

Session 15 – SIMULATIONS

Readings

Frasca, Simulation vs. Narrative
Aarseth, Doors & Perception

Concepts/Keywords

- Simulation representation
- Manipulation rules
- mechanics

Goals

- Prepare the ground to discuss Procedural rhetoric
- Continue discussion – rules vs. fiction.

Intro:

Frasca comes from anti-narrativist stance, so does Aarseth. → focus on simulation instead of what they call representation/fiction.

WARNING – these texts are for discussion, rather than defining terms.

Q: What is a SIMULATION?

Frasca:

“to simulate” is to model a (source) system through a different system which maintains (for somebody) some of the behaviors of the original.

Aarseth:

Simulation is signs and dynamic model, [system model which specify behavior and respond to input]

- Simulation opposes:
 - Representation (Frasca)
 - Fiction (Aarseth)(both are wishy-washy terms here)

Focus here is on behavior, dynamic systems, as what sets games apart

Simulations usual connotation of real-world representation – flight simulator, history simulation

Q: How are these games simulations? What do they simulate?

- *Tetris/Peggle, Wipeout, Farmville/SimCity, Harvest Moon, GTA, Civilization*

Q: What differentiates (video) games from:

- Text editing software (virtual world, make-believe and interactive)
- A visual physics simulator (interactive, make-believe)
- Economic predictions

CMS.300 – Intro to Video Game Theory

Frasca & Aarseth have problems with representation/fiction, but that's what often sets them apart – fictional worlds

Aarseth's issues with Simulated vs. Fictional doors → some aspects of the fictional world are simulated, others are represented.

Q: Why are some aspects of the fictional world simulated and not others?

- Impossibility to recreate a whole world
- Focus on aspects relevant to gameplay
- Interaction design/usability

Simulation allows focusing on PROCESS (that's what Frasca advocates, but not using the term)

The Communist Manifesto would be better as a simulation

“Simauthors” (designers) provide manipulation rules (mechanics) to experiment with simulation, but not necessarily goals. Goals encourage behavior by rewarding them (eg. killing prostitutes in GTA is (not?) possible, but doesn't give you a reward)

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

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

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.