News Games

IMM/JPW 370

Fall, 2011
Tues 12:30-3:30

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Overview

This course explores the emergence of news games in terms of their implication for gaming and for journalism. Students will analyze and create news games focused on two major problems among Trenton residents: food insecurity and environmental justice. No prior knowledge of game design or programming is assumed. This course is an intermediate option or elective in the JPW and IMM majors.

Goals

As a result of this class, students will:

- Be able to describe fundamental principles of game design
- Explain how game design principles and techniques are being employed in journalism
- Discuss the ethical challenges related to the development of news games
- Analyze several kinds of news games
- Design news games, whether individually or in groups

Class policies

- Unless otherwise noted, readings and assignments are due for the following class.
- Students requiring accommodations for physical challenges, learning differences or other issues should obtain documentation from the Office of Differing Abilities: http://differingabilities.pages.tcnj.edu/
- Essays and papers should be submitted via SOCS. Scratch projects should be uploaded to the Scratch website and the URLS should be submitted via SOCS. For group Scratch projects, each contributor is expected to submit the URL of the group project in SOCS with an explanation of each student's contribution to the project.

Major assignments and grading breakdown

- Homework: 15 percent
- Food stamp game remix: 15 percent
- Final project proposal: 20 percent
- Final game prototype: 30 percent
- Final presentation: 10 percent

Class participation: 10 percent (Note: this class requires substantial in-class and out of class collaboration. It will be impossible to make an

Materials

Required books:
- Bogost, Ian et. al Newsgames: Journalism at Play
- Fullerton, Tracy. Game Design Workshop

Recommended:
- Kovach and Rosensteil. Elements of Journalism

Download Scratch at http://scratch.mit.edu and create an account

Milestones

September 13
1. Essay on Cutthroat Capitalism game due
2. First Scratch projects uploaded to News Games gallery

September 27
1. Remixes of The Food Stamp Game posted to Scratch site
2. Accompanying reflective essay

October 25
Proposals due for final project

November 8
Formal presentation of project plans and status

November 29
Final game prototype due

December 6
Showcase with formal presentation of game prototypes

effective contribution to the class without consistent class attendance.

Class Schedule

August 30: Course overview, Introducing Scratch. **Read** NG Chaps 1-2, Fullerton Chaps 1-2 Pearson essays on game design in a journalism class http://kimpearson.net/?p=1241 and http://kimpearson.net/?p=1262 For next class: **Create** a sample Scratch project and upload it to the News Games gallery. **Submit** a two-page essay on the "cutthroat capitalism" game answering the questions: 1. Is this an effective game, according to Fullerton's criteria? 2. Is it effective journalism? Support your responses with citations from the class texts and other sources.

September 6 Follow Monday schedule. No class

September 13 Discussion – Is the Cutthroat Capitalism game journalism? How does it compare to "Can You Spot the Threats?" Discussion of readings. Brainstorming about the Food Stamp Game – how can it be made a better game? Better journalism? A better Scratch project? **Read** NG Chap. 3, Fullerton Chap. 4. Brainstorm ideas for remixing the game, with a focus on formal elements.

September 20 Remixing the Food Stamp Game, part 2. Focus on dramatic elements. **Read** Fullerton Chap. 5, NG Chap. 4. What is needed to create a more effective story for this game? What kind of reporting, research does that require?

September 27 Remixing the Food Stamp Game, part 3. Focus on System Dynamics. **Read** NG 5, Fullerton 6. **Post** remixes for next class. **Submit** 2 page reflection essay – is this now an effective game? Is it effective journalism?

October 4 Discuss remixes, essays. Brainstorming major project ideas. **Read** Fullerton 7-8. Discussion of environmental justice issues in Trenton

October 11 Planning your game. What's the news? What kind of news game do you want to create? **Read** Fullerton, 14. The proposal for your game is due October 25. Your proposal should summarize the game idea, its journalistic value, outline the formal elements, dramatic elements and system dynamics, identify the team members and their participation, and include a projected timeline for creating the game prototype and full design document.

October 18 MIDTERM BREAK

October 25 Presentation of game ideas for peer critique. Group meetings to consider feedback, project status, and possible revisions to project plans.

November 1 Read, NG 7. The ethics of news games.

November 8 Read Fullerton 9-10 Group work

November 15 Read NG 8. Group work

November 22 Read NG 9-10 Playtesting and peer critique in class in preparation for end of semester showcase

November 29 Preparation for Showcase. Freeze game. Presentation rehearsal

December 6 Showcase with formal presentation of final game prototypes.