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CMS.608 / CMS.864 Game Design  
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## **CMS.608 – 3 March 2008**

Notes by Clara Rhee

### Rules and Fiction

- Games work just fine without fiction
  - Many games are completely abstract
- So why bother putting in fiction in a game?
  - Emotional attachment
  - Personal preferences on outcomes
- Chess is a very abstract version of military campaigns, with different fictions in the different versions of chess
- At this point, does the fiction in chess matter at all?
  - The political context today is very different
  - Back in the day, the military analogy was much more real to the players
- Games with fiction are meaningful outside of the definition of meaningful play – it adds context
- So when does the fiction come forward? Do you care about the fiction?
  - Depends on the game
  - Some games almost discourage you from caring by allowing you to skip ahead cut scenes with no consequence
  - In multiplayer games, the fiction gets pushed back for the human interaction
    - The players rush each other
  - If you can ignore it, you will ignore it
- How do you make a player care about the fiction?
  - “Make it not suck!”
  - Many stories are too obvious and flat
- Some games have a strong “fiction” component (separate events) and a very weak story
- Hard and fast stories are hard for games
  - Ex. The Sims have no story given by the game at all
- Games are half-real
  - Winning/losing is real
  - The fiction is not
- Frijda’s Law of Apparent Reality
  - People care as much as they think it’s real
- With games and rules, the rules make you feel like it’s less real, making the fiction less effective

### Complexity

- What kind of a system is the human body?
  - Periodic? Not chaotic, not static.
- Complexity needs objects, attributes, and a resulting relationship between objects
- Most games would be closed systems
  
- Why is that (complexity) relevant (to the interaction of games and fiction)?

- The system of the game needs to include the fiction for the player to care about the fiction
  - A lot of educational games have very bad integration of the lesson and the fiction
  - Scot Osterweil's Education Arcade is working on a good educational math game. How did he do it?
    - The math is well integrated
    - The lesson is found in the environment
  - Bad educational games are too explicit
  - The good ones let you work within the system

### Brainscripts

- Everyone has a set of knowledge about phenomenon in the world
- The "brainscript" about one thing can be adapted for slight variations
  - Ex. Going shopping, Christmas, going to the doctor, restaurants

### EXERCISE: "1000 Blank White Cards"

Step 1: Pick a scheme. Write elements/actions on the cards. Put cards in bag.

Step 2: Take turns pulling out random card in pairs for six pairs

Determine win condition.

- What kind of questions occurred?

Step 3: Pitch the game...