MMOs

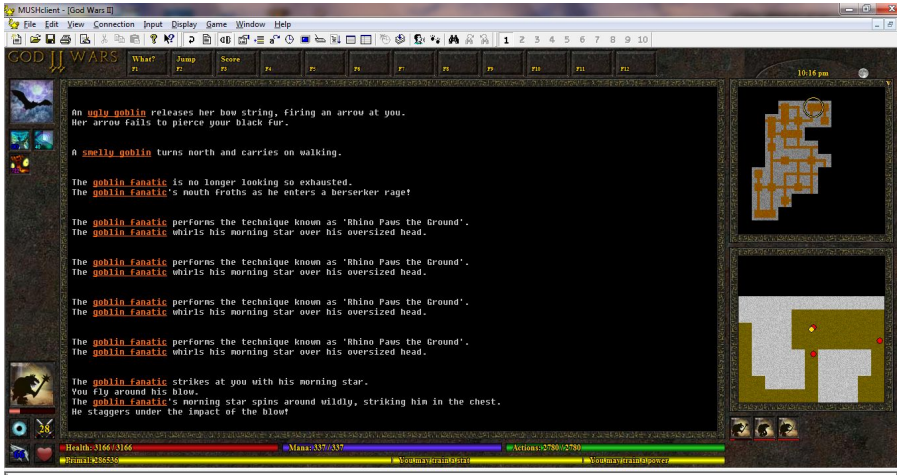
EECS 370 Spring 2017

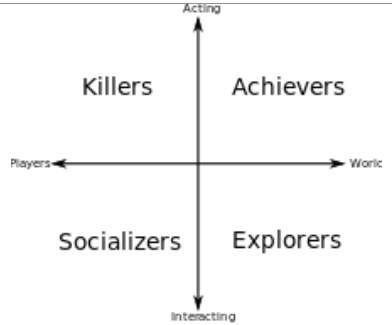
Overview

- They’re Massively Multiplayer
- They’re Online
- ~~They’re pink~~
- Case Study: Runescape
- Case Study: WoW
- Case Study: EVE Online

History Lesson

- MMOs started with university mainframe MUDs
  - I mean, this is simplifying a lot, but whatever
- Multi-User Dungeons
  - text-based
  - dungeon crawlers
  - multiplayer (duh)
- Remember Bartle's player type chart?





Handling Many Players

“If there is a lever, someone will pull it.” - paraphrased GM wisdom

144. There is no such thing as pleather armor.
145. I cannot go back in time to cut in line at the Declaration of Independence so everybody now is asked for their Terrence E. Woczinski when signing documents.
146. Not allowed to play an Australian in any game set before 1600.
147. Hobbits are not allowed to have Norse ancestry.
148. There is no Gnomish Deathgrip, and even if there was, it wouldn't involve tongs.
149. Looting the unguarded baggage train is not considered a glorious victory.
150. Not allowed to create recreational drugs in suppository format.
151. Halflings do not have a racial proficiency with the flamethrower.
152. When the guy is at -9 HP is not the best time for my cleric to convert him.
153. I will not propose to every noblewoman at the royal ball until I crit my charisma check.

http://theglen.livejournal.com/16735.html

Handling Many Players

“A person is smart. People are dumb, panicky dangerous animals and you know it.”

- Agent Kay, MiB

- People do things just to do them
- It doesn’t matter if it would be assholic in real life; they’re not in real life
- In fact, it being assholic sometimes makes it more likely to happen

Herding Cats: Some Strategies

So what do we do?

- Limit the number of things players can do in the first place
- Punish players for being mean
  - banning, muting, etc.
- Go with the flow
  - not every unexpected action is bad :)
- Reactively change the rules
  - either the code or the community

Herding Cats: Limiting Player Actions

- How do we handle griefing/trolling?
- Separate action space for player-to-player and player-to-npc
  - PvP vs. PvE combat
- Limit the things that players can do/say to one another
- Let more mature players do more things
  - scamming prevention
  - player moderators

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/f/f5/Journey-PS3-Screenshot.jpg

Herding Cats: Punishing Jerks

Just because people signed an EULA doesn't mean they'll be nice

- Official Moderators, Player Moderators, No Moderators?
- Options to report players
- Sentences for culprits
  - muting (silencing in chat)
  - banning (temporary or permanent)
  - scarlet letters, public humiliation

