

Submission Worksheet

CLICK TO GRADE

<https://learn.ethereallab.app/assignment/IT265-002-S2024/it265-game-case-study-2/grade/sz35>

IT265-002-S2024 - [IT265] Game Case Study 2

Submissions:

Submission Selection

1 Submission [active] 4/13/2024 10:51:43 PM

Instructions

^ COLLAPSE ^

Step 1:

From this spreadsheet pick a game you plan to analyze (selection must be unique) and put your UCID to the left of it. <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MQpOF4Sfas-PANB-d5s9iGH4l4a6zknyW4cYepzPxAs/view>

Do not edit anyone else's content/selection and be mindful if multiple people are working on this sheet at the same time.

Step 2:

Playtest your game choice (or review streamers playing the game)

Step 3:

Analyze, research, and review your chosen game. Collect resources (website links, etc that you used during the exploration) include these with the responses in the related sections. Fill in the responses of the below prompts/checklist/etc.

Step 4:

Save the worksheet. Export the PDF. Upload it to the mentioned branch name (below) on GitHub. Create a pull request and merge it to main. Upload the PDF to Canvas.

Branch name: M2-Case-Study-2

Tasks: 16 Points: 10.00



Game Overview (1.25 pts.)

^ COLLAPSE ^



Task #1 - Points: 1

Text: Historical Context and Game Description

^ COLLAPSE ^

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Game's title, developer, publisher, platform, and release date.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Historical context of the game's release and its place in the industry.
<input type="checkbox"/> #3	1	Game's genre and how it compares to similar games of the time.

Response:

Europa Universalis 4 or EU4 for short, developed by Paradox Development Studio , published by Paradox Interactive, platforms include, Windows, macOS, and linux, and released in August 13 2013. EU4 started development after the final DLC released for it's predecessor Europa Universalis 3, when it was released it was met with very favorable reviews and won "Best Strategy" and "Best Historical" in Game Debate's 2013 awards. It is one of Paradox Interactive's main line games for the Grand Strategy and Historical genre and was released in a year with many other popular games such as Grand Theft Auto 4 and The Last of Us. Although it didn't get mainstream popularity since the genre it was made for was quite niche as it fills the historical strategy mix genre.



^COLLAPSE ^

Task #2 - Points: 1

Text: Gameplay Mechanics

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Discuss the core gameplay mechanics and how they shape the player's experience.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Explain how players control the game and interact with it.
<input type="checkbox"/> #3	1	Identify and describe any unique aspects or creative elements in the game's gameplay.

Response:

The core gameplay is that the player will take control of a country set in a historical start date which by default is 1444 and engage in interactions such as conquest, diplomacy, exploration, and colonization. The game has a heavy learning curve as there are many features and mechanics that aren't always put in front of the player to see. An apt way to describe it would be the game at it's core is a spreadsheet made to look like a game as many of the interactions are represented by numbers. Players will use their mouse to really interact with the game as there are many buttons and menus to interact with as the players will click on another country, it opens up a diplomacy tab, the player will then click on a declare war button and cause the selected country and the player's country to be in a state of war, the player will then click and select their armies and click on a province(tile) to move their armies to either engage an enemy army or to just occupy that province.

EU4 has manage to somewhat simulate ruling a country and the interactions they might have had with other countries, it creatively represents a number generator game to be much more interactive and appealing. It has dominates the genre it was made in and is still played with great popularity even today but it's fanbase and also it's very extensive modding community.



Software Architecture and Technology (1.25 pts.)

^COLLAPSE ^

Task #1 - Points: 1

Text: Technical Framework

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Describe the game engine and any special software (middleware) used to make the game. Explain why these were important for making the game work.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	List the programming languages and software tools used to build the game. Discuss how these tools helped in creating the game's features.

