Main Project for Game Design Workshop

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Your Work Will Advance the Field

Description

Students will develop games in this course that advance the field. Student games will cultivate perspectives and foster experiences that currently games do not achieve. Students may focus on any of these directions to create work that advances the field:

1. **HUMAN EXPERIENCE.** Develop a game that captures a sense of the human experience that no other game has delivered. Most of our life experience—our highest highs, our lowest lows, mundane moments walking to lunch, silly moments playing with a puppy, so few of these are really every captured in games. Not to mention spiritual states, non-normative psychological states, and so on. For example see SoundSelf <http://soundselfgame.com/>
2. **OVERLOOKED DEMOGRAPHIC**. Develop a game for a demographic not represented or not very included in game development. For example Average Everyday Adventures of Samantha Brown: <https://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/271251/Every_decision_is_wrong_Portraying_social_anxiety_in_a_game.php>
3. **GAMES AS ART.** Develop a game pushing the aesthetic, experiential, and interactive aspects of the medium into rich artistic expressions. For example Slave of God: <https://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2013/01/04/slave-of-god-review/>
4. **INSTALLATION.** Develop a specially-crafted installation game. See Alt-Ctrl games that won entry into GDC for example: <https://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2017/03/08/alt-ctrl-gdc-2017/>
5. **PERFORMANCE.** Develop a game in which the performance of playing is the key feature. For example Bust A Cup <http://www.gamejournal.it/bust-a-cup-reclaiming-risk-in-play/>

Game Ideations

During the first week of class students will identify sources of inspiration, passion, pain, or aggravation from which they will derive the energy and drive to make their project. For example, you could be inspired by some terrible thing that should stop existing. *Bust A Cup* battles fear and a sense of stuffiness / didacticism / commercialism in the game development community, winning entry into international festivals and conferences. You could be inspired by something that doesn’t exist but should. For example there isn’t a game that really humanizes a homeless teenager so you’d like to show how their everyday is harrowing but has bright moments, perhaps through volunteering at the animal shelter. Perhaps you love the entopic phenomena that appear when you close your eyes and gently press on your eyelids, fostering whirling geometric patterns and you’d love to make a game that emulates that odd medley of physiology and perceptive geometry.

As students are generating inspiration from which to brainstorm games, they will periodically investigate the ideal venues in which they could see such games winning awards and being featured. This requires some research as to what game events and communities exist and are most relevant to your potential projects. Some venues to research:

* IndieCade
* Independent Games Festival at the Game Developers Conference
* Alt Ctrl at the Game Developers Conference
* AMAZE held in Germany and South Africa
* Sense of Wonder Night
* DiGRA (Digital Games Research Association Conference)
* Meaningful Play
* Games+Learning+Society
* Art History
* SIGGRAPH

Many upcoming game festivals may be found here: <https://www.promoterapp.com/calendar>

A more exhaustive list of game conferences is searchable here: <http://www.gameconfs.com/>

Weeks #1-11 Game Exploration Due Each Week

Students will play 5-30 different games each week from any of the venues above, even if just for a minute, to get a concrete sense of the kinds of games that are awarded and celebrated. Many venues value polish as much as experimentation. Understanding the culture of each venue will help you focus your game development so that it is awarded entry. Post quick critical thoughts and takeaways of the more interesting finds in the #exploration channel in the class Slack. Please note you don’t have to document your thoughts on each game, but if any game does something particularly noteworthy, share the finding with the class.

Week #1 Game Conversations Due Throughout September 7 through 11

1. Students identify sources of inspiration or aggravation from which they would like to derive or drive their course project.
2. Students brainstorm dozens of ideas of how the kind of game identified above could exist.
3. Students privately evaluate each of their ideas from 1-5 in terms of scope (how easy game would be to make) and 1-5 in terms of cultural impact (how likely, if successfully completed, would game idea be of getting into chosen venue: IndieCade, IGF, etc.).
4. Students select some of their better ideas and share them on the #design\_and\_builds Slack channel and engage with other students in conversations about their ideas.
5. Students further develop 3-4 ideas to share with the class on Tuesday, September 11. Students should have references, inspiration, and any relevant media that will help convey their ideas and vision. Students could prepare a more formal presentation or something more casual. Whatever format the student chooses, however, remember that the most important thing is to convey the ideas clearly and richly.