CMPM121 Final Project Post Mortem

While working on 3 CCG was fun, it was also a mix of problem solving and frustrating trial and error. The process wasn't always smooth, but I think that having my solitaire build to look back on was a big help throughout. I started with deck building + turn-based card play as the main thing to build around. Working around foundations and systems is a more challenging code aspect for me, and I think I struggled this time because of how many small systems needed to interconnect just to make a simple turn flow feel good. But by sticking with it and debugging consistently, I was able to build something I'm genuinely proud of.

Compared to other projects I've worked on (like Unity-based puzzle games or generative systems), this one felt more technical. I had to think about gameplay logic, card data structures, UI flow, and AI behavior all working in harmony. I don't know if I'll continue to use LOVE2D, but I think it helped me learn to work with and control states better. There's no scene manager or inspector to hide behind, like Unity, so everything needs to be clearly planned out.

The biggest triumph for me was definitely the deckbuilder. Implementing drag and drop card selection with slot validation, hover previews, and enforcement of card limits took a lot of iteration. At one point, cards wouldn't release properly, at another, duplicates were flooding the deck. Fixing that, while also ensuring the transition into gameplay was clean might have been more work for me than it was worth.

The biggest annoyance was probably how many small invisible errors I had to debug just to make the game work.

There was a point where I couldn't get AI to draw its first card. I was probably stuck on this for 2 hours before realizing that it was a simple return issue that was causing me this pain.

Another annoying part of creation came from early win/loss transitions that didn't reset the game properly, which led to residual cards or phases getting stuck. These aren't dramatic bugs, but getting stuck on them for long periods of time definitely can do a number on your morale.

Would I work on something like this again? Honestly, yes. I've started to enjoy TCG's quite a bit and this project gave me a nice space to really think through game logic, player interaction, game balance, and AI flow.

I'd probably want to experiment with using JSON to define cards so that the whole engine is more data driven, but it's definitely something I could see myself working more on.

Not a ton of super funny moments during testing, honestly. More like me raging at my computer, haha.

I just want to say a huge thanks to Zac and Yi for this quarter. It's my last quarter here at UCSC, and writing the end of this, honestly makes me a little sad. It was fun though. Thank you, and I hope we can all keep making cool games in the future!