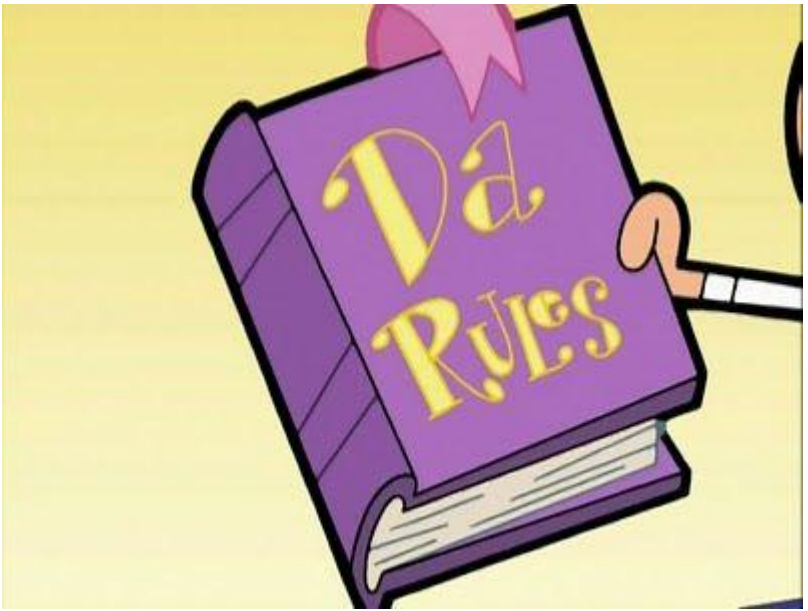
Herding Cats: Going with the Flow

- What if we just-God save and protect us-let the players be free?
- Risk of chaos
  - not always a bad thing
- Legitimate concerns with respect to bullying, abuse, slurs, etc.
- Done correctly, is much appreciated by the players ➜

“Shard Vigil” Memorial, Asheron’s Call
http://www.cracked.com/blog/the-7-most-elaborate-dick-moves-in-online-gaming-history_p5/

Herding Cats: Changing the Rules

- As the community changes, so must the rules
- How do we handle ad-blockers?
  - do what Forbes, etc. did and refuse to let you use our content
  - do what Jagex did and ban you for using them
  - put those awkward “please support me” things under our ads
- How do we handle people who find bugs?
  - generally, reward people who report them; punish those who abuse them



Online, Persistent Worlds

- Kind of necessary for an MMO
- Concerns:
  - server loads
  - shared resources
  - in-game economies
  - differing levels of progress
  - glitches
  - fairness

Online Worlds: Server Loads

- Generally, you have your own machines for your game
  - some people have done Peer-to-peer MMOs
    - security concerns
    - performance concerns
- How do you handle the problem of lots of users?
- Multiple instances of your game!
  - sometimes localized
  - sometimes “themed”

World	Players	Location/Activity	Type	Ping
48	278	Skill Total (2400)	Members	164
116	284	Fishing Trawler	Members	-
98	284	United States (East Coast)	Members	-
74	285	Clan Wars	Members	-
50	286	Australia	Members	314
51	288	Vinesweeper	Members	431
68	288	Group Bossing	Members	-
35	288	Fight Pits	Members	85
97	289	Community Fishing Training	Members	-
124	289	Livid Farm	Members	-
117	289	Dungeoneering: Levels 80-100	Members	-
137	289	High-risk Wilderness Worlds	Members	-
63	292	Canada	Members	-
62	293	Stealing Creation	Members	-
52	294	Castle Wars	Members	455
73	294	Player Assist/Lend (GE)	Members	-
106	295	Europe	Members	-
26	297	Europe	Members	113
54	297	Duel Arena - Staked	Members	-
104	298	Trouble Brewing	Members	-
65	298	United States (West Coast)	Members	-
82	302	Clan Recruitment	Members	-
134	303	Sinkholes	Members	-
40	304	Duel Arena - Friendly	Members	85
138	304	Rat Pits	Members	-
72	304	Canada	Members	-
115	306	House Parties	Members	-
18	307	Organised Player Killing	Members	42
99	308	Community Cooking Training	Members	-
27	309	Social Slayer	Members	46
76	311	Mobilising Armies (4)	Members	-
69	313	Pest Control & Conquest	Members	-

“Postmortem”: Runescape

- Launched in January ‘01
- Fantasy MMORPG set in the “land of Gielinor”
- Originally written in Java
  - a brief, awkward interlude in HTML5
  - since ported to C++
- Non-linear storyline
  - numerous global events and chances to impact the future of Gielinor
- PvP combat
- Dozens of NPCs dotted throughout
  - recently: voice-acting for important npcs

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RuneScape

Interlude: Postmortems (Postmorta? morti? mortae?)

