CSC404: VIDEO GAME DESIGN

ABOUT ME
- Before UofT
  - Built social games (before Facebook existed)
- At UofT
  - Took this class (several years ago)
  - Presented my (mobile) game at Level Up
  - Graduated with a CS degree
- After UofT
  - Technical Lead at Uken Games
  - Teaching this course since 2016
  - Engineering Manager during the day
  - Independent Game Developer at night

COURSE OVERVIEW
Learning the Art of Design

So much more to games outside of programming

COURSE OVERVIEW
Learning the tools to succeed as a Game Developer

• Game Jams
  - Saturday 14th: 10 AM to 4 PM – BA 2270
  - Saturday 21st: 10 AM to 4 PM – BA 3200

• Group Project
  - Demo sessions with industry experts throughout the semester
PROJECT OVERVIEW

• Theme: INDIE GAMES
• Groups: UofT + Centennial College + Faculty of Music
• Design options:
  • Unity, Android, Oculus, etc
  • No keyboards or mice
  • 3D Game
• Demo sessions:
  • In-class & playtesting

PREVIOUS PROJECTS

CHROMINANCE - 2016

PLUNDER - 2016

FACE OFF - 2016

CHIAROSCURO - 2017
WAYPOINT - 2018

LEVEL UP STUDENT SHOWCASE

DELIVERABLES

10% • Game Jams – bring your own laptops

10% • Participation – taking part in class, presenting, attending events, organizing playtesting sessions

10%

80%

• Game Brainstorming – submission of potential game ideas
• Game Pitch & Creative Brief - conceptual description includes key components of the game
• Design Document & Prototype - structure of how the game is going to be built. Small playable prototype
• Alpha Release - Key gameplay functionality
• Beta Release - All the features of the final version
• Playtesting Demo • Includes report, peer evals and game trailer.

RECOMMENDED TOOLS

GAME JAMS

• Making a game in 6 hours
• Ideal for prototyping
• Popular in the community:
  • TGJ Jam
  • Global Game Jam
REASONS WHY PEOPLE TAKE CSC404

- Interest in game development careers
- Real-world industry interaction
- Working with artists and musicians
- The challenge of a capstone course
- Having a game idea that you want to work on
- Enjoy playing games
- Need a 4th-year course

COURSE GOALS

- Developing your creative abilities:
  - Brainstorming
  - Designing
  - Developing
  - Refining

- Applying your development skills:
  - Agile development
  - Working with others
  - Dealing with failure

MORE IMPORTANTLY...

I want you to make an awesome game!

HOW NOT TO SUCCEED IN CSC404

DIFFUSION OF RESPONSIBILITY

TAKING OVER THE PROJECT
IGNORING FEEDBACK

FAILING CSC404

BAD TEAMMATE

- Not doing your work
- Not showing up for team meetings
- Not showing up for presentations
- Not communicating with your team

- This is why we have peer evaluations

A NOTE ON PEER EVALUATIONS

- Everyone must submit them by end of term.
- I will review each one personally
- May have implications on your final project mark*.
  - Positive evaluations: Possible positive multiplier
  - Negative evaluations: Possible negative multiplier
- * Only in special circumstances

BAD TIME MANAGEMENT

- Rushing your work
- Poorly defined goals
- Procrastination
  - Researching vs playing
- Prioritization
- Perfectionism*

CARING MORE ABOUT MARKS THAN ABOUT THE GAME

- Entire focus of the course is the project
  - No midterm or final

- Making a good game will lead to good marks
- Getting good marks will not always lead to a good game
GOOD HABITS

COMMUNICATION
- Listen
- Be active on Discord
  - Check in with your team regularly
- Be active on GitHub
  - Commit often
- Be clear
- Be clearer

PLAYTESTING
- Get feedback as often as possible
- We’ll have a lecture on this later on
- Never too early to get feedback
- Playing your own game does not count

ASSIGN ROLES
Clearly define who is responsible for what

INDIE GAMES

WHAT ARE INDIE GAMES?
- Usually small teams
- Little to no budget available
- Our focus: innovation
  - Cool and unique
MONUMENT VALLEY

DON'T STARVE

JOURNEY

BRAINSTORMING IDEAS

• Start thinking about what you want to build in CSC404
• Come up with an Elevator Pitch (more on this next week)
• If your idea can fit in a tweet (280 chars), it's a good submission
• Submit to TAs by Wednesday September 18th at 11:59pm
• Course info sheet and website will be up by end of day Friday

PLAN FOR NEXT WEEKS

• Saturday September 14th
  • Game Jam 1
• Wednesday September 18th
  • Lecture
  • Deadline to submit game ideas
• Thursday September 19th:
  • TAs will shortlist game ideas and pick top X
• Friday September 20th
  • Instructors will pick which ideas will be worked on and will notify class via email
• Saturday September 21st
  • Game Jam 2
• Wednesday September 25th
  • Pitch presentation

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES