Game Design Studio I

week 1, lecture 1
Today’s agenda

• Introducing TA: Brandon Tearse (batman@soe) who will offer technical help, collect assignments, etc

• Answering frequently asked questions

• Going over class plan and draft syllabus

• Taking new questions
GDS Concept

• You will work all year to design and implement an innovative game with a team.

• The leaders of this team (e.g., design lead, producer) will be in 170 sequence.

• Other members of this team will be from 170 and, if you choose, from outside — UCSC students and/or people elsewhere.

• This class you define concepts, form teams, and iterate design.
How do I get into this class?

• I will not give you a permission code today — this decision impacts full year

• Write up your circumstances (why do you need a code, why not wait) and preparation (why are you ready, classes and more) and email them to me (nwf@soe) this weekend

• Program faculty will decide each case by end of next week
Do you want into this class?

- If you’re a Junior, you should wait to take this as a real Senior capstone
- If you’re not in the Game Design major, you should not try to take this class (unless in already-approved independent major)
- But you can still be a member of a team, for the full year, w/ independent study credit — if you are on a team w/ a greenlit project
What we’ll be doing

• Fast pitches — x2
• C++ problem
• Final pitches and teams
• Design documents
• Physical prototype and revision
• Computational prototypes (1 revision)
The games

• The kinds of games that do well in competitions — small, innovative

• Q: What if we don’t care about entering competitions?

• A: I don’t care if you don’t. But these are the *kinds* of games that will serve you well!
Avoiding failure modes

- Not being technically prepared
- This is why being a senior is important
- This is why we’re doing the C++ problem
- Q: Does everyone have to program?
- A: Except for the self-designed major
Avoiding failure modes

- Working on a game you don’t care about
- Only some games pitches get “greenlit”
- Teams work on greenlit projects
- This year, only projects with full teams can make a final pitch
- You can agree to be on multiple pitches
Avoiding failure modes

• Trying to create a game you can’t finish
• Biggest problem: needs graphics that team can’t make
• Pulling engineers to do amateur graphics makes both fail
• This year, only games with documented sources for all elements can be greenlit
Building on strengths

• Your great strength: a team of engineers who understand games

• This makes possible gameplay innovations (e.g., new mechanics) that are impossible for those using fixed engines

• Your game doesn’t have a restriction (platform, license, etc) — pitch what you really want to build
Game innovation

• One restriction: game must be innovative
• Be able to explain what makes it interesting in 30 seconds, give good demo in 5 minutes
• This quarter is about selecting, testing, and refining your innovative concept and its elements
Game innovation: three types

- Familiar mechanics in a novel context
- Familiar elements for novel mechanic
- New mechanics supported by new elements
- Others?
Pitches

- First two pitches will be very short, focused on your ideas
- Full pitches will only be allowed for games with full teams and plan for all elements
- You can make a short pitch for something you want to make a full pitch
Questions:

• Do we need a complete game?
• Yes, but it doesn’t need to (and perhaps shouldn’t) have more than 30 minutes of gameplay
Questions:

• Can people switch teams?
• People can be fired if 2/3 of their team agrees — must find spot on another
• If you are without a team for two weeks (or more) at end of quarter, you do not continue to next 170 sequence course
• If you fail, you do not continue to next 170 sequence course — but you can get BA
Questions:

- What about intellectual property?
- I am not a lawyer (and don’t accept legal advice from any prof not in a law school)
- But the UC has never tried to assert any ownership of a student-produced game (or film, or...) to my knowledge
- If seriously concerned, do research
What’s next

• I will post these slides and a draft syllabus this weekend at: http://www.soe.ucsc.edu/classes/cmps170/Fall09/

• First assignment: Slides for pitch one. Due to Brandon by midnight Monday, 28 Sept

• Second assignment: C++ problem, due to Brandon before class Friday, 2 Oct
First assignment: 60-second pitch

- Create three slides (Powerpoint, Keynote, png, jpeg, whatever)
- Slide 1: Your name, email, role(s) you’d like on a team
- Slide 2: Game concept, core mechanics
- Slide 3: Game innovation, game scope
- To Brandon by midnight Monday, 28 Sept
Second assignment: C++ problem

- Problem F in this PDF:

- Brandon available for help — email him

- We will email additional test data shortly before problem is due

- To Brandon before class Friday, 2 Oct
For Monday

• Read first chapter of Fullerton book (available online, free, at Elsevier Direct)

• Have a plan and draft slides for first pitch (there will be time to edit after class)

• Start working on C++ problem, in case it turns out to be harder than you thought

• If trying to get in, have sent me petition email over weekend
Other questions?