- A presentation on a video game (usually a classic or your own)
- Basically a talk on:
  - what the game was
  - what it did right
  - (especially) what it did wrong
  - how things might go in the future
- Valuable skill for aspiring game designers
- GDC’s YouTube channel and Gamasutra for substantial collections of these

“Postmortem”: Runescape-The Good

- Tons of content
- Well over a hundred quests
  - multiple plot arcs to be explored
- Villages, cities, forests, spoopy mansions, dark caves, etc.
  - everything from gnomes in suspended treetop villages...
  - ...to weird goblin things that chill deep underground
- Over 200 million accounts created
- Strong community

Interlude: Handling Common Resources

How do we solve the problem of player skill imbalance, especially with limited resources?

- Faster respawn times in more crowded worlds
- Make more common resources much more common
- Make rarer resources more difficult to access
    - added bonus to the in-game economy

“Postmortem”: Runescape-The Bad

- Real-world trading was a big problem until a few years ago
  - generally, real-world trading of your in-game items is a bad thing
  - you don’t get any of those profits :(
- Clumsy handling of bots
- For a while it kind of looked like Jagex didn’t know how to code...

“Postmortem”: Runescape-Falador Massacre

- Introduction of player-owned houses
  - “instanced” sub-worlds
  - could throw parties
- User “Cursed You” throws a party
- Has to boot people because of FPS
- Users in the boxing ring discover they can attack players outside
- And so they do

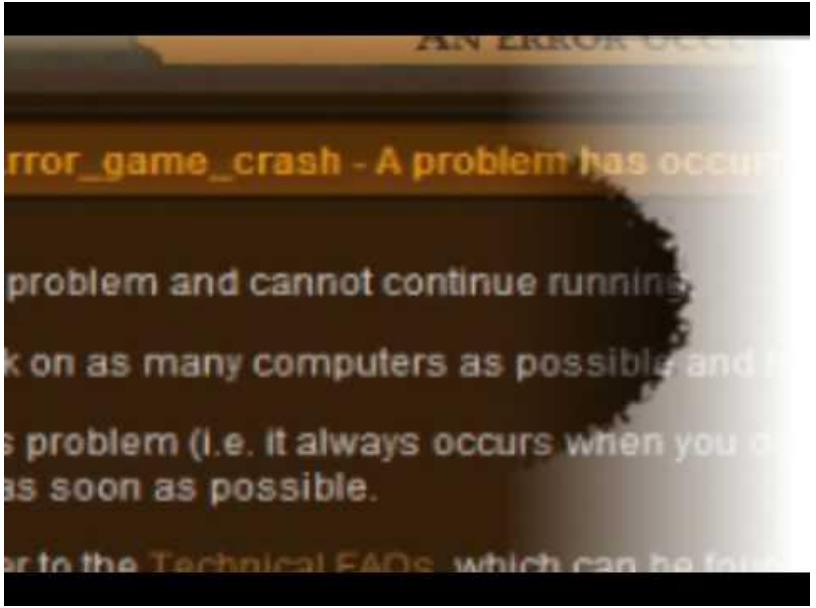
http://runescape.wikia.com/wiki/Falador_Massacre

Interlude: Instancing

- Not everything has to be shared
- The less you share, the better
- Instanced stuff can be stored locally
  - good for server loads!
- Some things can be instanced, but communicate stuff to the server
  - player talks to an npc; npc jumps for joy

“Postmortem”: Runescape-The Rune of Power

- So, turns out that the RS engine couldn’t render “µ”
- And if you typed it, anyone who saw it would disconnect
- Like an actual magic spell, but for assholes



http://www.cracked.com/blog/the-6-most-spectacular-dick-moves-in-online-gaming-history_p3/

Case Study: World of Warcraft

- Fantasy MMORPG
- Set on the planet of Azeroth
  - there are others, ‘course
- Released in 2004 by Blizzard
- Over a 100 million accounts created in total

WoW: The Corrupted Blood Plague

- 2005, new boss introduced with a contagious HP-draining effect
- Players learn how to teleport the spell out of the dungeon
- “Disease” spreads; pandemic ensues
- Used in actual epidemiology now
- “Because if there's one thing *World of Warcraft* players hate more than people who don't play, it's people who do play but not as much as them.”

http://www.cracked.com/blog/the-7-biggest-dick-moves-in-history-online-gaming/

WoW: Kiting Lord Kazzak

- WoW's world is divided into two factions
  - for why
- Lord Kazzak is a spoopy boss who lives in the *ehem* *Tainted Scar*
- Players from one faction kite Lord Kazzak to the other faction's capital
- Oh, also, this boss turns into a death machine after three minutes of combat
  - spoiler: it took longer than three minutes to get to the capital

http://www.cracked.com/blog/the-5-biggest-dick-moves-in-online-gaming-history-part-5_p2/

