Foundations of Interactive Game Design (80K)

week six, lecture two
Today

- Demos of *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* and *Mass Effect*
- Discussion of multi-game analysis
- Starting on games and fiction
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic
Mass Effect
What do you notice about these games?
KotOR and Mass Effect

• Both made by BioWare, Drew Karpyshyn writer on both, shared designers include Casey Hudson, David Falkner, etc

• Science fiction worlds & combat, not *Halo*

• Character selection & development (RPGs)

• Mechanics for choosing things to say (dialogue trees) and things to do (quests)
Multi-game analysis
Multi-game analysis

- Your next major assignment, due in two weeks
- Pick three games to compare *along some dimension*
- One of these games must come from the S&E Library’s game collection (see syllabus page on the multi-game analysis for links)
Comparing games

- Choose something about the game design to compare
- You might look at changes in fiction (e.g., quest structure), procedural rhetoric (e.g., simulated pollution), basic mechanics (e.g., jumping mechanics and challenges), etc
- Explicitly state your views on the differences and support with specifics!
Comparing games

• The most common type of comparison is in the same genre and/or series (it’s easier to compare jumping across platformers)

• Choosing three games from different eras is encouraged (e.g., the original *Prince of Persia*, *PoP: Sands of Time*, and the new *PoP*)

• With permission of your TA, you can choose a different dimension and grouping
Creative groupings

- The two Bogost essays for Monday were multi-game analysis examples.
- One analyzes playing weakness in 3 games.
- One looks at unlicensed branding in 3 games (Landlord’s Game intro).
Game fictions
Let’s start from the beginning
Spacewar!
graphics, movement, multi-player
You are standing at the end of a road before a small brick building. Around you is a forest. A small stream flows out of the building and down a gully.

> enter

You are inside a building, a well house for a large spring.

There are some keys on the ground here.
There is a shiny brass lamp nearby.
There is food here.
There is a bottle of water here.

> get lamp

Ok.

Adventure
text, narrative, single player
What happened next?
Arcade 84, Dave Dries
What now?

• Having met many of the goals of pure graphics, there’s a search for new directions (and new audiences)

• One direction is taking up the textual, narrative thread and pushing it further

• This requires thinking about the relationship between game design (gameplay) and writing (text, narrative)
Game fictions

• A great variety of fictions.
• But only two major approaches to how the fictional elements are implemented.
• Two examples: *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* and *Fable*. 
Start with a script

voice actors, animation
Prince of Persia

The Sands of Time

Jordan Mechner, Ubisoft
dagger as device for story and gameplay
Prince of Persia
The Sands of Time

Linear story, with side trips
(playing a cinematic story)
Fable

- James Leach (writer), Peter Molyneux (designer), Lionhead Studios
- Goal: the hero’s journey, in RPG mechanics, with more dynamic non-player characters
- Strategy: script the story, but also simulate the people
Fable: begin with a story

Write a traditional hero fiction
Break story into scenes
Break scenes down into dialogue and animation
Pass to animators and AI scriptors
combine story management and language
(for 200 speaking characters)
**Fable: the NPCs**

17 non-player character types
Evolving attitudes
Things to say — 155k words
Alternating world/story control of characters and world state
Fable
Putting it together

Linear story, good and evil choices
NPC logics same for animation and language
Fable is an interesting industry effort — in line with other RPGs — we need to look to independent & research projects for the next step.
This week
This week

- Prototypes due in sections
- Friday visitor: Richard Hilleman, EA CCO
- Friday reading: Online, Ken has emailed user name and password