Sample curriculum:

Assignment 4: Game Conceptual Design & Prototype

Excerpt from Assignment followed by grading scheme – see Appendix for full assignment

The Prototype…

Your team will build a physical prototype that will support the scenarios and conceptual design you created. The goal of each prototype is to help you evaluate and refine your idea.

The type of prototype you build will depend on the nature of your core concept. For example, if you are innovating in the area of gameplay systems, it probably makes sense to build a playable physical game that runs according to the same rules — so that you can see if they produce the kinds of gameplay situations that you expect, or if unexpected strategies or states emerge through play. You should use materials for this such as a board, cards, dice, counters, and so on.

If you are focusing on creating a novel world with familiar mechanics, you should build a prototype of the levels you expect to create. How will moving through this world be challenging and interesting for the player? Will there be puzzles, combat, revelations about the fictional world, dexterity challenges, hidden objects, power ups, and so on? How will the combination and arrangement you plan to create build a growing understanding of how the game is played and provide a good experience of pacing, understanding what makes the world interesting, and so on? For this sort of prototype you should think of the best way to create a model of the levels the player will move through — perhaps things like wooden blocks, Legos, clay, and construction paper, or perhaps the kinds of maps and resource booklets used for tabletop role-playing game modules. It all depends on your game concept, which you're trying to test as faithfully as possible.

Building a physical prototype can help you answer questions about your core concept in a number of ways. First, it can help you and your team partners to clarify and explicitly communicate what you propose for the game. A prototype is often less ambiguous than words. Second, you can use the prototype as an aid to brainstorming and trying out different options. Third, you can play the prototype yourself and get a sense of whether you think your idea is on the right track. But perhaps the most important reason is the fourth: you can have other people play with the prototype, who may see the game very differently from what you imagined, and you can observe what happens.

Grading

The evaluation of this assignment will be broken down as follows

- 30% your game specification
- 30% your conceptual design
- 40% your prototype

The actual grading will be done in two parts:

1) Your game design documents (game specification and conceptual design) will be submitted via conneX and marked by your TA

2) Your prototype will be marked in lab based on a) your explanation of the core concept of your game and b) the testing of your prototype by another team (Does the prototype serve to meaningfully test the central aspects of your game?) More details on time constraints to come…

Assignment 8: Playtestable Version

Assignment Details:

At this point you should have a complete, playable game with instructions. Now you need feedback to make sure the game and the instructions produce the experience of play you intend. You will be running a playtest session with this playtest version of your game. Playtesters will be expected to be able to read the instructions for the game without being told what to expect or getting suggestions from other teams. You will need to develop a script for the playtest including any questions you intend to ask your playtesters.

Outcomes:

Sample video game

http://www.callofireland.com

Sample video prototype

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_wRHXVEsuY

Sample game prototype