Response:

The game engine for EU4 is the Clausewitz Engine which is a propriety engine of Paradox but is designed to be open to anyone who wishes to edit the game files. This has lead to the development of a strong modding community for Paradox games that run on this engine and is also what makes EU4 popular as well. Although the game is still being developed with DLC and content updates, modding renews interest in the game and allows more creativity to enhance and retain the player and fan base. The Clausewitz Engine is also made with the C++ coding language which is popular in the gaming industry because of it's high performance and control over system resources. This is necessary because EU4 is a very intensive game that requires a lot of computing and relies heavily on the CPU rather than a GPU, so without the C++ language the game would have suffered from terrible game performance and the game would be limited on what game mechanics or features they can implement.

Task #2 - Points: 1

Text: Innovations and Challenges

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Identify and describe any new or unique technical features in the game. Explain how these features made the game different or improved it.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Discuss any major difficulties the developers encountered while making the game. Describe how they solved these problems.

Response:

A major difficulty of the developers were their focus on stability and quality control, this is because EU4's predecessor EU3 and other previous releases from Paradox gained a reputation for being not worth the buy on release as the games only got into a decently playable state after a few updates or expansions. But EU4 was vastly different from EU3 as when it released many of EU3's game mechanics have been changed, updated, or not included and some mechanics have been simplified or complicated. There was no big generational leap in technology or anything as EU3 was the first game to be developed with the Clausewitz Engine and EU4 also uses the same engine.



^COLLAPSE ^

Task #1 - Points: 1

Text: Mechanics Analysis

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Explore and describe the main rules and actions that players use in the game. Explain how these core mechanics define the game's playstyle.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Discuss how the game's core mechanics keep players interested and involved. Describe the ways these mechanics make the game fun or challenging.

Response:

The game at its core is grounded in numbers/resources and so any tangible action revolves around them, technology and development requires a resource called monarch points that are generated by a country's ruler and these rulers have lifespans as well while on the military side one needs sufficient currency, ducats, and manpower to fund and raise an army. So resource generation and management is a core rule and action the player will have to use in game.

But another action that most player will find interest and engage in is the war mechanic where it can pit one country with another and also drag in any allies or vassals of each side into the conflict. Players will have to conduct the war mainly with their armies that they can move about on the map and battles between armies are determined by a variety of game features. Damage is calculated by factors such as dice rolls but also modified by a general's stats that can add onto a dice roll and a country's military quality can be affected by modifiers such as increased morale aka hp or increased damage.

So winning in wars require a variety of factors such as how strong a country is by its modifiers and ideas which grants a variety of buffs to that country, how well developed that country's economy is, the tactical aspect as terrain is also a factor and defenders on an advantageous terrain like mountains or by a river crossing, and lastly an element of randomness as even with all that an army can lose if they continually roll low rolls even against inferior enemies.



^COLLAPSE ^

Task #2 - Points: 1

Text: Level Design

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Describe the design of the game's levels or environments. Focus on the layout, obstacles, and visual elements, and how they contribute to the game's setting.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Explain how the level or environment design affects the way players play the game. Discuss how these design choices impact the overall experience, such as creating challenges, guiding the player, or setting the mood.

Response:

The game takes place on a map of Earth, where it is then broken up into tiles that represent provincial divisions of the land mass, usually following the administrative divisions of that area historically, as if it is a place of importance, this

land mass, usually following the administrative divisions of that area historically or if it is a place of importance, this includes breaking up the oceans and seas as well. That is just the base map as there a variety of map modes the player can use to view the map such as terrain, political, or other features like religion as these map modes will convey a variety of needed information to the player. But the map is still empty and is mainly populated by countries who occupy these provinces and so these are the game pieces the player will control through which to interact with the game environment and other game pieces.

So if a player wishes to say conquer the whole of Europe under one country they can do so by defeating other countries and annexing their provinces and territories to paint the map. The game also populate the vast amount of countries with differing colors so the player can more easily see which country they are controlling and makes it clearer for the player to appreciate their country.

Graphic and Audio Design (1.25 pts.)

^COLLAPSE ^

Task #1 - Points: 1

Text: Visual Design

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Describe the game's visual appearance and the artistic choices made. Discuss elements like color, art style, and thematic consistency, and how they contribute to the game's overall look and feel.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Discuss the design of the game's characters and environments. Focus on aspects such as realism, creativity, and how they fit within the game's world. Explain how these designs enhance the player's immersion in the game.