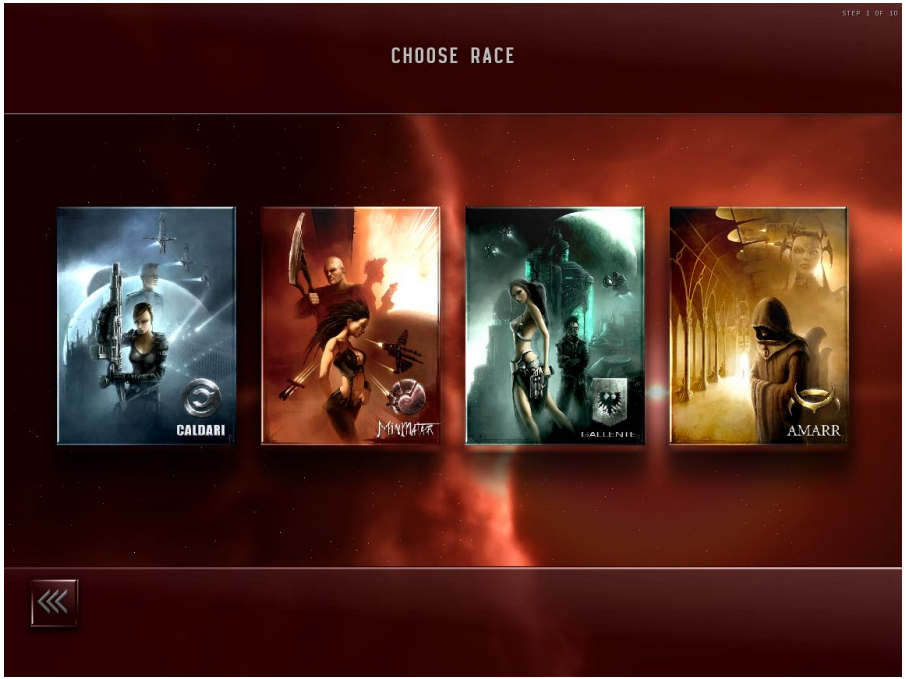
Interlude: WoW Custom UIs

- Blizzard exposed the UI code to WoW users, allowing them to mod their UIs however they wanted
  - this is really cool
- Some pretty clever designs
- However...

7 fps 75.9 MiB 2399 32 76 AtlasLootFu AutoLoot On 0.0% 0 XP/h 75% Elephant
The Halls of Winter (67, 63) [80-80]
Another action is in progress
Spell is not ready yet.
Spell is not ready yet.
Cloud on Damagemaker!
Freeze!
Cloud on Hawtness!
+175 Mana (3 Hits)
Cloud on Dauthighoul!
Flash Freeze
(Nature's Grace)
Flash Freeze
Storm Cloud >>Damagemaker<<
Fireball
Hodir
23111/23111 100%
18243/22353 81%
24041/24041 100%
18880/21273 88%
24058/24058 100%
16922/21958 77%
9144/24238 38%
14366/21433 67%
Vampiric Touch
Damage Done
1. Thewardruid 607122 (15288.9, 9.5%)
2. Nimfas 555101 (13884.5, 8.7%)
3. Methys 482701 (10058.4, 7.5%)
4. Darvulia 366290 (6784.4, 5.7%)
5. Reclusiarch 350277 (6776.5, 5.5%)
6. Hawtness 345387 (6548.9, 5.4%)
7. Mindcrime 344674 (6836.1, 5.4%)
8. Korlian 336153 (6343.7, 5.2%)
9. Damagemaker 333051 (6046.7, 5.2%)
10. Umôhjä 327668 (6750.5, 5.1%)
11. Moowalker 313639 (5960.5, 4.9%)
Group 4
Starrine
24155/24155 100%
20408/23256 87%
0K/1691K 0%
3810/12000 31.8%
Flash Freeze
26.6M/32.5M 82%
Boss
Zigipaladin Azizz Umôhjä Nimfas Moowalker
Asterya Damagemaker Hawtness Dauthighoul Alyve
Huntudown Reclusiarch Sepsis Mindcrime Fulgutza
Devaraja Steelpan Trixiel Methys Vanguard
Addoo Darvulia Korlian Thewardruid Rofi
Players: 25
HP %: 94.9
Mana %: 83.3
Dead: 0
AFK: 0
Offline: 0
SmartDebuff
[19:56:26] [Raid] [Damagemaker:80]: Umôhjä fails at moving (Ice Shards) (8)
[19:56:26] [Raid] [Damagemaker:80]: Hawtness fails at moving (Ice Shards) (3)
[19:56:26] Hodir yells: Winds of ... you!
[19:56:26] Hodir begins to cast F...
[19:56:28] [Raid] [Damagemaker:80]: ... fails at moving (Ice Shards) (6)
[19:56:28] [Raid] [Damagemaker:80]: Sepsis fails at moving (Ice Shards) (9)
[19:56:30] [Damagemaker:80] yells: Storm Cloud on me!
[19:56:30] [Damagemaker:80] says: Storm Cloud - Damagemaker
Hodir
Level ?? Giant (Boss)
75% Threat
Moonkin Aura
Moonkin Form
None
Retribution Aura VII
Starlight
Toasty Fire
Tree of Life
Windfury Totem I
Arcane Brilliance III 57:35
Gift of the Wild IV 57:22
Prayer of Fortitude IV 57:00
Prayer of Spirit III 56:58
Well Fed 56:48
Greater Blessing of Kings 27:25
Greater Blessing of Wisdom V 26:55
Greater Blessing of Might V 26:06
Flask of the Frost 21:44
Bear
Cat
Travel
Aqu...
Flight
Caster

