

Gameplay and Interactivity

CIS 487/587

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Goals

- List 5 games
- What in one sentence what is the objective of each?

Rules, Play, Culture

- Rules
 - Organization of the game system
- Play
 - Human experience from the game system
- Culture
 - Larger contexts engaged or inhabited by the game system

Implementing Gameplay

- Gameplay is the union of the game environment and game rules
- A game is a series of choices
- To be worthwhile gameplay must provide players with non-trivial choices
- Choices should have both good and bad consequences to ensure that no one strategy can become dominant

Rules

- Operational Rules
 - Guidelines to allow for orderly play
- Constitutive Rules
 - Logical or math basis of the game
 - Example: Nim or Taxman
- Implicit Rules
 - Etiquette or sportsmanship
 - Example: everyone can reach the board

Rules

- Can you think of a game with no rules?
- How about a game with only one rule?
- Why is it hard to find a game without many rules?

Meaningful Gameplay

- Descriptive play
 - Game action reflected in system outcomes
- Discernable play
 - Result of the game action is communicated in a perceivable way
- Integrated play
 - Relationship between action and outcome part of larger context (e.g. several hits to kill enemy)

Dominant Strategy Problem

- Dominated strategy
 - option so bad that it is never worth using
- Dominant strategy
 - option so good that it is always used
- Games with lasting appeal will avoid the use of near dominated (limited use) and near dominant (excessively used) options

Types Player Choices

- Option that should sometimes be taken and sometimes avoided (good)
- Option whose timing is critical (good)
- Insignificant options (poor)
- Option always worth taking (poor)
- Option never worth taking

Ensuring Interesting Choices

- Avoid paper-scissors-rock type absolute transitive relationships
- Players should be required to make a judgment to select an optimal strategy only after taking into account the aspects of each game situation (e.g. terrain, weather, time, opponent actions)

Tradeoffs

- Option does the most damage but it is the slowest
- Option is fastest to use but leaves player defenseless
- Option is best defense but does little damage
- Option is never the best or worst, but is the most versatile

Strategy vs Tactics

- Strategic choices
 - Affect the course of the game over the medium or long term
- Tactical choices
 - Apply to the immediate situation

Supporting Investments

- To reach the primary game objective (destroy enemies) players may have to attend to secondary aims (like building farms to produce food to encourage trade to make money to recruit soldiers)
- By including multilevel decisions creates the need for players to think strategically

Compensating Factors

- Costs that may be added to game to make selection of option less attractive
- Example:
 - Helicopters can cross any type of terrain
 - Make them slow
 - Make them easily destroyed
 - Limit their ability to look far ahead
 - Make them expensive

Impermanence

- Sometimes an advantage associated with a strategy might only be temporary
 - Destroyed by enemies
 - Stolen or converted
 - Require the use of something not always present
 - Limited number of uses
 - Time limit on use

Shadow Costs

- The underlying costs to the player associated with making a decision
- Resources or experiences required to be able to use some option
- Can be costs related to make supporting investments

Interactivity

- Affecting game world itself
- Directly controlling game character actions
- Influencing character's actions
- Deciding who to follow rather than what happens
- Selecting what is interesting to focus on in the game