Response:

The countries are painted with a variety of colors and each one is assigned one and even if some colors are reused these are put on countries that are not in close vicinity. But the game also heavily focuses on the historical theme that starts from 1444 and eventually ends around the early 1800s so the art in the game represented these early modern and renaissance styles. This ranges from buildings, portraits of advisors, ships, and the army units as the units in 1444 are shown wearing heavy armor and carrying spears, pikes, and halberds and then as the date moves forward and new technologies are researched these units would then be wearing coats and carrying muskets.

This immerses the player as they can visualize these units that represent armies fighting each other and keeps them immersed in the historical time periods so that they can fully role play as these historical countries as this is what they came for.

Task #2 - Points: 1

Text: Audio Design

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Examine the game's sound design, focusing on the music and sound effects. Describe how they are used and their quality. Discuss any memorable or unique audio elements in the game.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Explain how the game's audio contributes to its overall mood and setting. Discuss how sound and music influence the player's emotional response and enhance the gaming experience.

Response:

The game's sound design focuses on historical genre of music and so have a lot of songs and soundtracks that uses the instrument of the time and as well the music style of those times as well. So there are no immersion breaking when it comes to sound as most people can associate the music with the time period and can range from soft flute music to more epic sounds of grandeur. Because of how much I play the game there are some sounds that reminds me of EU4 right as that sound track has been played numerous times as I played the game. Although EU4 also has a DLC where they collaborated with a Swedish Band called Sabaton that sings rock/metal songs about history as well. These songs generally induce epicness and awesomeness while playing the game but are also optional so that the players can keep to their historical immersion.



User Interface and User Experience (1.25 pts.)

^COLLAPSE ^



Task #1 - Points: 1

Text: UI Design

^COLLAPSE ^

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Describe the layout of the game's user interface (UI) and how it functions. Discuss elements like menus, icons, and on-screen prompts, and how they help players navigate and understand the game.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Evaluate how well the game's UI communicates important information to players. Discuss aspects such as clarity, readability, and the ability of the UI to provide necessary game details without overwhelming or confusing the player.

Response:

The game's UI follows the layout of the most important and basic resource at the top along with other important information and notifications such as the country's name and notifications like being able to build something. On the bottom right is the mini map as well as the various buttons for the different map modes the user can use. At the right is usually other important information such as the army numbers for each of the player's armies, merchants, diplomats, and other indications of actions the player is currently doing.

Although because of how jam packed full of features and mechanics almost all the menus, tabs, and buttons can lead to even more game information and UI that couldn't all realistically be depicted on the main screen for the player. But also in the game's choice to try to depict many of the modifiers and numbers but also to not clutter the screen it leads to the new players to be overwhelmed and also not know what these information represent or convey.



^COLLAPSE ^

Task #2 - Points: 1

Text: UX Analysis

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Discuss the overall feel of playing the game, focusing on how different aspects of the game contribute to the player's experience. Analyze how these elements, such as ease of use, game flow, and feedback, affect the gameplay.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Evaluate the design decisions made to enhance the player's experience. Consider factors like tutorial design, learning curve, and player engagement. Discuss how effective these choices are in making the game enjoyable and accessible to players.

Response:

The game is heavily focused on the map aspect and much of the game is looking at a map and so it is easy for the player to know where they are and where their units are. Time moves by days and everything is in real time so just as the player is moving their units the AI or other players can also move their units at the same time. Things are usually quite responsive but there can be delays if the player's hardware is lacking or if there is too many things on the screen so there can be optimizations there.

The game has a steep learning curve and although there are in game tutorials the game still has many features that aren't directly told to the player and it's a common thing for players to still learn new things even after playing for 1000 hours. But the designs at its core are simple and easy to understand after learning it but it is because a multitude of these designs are working in tandem that can make the game more complicated for new players. Sure a player can recruit a larger army and attack a neighbor but might lose a battle because the neighbor had better technology or had a stronger combination of ideas and buffs. EU4 can also be divided into two communities a singleplayer and a multiplayer community and each have their own appeal for player engagement but overall the game immerses the player into trying to take their country to the top and dominate the world in a variety of ways.



