Course Introduction

CSC404 / GDES 3B71: VIDEO GAME DESIGN
Plan for today & Tuesday

- **Today**: Course overview
  - What the course is about.
  - How to do well in this course.
  - Looking at indie games

- **Tuesday**: Game design tools
  - **Unity** (education version)
  - Led by: Adam Robinson-Yu

- **CSC404 Info Form**
  - [http://tinyurl.com/404InfoForm](http://tinyurl.com/404InfoForm)
  - Fill this in!!
A glimpse into the past
Bubble Bound – 2008
Gentleman Explorer - 2012
Office Joust – 2014
Pitfall Planet – 2015
Course Overview
Course Deliverables

- **Assignments**
  - “Game jam” events
    
  
- **Course Project**

- **Participation**
  - Taking part in class, running playtesting sessions, attending special events, attending Level Up Showcase, etc.

\[ \text{Assignments} \quad 10\% \quad (5\% \text{ each}) \]
\[ \text{Course Project} \quad 80\% \]
\[ \text{Participation} \quad 10\% \]
Course Project

- Major game development milestones:
  - **Creative Brief**
    - Conceptual description; includes key components and secret ingredients.
  - **Design Document**
    - Detailed, fully explored, paper-playable breakdown.
  - **Alpha Release**
    - Playable prototype.
  - **Beta Release**
    - Feature complete demo and playtesting report.
  - **Level Up Showcase**
    - The final evaluation, where industry members and the public judge your game.
    - Includes: peer evals and game trailer.
Course Project

- Other course project elements:
  - **Game Brainstorming**
    - In week 2, submission of potential game ideas.
  - **Mini-Demos**
    - Demos between major milestones.
  - **Game Design Blog**
    - Weekly log of development progress.
    - Submission site for creative brief & design document.
  - **Playtesting Report**
    - Playtesting results and analysis.
Level Up Student Showcase
Course project

- Groups: UofT + OCAD U + Faculty of Music.
  - Teamwork is essential!
- Design options:
  - Unity, Android, Oculus, etc.
  - No keyboards or mice!
- Industry feedback at every milestone, and at playtesting time.
Game Jams

- Rapid game prototyping
  - Make a game in 6 hours!
- Birthplace of innovative, exploratory game ideas:
  - Surgeon Simulator, Superhot, Goat Simulator
- Popular and prevalent around the community.
  - e.g. Global Game Jam, ROM Game Jam, TOJam (pictured here)
What you should want from CSC404
Why you’re here

- 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
What I want to see from CSC404
Course Goals

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

- Applying your development skills:
  - Agile development
  - Working with others
  - Dealing with failure
But most of all...

I want you to make a game that doesn’t suck.
Past examples

- **Bearly Made It**
  - Endless runner where main character runs toward the screen, chased by mutant Goldilocks.

- **Cat’s Cradle**
  - Co-operative game where cats are tethered together by yarn.

- **Islands of Araceli**
  - Player-vs-player game of throwing blocks at people on other islands to knock them down.
It could happen to you

- There are many reasons why a game could fail, and far fewer that lead to success.

- We will try to steer you in the right direction, assuming that you want to be led there.
Ways to do badly in CSC404
Diffusion of responsibility

- Don’t just do what you think you’re required to do. Think of what’s best for the game.

**THIS RARELY WORKS**

Unless the group you’re in is really motivated and the task doesn’t suck too much, more often than not giving many people a task for one accomplishes nothing, because everyone thinks somebody else will do it.

Point directly at someone instead. Asking less people gets more done.
Taking over the project

SILENCE! I WILL NOT TOLERATE YOUR INSOLENCE
Designing by committee

“A camel is a horse designed by a committee.”
Ignoring feedback

- Accepting feedback is hard.
Ways to fail CSC404
Being a bad teammate

- Don’t do your work.
- Don’t show up for meetings.
- Not communicating with your team.
- Impeding the team’s progress.
- Being a complete ass.

- *This is why peer evaluations exist.*
Time management issues
Treating this like a course

- Care about the game, not about the marks.
Good game designer habits
Communication
Have leaders and helpers

- Everybody works on everything, and everybody is responsible for something.
Playtesting

- Solicit feedback constantly.
Bigger expectations

- Novelty
- Mastery
- Insight
- Prudence
- Tenacity
Making an “indie” game
Project theme: “Indie Games”

- What does “indie games” mean?
  - Games that have a certain feel to them?
  - Games that are made by an indie studio?
  - Games made in small groups?
  - Games made with small budget?
- Let’s review some examples....
Journey
Flower
Johann Sebastian Joust
rain

2013 fall
CSC404: “indie” = innovation
Final Takeaway