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 hour 24 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