Game Design Studio I

week 6, class 2
Today

- News
- Team schedules
  (slides due midnight Sun)
- Prototypes
News

- Helios is greenlit — but with concern team is too small
- Michael Mateas talk Thu, 4pm, S&E Library
- Blizzard on Friday — talk 12:30–2pm
- Jim Rushing (EA) moving to 11/16, will do longer team workshop (probably 2–5pm)
- Moving lecture on design docs, dropping separate visual design presentation
Schedules
Team schedules

- Due by midnight Sunday, presented in class Monday, unless I have given an exemption
- This breaks down, week by week, what pre-production tasks each team member will accomplish for next five weeks
- Make sure all tasks on syllabus have team members assigned to them
Include in schedules

- Full team makeup and roles (e.g., lead design, producer)
- When your full group meets (hopefully at least three “stand ups” /week) and when/if pairs work
- What prototypes you are building, to answer what questions
- Other pre-production tasks (e.g., art direction)
- A weekly breakdown of tasks for each team member
- Pair/group programming & prototyping strongly encouraged—but requires working in same time/place
Prototypes
Prototypes

• The current syllabus is a *minimum* for your pre-production

• For example, you should be doing a series of physical prototypes, testing them, revising them, and testing them again (some are)

• The syllabus only requires one — team size makes a difference in what you can/must do
Prototypes

• The goal of pre-production is to answer questions about your games

• You want to answer the most pressing questions first — biggest questions, biggest risks, most important elements

• Also a great way to communicate ideas within and outside your team
We all believe you can paper prototype a board game—it’s already paper—but what about real-time computer games?

What are some design questions you might ask?

What are the basic actions a player can perform?

How big should the level be?

What’s the level design (for a particular level)?

What objects are in the environment and how do they help or hurt the player (weapons, powerups, health…)?

Where are spawn points?
Simulating real-time with a paper prototype

- To answer questions, may need to simulate real-time gameplay
- Build stack: each player chooses three action cards and places them face down
- Reveal: each player turns over his top card.
- Resolve shoot cards: players with shoot cards fire in the direction their unit is pointing in a straight line. Simultaneous shots are resolved with dice.
- Resolve turn cards: Players with turn cards turn their unit. The order of simultaneous turns is resolved with dice.
- Resolve move cards: Players with move cards move their units the number of spaces they selected. Resolve multiple move cards with dice. Cannot occupy the same cell.
- Repeat steps 2-5 for the second and third cards in the stack.
Physical prototypes

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this kind of prototype?
  - Create much faster than on computer
  - Change much faster than on computer—even during playtest
  - Everyone can participate

- Allows rapid iteration
  - Can’t explore certain areas of game feel
  - Can’t figure out if game technology will work
  - Can’t execute complex processes—but can couple with computational support
Prototype questions

- What sorts of questions make sense for physical prototypes? Thoughts?
- If you only ask one—can you get at your core mechanics?
- Can you play in the model of space? Does the tech/character development tree offer interesting choices?
- If your game emphasizes level design, ask whether specific level approaches work (understandable flow? good challenge?)
- Weapon/unit balance
- Before coding up your GUI, do players understand your screen layout, information grouping and flow, etc?
Physical prototypes

• For next week, you will create a prototype to answer a key design question

• Before class, you will test the prototype with people outside your team, take notes, and write up the results

• You will bring a revised prototype to class

• We will playtest revised prototypes in class, you will take more notes

• You will write up the question you were asking, your key observations, and the preliminary answers you have found (>1k words). Email to Brandon by end of day next Saturday, together with photos.
Materials

- We have our first set of materials here, now, for your prototypes
- I can get more, and different — let me know what would be useful
- Be as specific as possible — a name and manufacturer is good, better is an Amazon.com product #
Physical prototypes

- Wednesday, November 4th: Stack ’n’ Deploy, ARC Infinitum, Penumbra
- Friday, November 6th: Helios, unnamed team
Questions?