Case Study: EVE Online

- EVE Online:kind of an anarcho-capitalist’s dream
- Thousands (yes, thousands) of real-world dollars spent yearly
- Gratuitously large spacecrafts and explosions, etc.
- Multiple Wikipedia entries for famous battles
- Not big on legible fonts ➜



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/62/The_four_playable_EVE_races_as_seen_during_character_creation.png

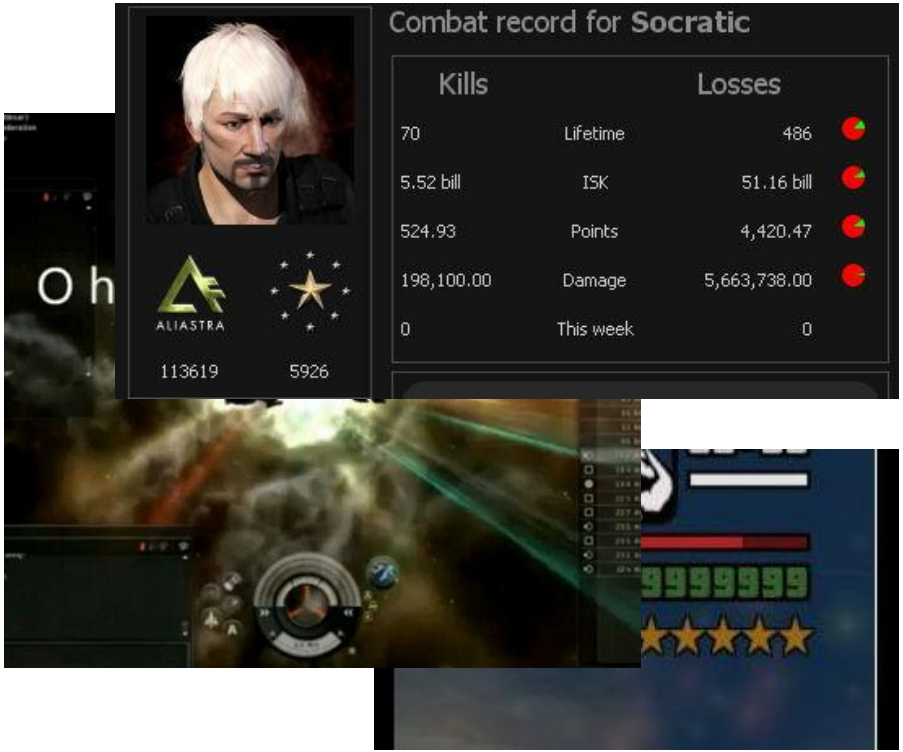
EVE Online: Robbing your Bank

- User “Cally” starts an EVE Bank
  - like a normal bank ~~but with no government regulation~~
- Looked after people’s cash and loaned it out to start-ups, etc.
- Then one took all of the money, but a giant spaceship, posted a Bond-villain rant video, and left
- This is called “fun”

http://www.cracked.com/blog/the-7-biggest-dick-moves-in-history-online-gaming_p3/

EVE Online: Hitting More than Five Stars

- User “Socratic” was really bad at EVE; was also kind of a jerk
- Spent tons getting blown up in expensive ships
- Duped him into setting off heavy explosives in neutral space
- Dropped his security status to -9.8
  - 0.0 is neutral, -2.0 is cops, -5.0 is open bounty
- “He was double bin Laden in a world where the police have warp drives and every citizen is armed”



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Questions?