Creative Methods Assignment for Game Design Workshop

Brian Schrank, PhD

Know Thyself and How You Work Best

Assignment Description

Students will develop themselves in this course, which will in turn help them develop their games. Each of us has latent desired rhythms, rituals, and methods, that serve us best when we program, design, make art, or do any kind of creative and productive work. Many of us do not know the kinds of rhythms, rituals, and methods that would serve us best. Students in this course will be introspective and listen their latent desires of how they will work on their projects.

Week #1—Tuning to Oneself

Students will become much more aware of their energy level, attention level, mood, and passion (or lack thereof) to do their creative work. Not just in a general sense. Our bodies and minds are constantly experiencing fluctuations large and small. While students work for the first week they will begin to notice how they feel when they do certain tasks: meeting with teammates, listening to people speak (do you worry about X or Y while someone speaks, or do you completely relax and listen?), drawing in sketchbook, researching and reading about game venues, and so on. What is stimulating and why? What is draining? Is it exhausting in a good way or not? How could you modify your rhythms, rituals, or methods to better match your mind and body’s latent desires in which they would like to do creative and productive work? What works and what doesn’t? What changes would you like to try to make? **Anytime between September 7-12th post in the #reflections channel in the class Slack some of the things you’ve learned about yourself.**

Week #2—Tuning One’s Work Habits

Once the self-assessment is complete then students are ready to modify or create work rhythms and rituals that fit their minds and bodies better. **For this second week try out some of your new work habit ideas and post results or thoughts about them in the #reflections channel in the class Slack. Post this anytime between September 12-19th.** For students focusing on art compared to a student focusing on programming, these creative methods may appear very different. For example, an artist might develop a daily workflow that ends up looking like this:

1. Take a 10 minute walk
2. Browse Instagram targeting inspiring references for 10 minutes
3. Add a few new images, notes to their Evernote notebook for class
4. Loosely mock up / iterate on visual ideas for characters, environment for 40 minutes
5. Post screenshots, new iterations to team and class Slack
6. Take a 5 minute break, looking at more references or inspirational material
7. Check to see if anyone responded on Slack
8. Continue mocking up ideas for characters, environment for another 40 minutes
9. Etc…

While a designer might develop a daily workflow that looks something like this:

1. Eat a snack
2. Play latest prototype of their game for 10 minutes really getting into how it flows and feels
3. Brainstorm 20 changes they could make to game to make it feel better and fulfill development goals
4. Rank each of the 20 ideas by 1) how time consuming trying that change would be and 2) how much value that change could be if successful.
5. Implement the 5 ideas that seem easiest / highest impact
6. Play new prototype for 10 minutes, really letting the new feel sink in
7. Etc…

While a programmer might develop a daily workflow that looks something like this. Notice that the primary focus is about developing advanced methods of problem-solving:

1. Close eyes and listening to music for 10 minutes
2. Review task-list and select a set of tasks you’d like to complete for the day.
3. Begin programming task. If you run into a roadblock assess the best way to use your time:
   1. Should you keep hitting head against wall and try to brute force the solution? No.
   2. Search Unity Answers and Unity Forums for related posts
   3. If still stuck, post the question on the Class Slack and Unity Forum.
   4. Go to next task while the question bakes a response
4. Play prototype of game for 10 minutes, letting the game feel sink in
5. Chose a task that will have the highest positive impact on how the game feels, even if it will take the rest of the day
6. Etc…

Weeks #3-11 Retuning Creative Methods Due Each Week

Periodically throughout the quarter, at least once a week, check in with the #reflections channel on Slack and report any new epiphanies you’ve had about your professional work and practice or describe any tweaks you’ve done to your work methods. Engage with other students in the channel to help build a community of support and collective self-exploration.