Narrative and Storytelling (1.25 pts.)

^COLLAPSE ^



^COLLAPSE ^

Task #1 - Points: 1

Text: Narrative Structure

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Describe the game's story, including its narrative structure, main plot points, and the setting in which it takes place. Discuss how these elements come together to create a cohesive and engaging story.
		Analyze the storytelling techniques used in the game, such as dialogue, cutscenes, or

<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	environmental storytelling. Evaluate how effectively these techniques convey the story and engage the player.
-----------------------------	---	---

Response:

So EU4's start date takes place in November 11, 1444 after the Battle of Varna which is a pivotal moment in history as the alliance of countries and crusaders were defeated in an epic battle against the rising Ottoman Empire. The developers picked this timeline as it is just around the end of the late middle ages and soon the Renaissance will happen which is also represented in the game. Although it is a eurocentric focus as is the name of the game itself the rest of the world is also represented by the time of 1444 as well. And while the game is sandbox in it's mechanics as the player are not restricted to play the game historically and can vastly diverge from our own history, the game does implement mission trees for nations of interest to provide a narrative structure and guide the player in some directions. For example England at this time is still engaged in the Hundred Years War with France and historically England lost and was eventually kicked off the French mainland, however England does have a mission tree path where if the player won the war against France there are events for it and other subsequent missions relating to an alternate history where the kings of England rule France as well and engage in mainland european politics.

Overall most nations have mission trees that will reward and grant the player bonuses for fulfilling them and generally play into the historical area such as Spain at the time starts the colonization of the New World and so have missions that grants them bonuses in exploration and colonization but also have content related to other what ifs in history. On top of these mission trees there are also many events that can relate to these paths and in the game in general so the player can also learn some of the historical events of note that happen but also have a narrative that they can read should they go off the historical path.

^COLLAPSE ^

Task #2 - Points: 1
Text: Character and Integration

Checklist *The checkboxes are for your own tracking		
#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Discuss the development of the game's characters. Describe their roles within the story, their personalities, and how they evolve throughout the game. Consider how the characters contribute to the overall narrative.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Examine how the game's narrative and characters are integrated into the gameplay. Discuss how story elements are woven into the game mechanics and how this integration affects the player's experience.

Response:

EU4 has a less focus on characters than on countries themselves but the rulers of the countries do get assigned personality traits that can grant buffs or debuffs to the country they are ruling and rulers themselves are necessary for point generation. Although limited in their representation such as a great military leader like Frederick the Great is represented with the max stat in military for point generation of military points it still somewhat differentiates and gives the rulers themselves some flavor. Some of the historical events also are related to rulers themselves such as England's War of Roses and they start off King Henry VI who is represented with a 0/0/0 stat in Administration, Diplomacy, and Military as he became mentally inept later on and his succession sparked the War of Roses between two branches of the dynasty. Depending on which side the player decides to go with they can replace him with a York or Lancaster king and the flavor surrounding that, on top of rulers there are also generals and admirals although the land warfare aspect is more fleshed out than the naval warfare. Some mission trees can grant powerful generals that

are rooted in history and that is one way EU4 tells a historical narrative through characters. However the game is also easily moddable and some excellent mods take advantage of this fact and takes that interaction into more creative ways than the game does.

Impact and Reception (1.25 pts.)

^COLLAPSE ^

Task #1 - Points: 1

Text: Reception and Impact

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Research and summarize how the game was received by critics and players. Include key reviews, ratings, and player feedback. Discuss any notable praise or criticism the game received.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Analyze the game's impact on the gaming industry. Discuss how it may have influenced game design, trends, or inspired other games. Consider any lasting effects it has had on the industry.

