CSC404 / GDES 3B71: VIDEO GAME DESIGN

Course Introduction

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
  - Fill this in!!

What is this course about?

- The answer to this has changed over time.
- The answer (as of 2019):

  Learning the Art of Design

Learning from Experience

- Design principles are difficult to quantify, and video game design is no different.
- As past students have learned how to make high-quality games, we have also learned how to better teach students to make high-quality games.
  - That being said, there are always new lessons to learn by watching you succeed and fail 😊
A glimpse into the past

Bubble Bound – 2008

Rolling Pig – 2011

Gentleman Explorer – 2012
Course Deliverables

- Assignments
  - “Game jam” events
    - 10% (5% each)
- Course Project
  - 80%
- Participation
  - Taking part in class, running playtesting sessions, attending special events, attending Level Up Showcase, etc.
  - 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.
  - Final Demo
    - The final evaluation, where industry members and the public judge your game.
    - Includes: peer evals and game trailer.

- 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.

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.

Level Up Student Showcase
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)

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 you should want from CSC404

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 people want to play.

Past (failed) 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.

Taking over the project

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 jerk.

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

- 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?
- For CSC404: Something Novel & Innovative
  - Let’s see some examples....
Johann Sebastian Joust

Papers, Please

CSC404: “indie” = innovation
Final Takeaway