

Foundations of Interactive Game Design

CMPS 80K – Winter 2006

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One of my favorite games...

- *Switch screen input*

Background on Legend of Zelda

- Goal:
 - Control an elf boy named Link
 - Defeat the evil wizard Ganon, and rescue Zelda, princess of Hyrule
 - Locate pieces of the Triforce, a magical tablet, scattered throughout the game
- Created in 1987, by Shigeru Miyamoto
- It typically ranks high on lists of the greatest games of all time

Perceptions in 1987

“The Legend of Zelda was a different kind of game and, also, it took a long time until people really liked the game. I hoped people would be patient enough and understand that it was a different game and enjoy it, and I was worried at the time.”

- Minoru Arakawa (head of Nintendo of America)

- Interestingly, by contemporary standards, the game appears to be simple, and not at all complex.

More Perceptions

“..It was just so compelling that we kept playing it and playing it. The way the game mechanics worked, the facts that it did this great thing with that sword ... It had great mechanics. Typical of Miyamoto, it had puzzles. You would come across things that would be on an island or behind a door or whatever, and you could see them, but you couldn't have them.”

- Howard Philips (Nintendo spokesman)

Why is Zelda a Classic?

- People still like playing Legend of Zelda
- It still provides a engrossing playing experience.
- Why?
- What qualities does this game have that have allowed it to age so well?
- Why is it that the low-resolution graphics don't seem to matter?

Miyamoto on Zelda

“...Created based on the original concept of ‘miniature garden that you can put inside your drawer,’ inside of which the player can freely explore. ... I tried to make a game where the next move the player is supposed to take is not already determined. ... Another big element is that players themselves can grow. In the game you see and feel that Link actually grows. At the same time, players can become better game players.”

Broad answer: design

- A broad way of answering the question is that Miyamoto executed a great game design.
- This just shifts the question:
- What are the components of great game design?

Goals of this course

- Provide an overview to the key issues of computer game design
- Develop skill as a game designer by creating two games
 - One non-video game
 - One video game
- Develop skill at performing critical analysis on the design of video games

Design Issues Considered

- What is (and is not) a game?
- What role do rules play in a game?
- Difference between games of emergence and games of progression.
- Creating emergence in gameplay
- Creating interesting player choices
- How to make a game challenging

Design Issues (cont'd)

- How to add conflict to games
- Design of interactivity
- Focusing a game & avoiding creeping incrementalism
- Including narrative elements into games
- Creating non-player adversaries
- Violence in video games

Design Issues (cont'd)

- Creating games for women and girls
- Creating economies in online games
- Creating games for education

- There are other issues involved in the design of video games, but this list provides a good foundation.

Course Overview

Teaching Assistants

- Anne Sullivan
 - anne@soe.ucsc.edu
- Ken Hullett
 - khullett@soe.ucsc.edu
- Are still working on office hours, will announce these once they are final.

Textbooks

- *Half-real*, Jesper Juul, MIT Press, 2005.
 - Academic game studies treatment of what constitutes a game, what role game rules play in game design, interplay of fiction and game.
- *Chris Crawford on Game Design*, Chris Crawford, New Riders, 2003.
 - Opinionated view of game design, with multiple chapters covering the design of individual games.

Class Web Site

<http://www.soe.ucsc.edu/classes/cmeps080k/Winter06/>

Note:

- “Winter” is capitalized
- “080” is zero eight zero
- “06” is zero six
- Recommend adding it to your browser’s bookmarks
- All assignments will be on the web site
- Some readings only available via the web site
- Syllabus expected to change often

Grading

- Final grade is composed of:
- Exams (30%)
 - 2 midterms
- Critical analysis of games (10%)
 - 2 assignments
- Lab assignments (10%)
 - 2 assignments
- Game Projects (30%)
- Final exam (20%)

Labs

- There are 4 lab sessions
- Main idea is to provide times when you can go to a lab and help will be available
- Attendance in labs is *not* required
- Main idea is to provide drop-in help for labs assignments and video game project
- **No labs next week!**
- We will tell you when the labs will be staffed. Unless we explicitly state so, no Professor or TA will be at the lab.
- Feel free to use labs for your project, even if no TA or Professor is present

Note on Background

- To have a good outcome in this course:
 - You should be familiar with the operation of a computer
 - Use of Windows, mouse, launching programs
 - You should have basic knowledge of algebra and trigonometry
 - Don't have to be a wizard at this, but need to know angles, simple trig functions, variables
 - You should be able to write competently
 - Several of the assignments involve writing

Readings

- Most classes will have assigned readings
- There is no mechanism for me to check that you have actually done the reading
 - Doing the reading will substantially enhance your experience of the course
 - The readings are very good
 - Hard to imagine good test outcomes without having performed the reading
- For next Monday:
 - Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 (up to page 43) of *Half-Real*

Questions?