

ART 488 / CMSC 493

Game Project Class

Introduction

- Marc Olano
- BS EE, University of Illinois
 - Visualization, Theatre Lighting Design
- PhD CS, University of North Carolina
 - First graphics hardware shading
- 4 years Silicon Graphics
 - Cramming shading into non-programmable hardware
- 8 years here
 - Sabbatical at Firaxis Games

Hopes and the Law

- I want you to make games and sell them
 - I want you to take marketing and market feedback seriously
 - If you get stinking rich, that's awesome
 - You probably will not get stinking rich
- Legal
 - I don't expect you to incorporate (\$\$\$)
 - Please pay your taxes
 - Please treat each other right

Two Years Ago

- AAA tools, AAA complexity
 - Gamebryo + Wwise + Scaleform
 - All used in some real AAA games
 - All poorly documented, steep learning curve
 - Legal encumbrance
 - “No charge! Unless you sell it!”

Last Year

- Tiny teams, Tiny 2D games
 - Some awesome, some less awesome
 - Maybe too tiny...
 - Little programming complexity
 - I've seen High School (Imagine Cup Finalists) do better

The Plan

- Survival of the fittest
- Best ideas get 2-3 person 3-week prototype
- Best prototypes get 6-8 person team
 - 6 weeks development
 - 3 weeks to refine it
 - 3 weeks to make it bulletproof
- Demo

Marketing

- Yes, I know you're a programmer/artiste
- Much of marketing is just documentation
 - Screen shots, video capture, instructions
- Even more marketing is just respectful “did you see my game?” emails
- Don't forget Facebook, friends, friendly reviews

Marketing Schedule

- Identify external deadlines & exploit them
- Global Game Jam this weekend
 - Right before pitch
 - National or international competition
- GDC 2/28
 - Right after prototype deadline
 - Distribute, plan, market
- Imagine Cup 3/7
 - Limits to platform, team size, and game theme
- You identify other festivals, contests, etc.

How to Pitch

- Look at rubric, due NEXT TIME
- Bring five printed slides 8.5"x11"
 - Takes too long to switch: $21 * 4 = 1 \text{ hour } 24 \text{ min}$
- 3 minute presentations
 - Over 3 minutes = -15%
 - Questions after EVERYONE is done

Your Pitch

- Slide 1: Elevator pitch
 - 2 sentences, 10 seconds
- Slide 2: Demographics
 - Who is your target player, why will they like it?
 - Similar games that succeeded
 - Potential festivals or contests
- Slide 3: Mechanic
 - What do your players do? Why is that fun?
- Slide 4: Technical
 - Time and resources
- Slide 5: Screen Mockup
 - What will the game look like? What is the artistic style?

Target Platforms

- Stick with stuff that won't limit your ability to sell your game if you want to
- 2D or 3D
- Flash, iPhone, Android, Xbox, PC
- Visual Studio, XNA, DirectX, OpenGL
- Higher level libraries

iPhone

- Apple Academic License
 - Cannot compile distributed apps
 - Must be used responsibly
 - No hacking, no spying, no circumventing
 - Or license will go away and you'll be expelled
- Putting things on the App store
 - Not required
 - To do it, you would get your own \$100 developer license & install it on your own computer
 - Is a way to sell your homework

Other ways to sell

- Xbox Live, Facebook, your web site+paypal
- I can't demand you put stuff on the App store
 - Apple, at least, does reject stuff
- Give me copies of your submission material & any official responses
- I do demand that you publish or publicize
- I do demand that you obey the law
 - Be very careful about licensing
 - Make sure you have a commercial license!

Ethics

- You can use external toolkits and code
 - **If you have the rights**
 - **And you credit them**
- But you need to make your own game
 - The design must be yours
 - The art must be yours
 - The core game code must be yours