CS4303 – Practical 4

**God is Dead**

# Introduction

This practical involved the design and creation of our own game utilising the Processing library. The game I ultimately decided to implement was the same game idea which I had pitched, God is Dead. Even though we were tasked with implementing the game using Processing, I also had various other elements, namely p5.js, the Node framework Express and aspects from the cloud computing company DigitalOcean, to complete my game. In God is Dead, I managed to create a game that relies on players being deductive, deceptive, and attentive.

# Design

## Background and Genre

To prevent my game from being extremely like other games that would be created for this practical, and games which are currently incredibly popular, I initially decided that I would want to focus on a specific aspect of the game and implement it flawlessly. My choice, networking. Unlike Physics, AI, and Procedural Content Generation, Networking would allow me to explore a different aspect regarding video games, which was not as heavily covered in comparison to the former.

Upon deciding on a heavily networked game, I aimed at finding a core theme behind my game. I eventually chose philosophy. This was chosen as I wanted to make the players of my game heavily engaged with the game and requiring them to thoroughly contemplate their actions, as well as the events that would unfold before them. I had initially hoped to formulate an idea which would make the player question their own consciousness and existence, as well as that of objects within the game, as this branch of philosophy (phenomenology) had the potential to provide the exact user experience I desired. I managed to come up with a couple game ideas regarding this branch of philosophy, such as:

* A mystery free-for-all where you’re only certain of your own existence
* A puzzle/mystery game akin to “The Stanley Parable” where the player must explore and find clues to discover whether they are conscious or not

However, the ideas I came up with would have been either too complicated to accomplish within the timeline or have gameplay which could be synonymous as being “buggy”. For example, with the user finding themselves “teleported” to a bed at the start of a level after they believe they have moved around, but they had never woken up in the first place.

Instead, I turned to deduction. While not as heavily linked with phenomenology as I had hoped, this allowed me to define the genre of my game as a Social-Deduction Party Game (also referred to as a Social-Deduction Strategy RPG in my pitch). Despite lacking the ability to incite an existential crisis in the player, this game genre allows me to ensure that players are not passive participants. Players, in order to increase their chances of winning, must be fully invested.

## Title

As previously mentioned, the title for my game is “God is Dead”, as I had initially aimed to create a game highly inspired by philosophy, I felt it was necessary that the title also took influence from philosophy. Hence, my title references one of Friedrich Nietzsche’s most famous quotes – “God is Dead”. Initial plans for the game, hoped for God to be a playable character by a person, with Angel’s needing to protect God from their existence being revealed and prevent them from being killed. Thus, taking the phrase into a literal sense. However, given the lack of God as a playable entity in the game’s current form, I believe the title of the game is much more suited to being interpreted much figuratively. Notably, in the manner where scientific discoveries and rationalism make it viable to challenge existing doctrines, leading to the conclusion that humanity has no need for an omnipotent being to explain existence. Appropriate for my game as the players playing as humans aim to uncover more knowledge by investigating and executing suspected angels.

## Players and Opponents

As alluded to in previous sections, the players in God is Dead are either human beings or angels. Players are assigned to play as either an Angel or a Human, with the “opponent” being the other group of players. However, Humans are unaware of the role of other players, while Angels, are aware of all the other Angels, and are, transitively, aware of all of the humans in the game. Being a party game, all the players are within the same room, only differentiated by these roles that they’ve been assigned. As a result, players are not required to be represented by an avatar, instead, rather trivially, they represent themselves.

## Gameplay

### Rules

The only rule per se within the game is to not cheat, i.e. not to look at another player’s device which may reveal their role. Violating this leads to a player being able to confirm, with complete accuracy, whether another player poses a threat to them or if they can be trusted, potentially leading to the unfair execution of a player, who may have played impeccably to deceive other players in the case that they were an Angel that gained the trust of other Humans.

### Mechanics

Gameplay in God is Dead is heavily user-driven. The players must decide among themselves about who to kill at night (where the player is an Angel), who to execute in relation to the murder that night and whether to pardon a player suspected of murder. God is Dead handles the murdering of a player at night, the accusation of a murder suspect and enforcing capital punishment of a convicted suspect. All of this is determined based on the votes and decisions supplied by the players regarding these various actions.

### Goals

For the Angels, they aim to conceal their existence and prevent the humans from investigating or killing off the entire group. The Angels are outnumbered by the humans, thus they must accomplish their task by eliminating any suspicion around themselves, consequently, by deceiving the humans into believing that, they too, are human. Defusing suspicion is critical for the Angels who, as a group, must remain alive for as long as possible to eliminate humans one by one by killing one human each night, thus completing their goal once every human has died.

Humans, on the other hand, need to utilise investigations and executions to either learn as much as possible about all the Angels (or evenj), or

# Context

## Town of Salem

A significant aspect of the game genre is the fact that God is Dead is a party game. Unlike Town of Salem, God is Dead is designed to be played with your friends in the same room as opposed to strangers on the internet.