Response:

EU4 was favorable received on release and got a 87/100 on Metacritic and many praised it for the improvement in mechanics and graphics from it's predecessor EU3. It also won awards in the same year it was released which were the Game Debate's "Best Historical" and "Best Strategy" in the 2013 awards. The game still generally has positive views but a major point of criticism is it's DLC implementation as the base game plus all the DLCs that have come out over the years when bought at full price can easily go into the \$400+, current calculations for the game and all the DLCs is around \$460.16 without tax. And one DLC even at launch received a 7% positive review on Steam because it was riddled with bugs and also bloated the game as well.

Although EU4 is a strong contender and popular game in it's genre and doesn't have any strong competitor in the same niche category it is one of the cornerstones of the Historical and Strategy genre. It has spawned many other games that seek to gain the same amount of popularity but EU4's popularity is particularly entrenched much like World of Warcraft. But its DLC and game design philosophy is detrimental to the consumer and gamers in the industry as this design philosophy means that player expect the game to be barebones on released and only with subsequent development of content, updates, and DLC will the game be fully fleshed out or deemed a playable and enjoyable state.

Task #2 - Points: 1

Text: Cultural Significance

Checklist


*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Examine the game's cultural significance and the legacy it has left behind. Discuss how

<input type="checkbox"/> #1		the game has been remembered over time and its status in the gaming community.
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Describe the game's presence and representation in media, such as films, books, or online content. Discuss its role in fan communities and any influence it has had on broader cultural aspects, such as art, music, or social trends.

Response:

EU4 is almost unique in its genre and also the culmination of many previous predecessor games by the same company, and although it feels a bit dated the game is still quite popular and have continuous players even now. Many players can feel the passion to history and alternate history the developers have and feel it implemented into the game and the game has come a long way since release because of continuous updates and expansions that keeps the game updated and fresh or adds onto the already vibrant world of the game. EU4 is a cornerstone of the strategy genre and will appear in mainstream searches for strategy games and has a strong following in its communities. There are quite a few youtubers that upload EU4 content, fans are always trying to keep up with the developer's posts and diaries on development of the game. The modding community is also popular as many mods have become quite popular in how far they can take the game engine, with one favorite mod of my being Anbennar which is someone's fantasy world implemented into the EU4 game, it comes with a completely new map, new mechanics, and adds onto or takes features in EU4 to the extreme in creative and fun ways that fit its new fantasy theme.

 Reflection (1.25 pts.)

^COLLAPSE ^



^COLLAPSE ^

Task #1 - Points: 1

Text: Describe your personal experience playing the chosen game

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	Was it "fun"? What made it fun or not fun?
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Is this genre/game-type aligned with personal interests?
<input type="checkbox"/> #3	1	What made you pick this game? Was it a good choice?

Response:

The game was very fun because I personally have an interest in the two genre Europa Universalis 4 falls into and caters towards. The idea that I can steer a nation through the courses of history and shape history however I want appeals to my personal interest and it is also a game I heavily play alone and with like minded friends. When I first played it took some time getting used to the controls and basic mechanics but other than that it became very fun as it invokes a sense of imagination and creativity. There is a bit of bias as it is a game I enjoy the concept and execution of how the game plays but it is a very good choice for people who want to get into a historical strategy genre.



^COLLAPSE ^

Task #2 - Points: 1

Text: Assignment Reflection

Checklist

*The checkboxes are for your own tracking

#	Points	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> #1	1	What interesting or new "thing(s)" did you learn during your research and analysis?
<input type="checkbox"/> #2	1	Did you find it was easy to come across the information you were looking for? What was your primary means of research/analysis?

Response:

I learned a bit more about the development and reception of Europa Universalis 4 since I only got and played the game 4 years after it was released. But I have seen content from the older versions of the game it did feel vastly underdeveloped compared to the state of the game today. Most of the information the general information was easy to find and for more in-depth research Paradox have their own forums for EU4 and the developers do post their updates and changes there. But I mainly analyzed the game through my own personal experience as, as of now on Steam I have a playtime of 1331.1 hours on EU4 and that will only continue to go up

End of Assignment