engines) are larger and determine more about use.

• Procedural genres (e.g., platformer) “similarities between the constitutive procedural representations that produce the on-screen effects and controllable dynamics we experience as players.”
On the other hand

• Bogost argues “procedures found the logics that structure behavior in all cases”

• Is this an unproven thesis (about cognition, culture, etc., as computational procedures)?

• Or is it a gesture to how broadly Bogost thinks we need to think of procedures?

• Should we differentiate the un/specifiable?
Rhetoric

- A derogatory term, a means of persuasion, or a means of seeking “correct judgement”
- Both macro- and micro-structures for speech and reasoning
- Now broadly considered beyond speech
Rhetoric

- Now encompasses writing, speech, art, etc
- Effective expression, employing techniques
- In emerging field of digital rhetoric, thus far, more focus on computer networking than procedurality
# Rhetorical vividness

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Vivid</th>
<th>Least Vivid</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>actual experience</td>
<td>statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>procedural rhetoric?</em></td>
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<td>moving images with sound</td>
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<td>static photograph</td>
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<td>realistic painting</td>
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<td>line drawing</td>
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<td>narrative, descriptive account</td>
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Rhetorical coercion?

• In procedural rhetoric, the world operates according to certain rules

• Even if we disagree with this model of the world, we must go along to progress

• Impossible to respond *in situ*, change rules

• Is this more coercive than what is required to follow a complex argument in a book?
Persuasive games

- *September 12th* is a political game, making a policy argument
- What about other kinds of persuasion?
Serious games

• Political games
• Advertising and promotion games
• Education and training games
• Even job interview games

• All, of course, can be viewed politically (military investment in promo and education games, and latter as former)
Many games are ambiguous — interpreting rhetoric requires an argument.
This week
This week

• Prototypes due in sections
• Wednesday: Overview of upcoming assignments
• Friday visitor: Richard Hilleman, EA CCO