Interactive Storytelling

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Course syllabus

- objective:
  - to present the key concepts behind interactive storytelling
  - to review the proposed and existing interactive storytelling systems
- credits: 5 cp.

Lectures

- lecture times
  - Tuesdays 10–12 a.m.
  - Thursdays 10–12 a.m.
- September 2 – September 25, 2008
- lecture room B2033

Assessment

- assessment is based on both
  - writing an essay and
  - taking an examination
- you cannot pass the course without both!

Examinations

- examination dates (tentative)
  - October 23, 2008
  - November 2008
  - December 2008
- check: http://www.it.utu.fi/opetus/tentit
- enrolment: https://ssl.utu.fi/nettiopsu

Essay

- an essay of 10–15 pages on a chosen topic (in English or in Finnish)
  - topics and material are available in the course's moodle page
  - the essay has to follow the given style standard
- the essay is returned as a PDF file
  - deadline: October 21, 2008 (Tuesday) 2 p.m.
  - papers returned after the deadline will not be graded!

Essay (cont'd)

- grades and possible teacher's comments are announced privately through the course's moodle page
- all returned essays will be published in the course's moodle page in November 2008
  - ‣ grades or teacher's comments are not made public

Quick walkthrough

1. Pick topics that interest you from the list of topics.
2. See which topics are still available and select your topic in the topic selection page.
3. Write the essay.

Quick walkthrough (cont'd)

4. Return the PDF version of the essay before October 21, 2008, 2 p.m. using the essay return page.
5. Check your essay grade in the course's moodle page.
6. Take an examination.

Grading

- grading is based on 20 points
  - ‣ the examination gives at maximum 10 points
  - ‣ the essays gives at maximum 10 points
- to pass the course you need *more than* 10 points
  - ‣ you cannot pass the course without both taking the examination and writing an essay!

Grading (cont'd)

- final grade:
  - ‣ points: (10, 12] $\Rightarrow$ grade: 1
  - ‣ points: (12, 14] $\Rightarrow$ grade: 2
  - ‣ points: (14, 16] $\Rightarrow$ grade: 3
  - ‣ points: (16, 18] $\Rightarrow$ grade: 4
  - ‣ points: (18, 20] $\Rightarrow$ grade: 5

Course homepage

http://www.iki.fi/smed/is08/

Contents

Introduction to interactive storytelling

Interaction

- "Reciprocal action; action or influence of persons or things on each other." (Oxford English Dictionary)
- "a cyclic process between two or more active agents in which each agent alternately listens, thinks and speaks" (Crawford, 2005)

Storytelling is about…

- the reasons for actions (not actions)
- people

(Spierling, 2002)

Linear psychological narrative

- psychological buy-in by the audience
- willing suspension of disbelief

(Perlin, 2005)

Typical features of storytelling

- contingency: story time/space vs. real time/space
- narrative representation: the way of presentation
- presence: viewer sharing story time/space
- interactivity: participation in story generation process

(Aylett & Louchart, 2003)

Comparison of different narrative forms

	Cinema	Theatre	Literature	Virtual reality
Contingency	low	medium	low	strong
Narrative representation	visual	visual	mental	visual
Presence	not physical	physical	not physical	not physical but immersive
Interactivity	no	no/yes	no	yes

Models of user engagement

- actual roles that users play in relation to the narrative experience (Aylett & Louchart, 2007)

| Degree of interactivity	Examples
none	conventional audience
non-participant control	conventional authoring; film
non-participant influence	Forum Theatre; *The Sims*
participant control points	branching narrative
freely participating characters	LARP, emergent narrative

Examples of interactive storytelling

- inventing and telling a story to an audience (e.g. children)
- (live action) role-playing games
- improvisational theatre (e.g. Forum Theatre)
- tour guiding
- teaching

Interactive digital storytelling

- interactive digital storytelling application is "designed for users (interactors) to take part in a concrete interactive experience, structured as a story represented in a computer" (Peinado & Gervás, 2007)

Three partakers

Author

Interactive storytelling system

Characters   End-user
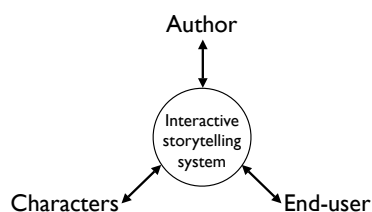
Forms of interactive entertainment

- computer games
- interactive fiction
- hypertext fiction
- digital storytelling
- scriptwriting software
- role-playing games (RPGs)
- simulators
- narrative intelligence   (Crawford, 2005)

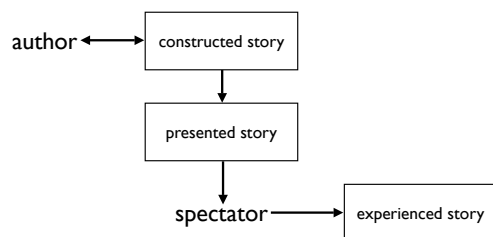# Uses for interactive storytelling systems

- art
- entertainment
  - computer games
- education
  - children
- guidance
  - information kiosks
  - tour guides

Narrative thinking

- fundamental structuring of the human experience
- autobiographical memory holds stories about the self

  (Aylett & Louchart, 2007)

Conventional narrative

author ↔ constructed story

constructed story → presented story

presented story → spectator → experienced story

Interactive narrative

user → experienced story

user ↕ generated story

generated story ↔ characters

generated story ↔ external events

author ⤏ characters

author ⤏ external events