Today’s agenda

• More detailed class introduction
• Two more outside opportunities: ecoReserve and Grateful Dead Archive
• Answering questions about class and today’s reading (Fullerton chapters 1 & 6)
• More on design innovation (if time permits)
GDS Concept

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

• 6–8 Game Design majors per team, with potential outside collaborators (art, music)

• This class you define concepts, form teams, and iterate design

• High intensity class—e.g., developing seven game ideas per student in first three weeks
The games

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

• 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! Look at IGF, IndieCade, Imagine Cup games
Avoiding failure modes

• Not being technically prepared
• This is why being a senior is important
• This is why there are prerequisites
• 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
• 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) — your design
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
- More if time...
Pitches

• First three weeks, developing seven ideas with different constraints, finding potential team members and outside collaborators

• 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 — in fact, you should, to help recruit a team
Questions:

• Do we need a complete game?
• Yes, but it doesn’t need to (and probably 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
• The Business Design Competition will address some of these topics
Questions for you

• Should we wipe out last year’s forum, starting fresh this year, or leave it for you to peruse?

• Does the bookstore have the book in stock?

• What’s a good way of organizing carpools for the Oct 13th event at Google?
For Thursday

• Read Fullerton chapters 2 & 7

• Students presenting game ideas (from their slides) will be notified soon, slides will be loaded on a TA laptop

• Start working on your outside opportunity game design ideas, choose which to prototype
Other questions?

on the class or the reading
Game innovation

• Familiar mechanics in a new situation. *American McGee's Alice* uses standard action mechanics in dark Wonderland

• A new mechanic supported by new element. *Timebot* combines simple door/trigger puzzles & “collaborate with yourself”
Game innovation

• A new mechanic for something familiar (wheel navigation of *Mass Effect* dialogue)

• A new mechanic for the unfamiliar (*Portal’s* portals are a new gameplay element, even if already in engines)
So what are mechanics?

• Two common meanings

• 1: Things the player can do (jump) as opposed to rules (gravity)

• 2: The deep rules by which gameworld and game operate (Adams)

• In either case, with your skills, you should be able to innovate on mechanics level!
Game ideas

- Gameplay: a puzzle game, a party game, a game like *The Sims*, a game like *Super Mario*
- Technology: a 3D game, an asynchronous multiplayer game, a specific tool trick
- World, theme, story: HP Lovecraft, environmental education, espionage
Game ideas

• Brainstorm multiple ideas connected to your strengths/interests

• “A 2D Sims-style game set in an HP Lovecraft world”

• “A mosaic-assembling puzzle game with mechanics inspired by art history”

• “A Diplomacy-style game of conflict and allegiance set in a suburban mall”
The big challenge

- Thinking of things that haven’t been done before isn’t that hard
- It’s more challenging to think of new things where the gameplay and gameworld work together — what we do and what we see
- Rather than always thinking of new worlds for same mechanics, varying both can open new creative spaces (even new genres)
Satire and Regret

Robert Nideffer and Alex Szeto's WTF?!

Lionhead’s

Fable III