

**Session 18 – FORMAL ASPECTS OF GAMES**

Readings

*Church, Formal Abstract Design Tools*

*Hunicke et al, MDA Framework*

Concepts/Keywords

- Formal / abstraction / design / tools
- Mechanics v. Manipulation Rules
- Dynamics
- Aesthetics

Goals

- Realize that there's jargon to talk about games, and that there's no consensus
- Understand what game design is as a discipline, areas of study/hobbies

Disciplines have their jargon, which distinguish them from one another → it can also be a barrier for new people. The goal of this course is to learn the basic vocabulary of game studies and a bit of game design

*Q: Where do students learn vocabulary to talk about games?*

*Q: Does vocabulary prevent players from getting into a game?*

Who develops vocabulary to talk about games?

- Developers
- Journalists
- fans
- Academics

How is it formalized?

- Write papers
- Articles or presentations
- Academic writing (systematic definability)

These two articles come from industry (mainly) as an early attempt to build vocabulary, formalize it.

## CMS.300 – Intro to Video Game Theory

Church: Game design is creation of experience

- Not being constructed as a discipline – contextualized, learning from other domains
- Building a common design vocabulary
  - **Q**: Why?
    - Creating community
    - Identifying paths and relationships
    - Learning from one another
      - Defining areas
- Many games/technology/audiences → many areas to be addressed
- Technology aspects are easier to describe
- Design evolution happens throughout refinement, often within the same genre → ITERATION

NOTE:

developing a vocabulary is not a matter of creating a dictionary alone (eg. Game Design Patterns/Game Ontology) → it has to be situated

FORMAL ABSTRACT DESIGN TOOLS → method to produce vocabulary throughout analysis

FORMAL – precise definition, can be explained to somebody else

ABSTRACT – focus on ideas, not genre constructs

DESIGN – the discipline

TOOLS – a common vocabulary

What are formal elements of games (vs. other media?)

EXERCISE: list formal elements of:

- Trespasser
- McDonald's game
- La Mulana
- PacMan
- Monopoly (it's in MDA paper)

MDA Framework:

Attempt at identifying main areas of game design

Understanding game design as cybernetics

## CMS.300 – Intro to Video Game Theory

(formal aspects of games)

### Mechanics:

actions, behaviors and control mechanisms allowed to the player and game content

Machine rules vs. Manipulation rules

### Galloway:

Machine Actions (diegetic/non-diegetic) vs. player actions (diegetic/non-diegetic)

MDA's definition is muddled and unclear

### Dynamics:

Rules in motion, RUNTIME

Players have to generate strategies

Emergence comes from here

DRAMA (show EVO 2004, Daigo vs. Justin) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pS5peqApgUA>

### Aesthetics:

- “Desirable emotional responses” → “Fun”
- Fuzzy term: Theme, fiction, experience
- 8 types of fun:
  - Sensation
  - fantasy
  - Narrative
  - Challenge
  - Fellowship
  - Discovery
  - Expression
  - Submission

Apply MDA to some games? What is different?

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CMS.300 / CMS.841 Introduction to Videogame Studies  
Fall 2011

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