Team Gameception
For Dr. Darren Wershler
ENGL 398E
Feb. 26th 2014

Minecraft Project Proposal

Title: Gameception

Summary: Our purpose is to design a gladiator-style arena for competitive play in order to create new experiences in what is otherwise an open-world game. The arena severely restrains the player's navigational opportunities, yet creates a space for new behaviour beyond building and storing. We want to track the way a competitor negotiates the immediacy of threatening situations, as well as the potential spectators' reactions to the event.

Description: Aptly called the Ludus, our combat arena will offer insight on players' decisions faced with monsters or enemy players in an enclosed area. Inspired somewhat by the Gladiator Games, we are aiming to have "events" held in this arena. These events will vary in length, and also in content, a "free-for-all", never-ending battle is in consideration, but we hope to have planned bouts of player(s) vs. player(s), as well. The Ludus will alter the player's perception of survival: Instead of fleeing or finding refuge, competitors must use constrained affordances provided by our construction in order to take down the opponent in a number of ways. Prior to setting the competitors loose, we will have them choose weapons in a barracks. Depending on the event, participants might or might not know what the "battle scenario" is, and as such, thought and consideration will have to be given to the equipment chosen. Because of the gladiatorial approach, some challengers may choose to win over the crowd by making a show of the fight. Others may simply fight head on, and others still may try a more tactical style of play.

Our rationale for undertaking this project is to see how we can manipulate the physics of the game (without using mods) in order to create another game within Minecraft that would follow our rules. We are interested in taking control of the monsters in the game and using them in a new way. As the creators of the arena, we want to explore as many competitive experiences as we can within the limitations of the game, therefore the matches will vary enormously. The variables include the number of opponents, the type of monsters used, the presence or absence of a time limit, and many others. Some ideas will inevitably fail while others may be sparked through the building process. Will there be

tools or traps available for the player? Will we reward the challenger for playing in specific ways? The challenging part of making the structure will be the basic engineering: How will we successfully trap and release monsters into the arena? From what kind of mechanisms would our structure benefit? How will we prevent spectators from being attacked? Upon completion of the Ludus, we hope to expand the arena with other, more personal minigames; some preliminary ideas include a maze, miniquizzes, and even a Connect-4 type game, using some of the materials which are normally affected by gravity (sand, gravel).

The knowledge we hope to gain from the Ludus is a rather theoretical set of observations about the nature of competitive play. Online multiplayer games and single-player games in which defeating enemies is the main indicator of success are very popular, so we are interested in transposing the idea onto a game with fewer inherent competitive elements. We also hope to gain some knowledge of what real-world game-development is like; since we are emulating the exercise of creating a game, within Minecraft, we are bound to experience some of the same challenges and setbacks that come with making an actual game, from bugs inside the game all the way to job management. It will be interesting to see if players are drawn more towards personal challenge through the 'single-player' minigames, battle against other players or monsters in the Ludus, or if they are content as mere spectators/consumers of the Ludus. We believe the different categories are representative of players' personal gameplay preferences. Those who prefer to sit as spectators are most likely to prefer watching video games, as opposed to being directly involved in the action. Challengers who are eager to face monsters in the Ludus are likely the most comfortable defeating enemies and taking on a more direct gameplay approach. The people who prefer playing minigames likely enjoy puzzle games. In addition, we also think minigame players are most likely to prefer single player experiences, while Ludus gladiators probably prefer multiplayer.

Since our project involves building a "game" within a game, we will introduce our own set of rules into the Ludus. We are interested to see whether or not people will resort to cheating. This could involve using our constructed affordances in ways we did not foresee, or by exploiting bugs and/or glitches to avoid certain situations. While we want to learn how people may cheat, whether in our closed-in arena or minigame rooms, we also want to know what may provoke the cheating. The Ludus will have chests constructed so that challengers can store any belongings they may possess before going into battle. Since this will prevent the loss of equipment, we want to see if there is a different motivation for cheating. Will there be a direct correlation on how many spectators there are and whether or not a

person choses to cheat? We are interested in seeing if players in the arena will be affected by the setting, taking on the game in the style of a traditional gladiator and choosing not to cheat in order to keep their dignity. Will they be less inclined to cheat out of respect for the game, or will they be more inclined to cheat out of their desire to not lose a battle?

Guiding Questions

1. How does being in an enclosed area change the player's behaviour in a fundamentally open-world game?

2. How does spectating in Minecraft compare to spectating in other games?

3. Can competitors find ways around the rules of our stadium? If so, how and why would they choose to cheat?

4. Can Minecraft provide a compelling and rich competitive experience? Were players eager to watch or participate in matches?

Constitution: Our group decided on a very respect-oriented set of rules. We do not want to interfere with the other groups' progress, so destroying their bases or stealing supplies is out of the question. Amongst ourselves, we agreed to consult others members of the group before deciding a major angle of the project, in order for everyone's opinions to be heard and discussed. Furthermore, we decided that everyone needs to spend time familiarizing themselves with the game. This does not necessarily mean that everyone must fulfill the role of the builder, but rather that we should acquaint ourselves with the game's core mechanics and have a presence on the server at some point in time. In addition, we agreed that we will support or assist teams if they ever need help, as long as they never interfere with our progress.

Participants:

(Name
Minecraft name
e-mail
job: job description)

Student 1
Co-Manager/Builder: I stay informed on teammates and their jobs, and try to help them out, I help organize group work, and try to encourage in-game participation. I also gather resources, help build the arena, keep photo updates of the project, and research ways to improve/expand on the Ludus.

Student 2
Presenter/Builder/Writer: I will be gathering resources and taking part in the construction of the project, as well as helping in the critical analysis/writing of the project. I am also going to be one of the presenters for the final project.

Student 3
Builder/Documentarist: One of the main builders on the arena, been working on establishing both a secure base for the team full of supplies as well as liaisons with some of the other teams, including trades and tips. I also keep snapshot records of the progress of the arena/ludus.

Student 4
Writer/Co-Manager: I am in charge of tracking the group's ideas and writing them down formally. I will also post questions and prompts in order for everyone to brainstorm about the theoretical component of the project. Finally, I remind the group of due dates and make sure everyone is contributing what we need from them.

Student 5
Writer/Researcher: I will work together with the other researchers on my team to discover useful information relating to our project. In addition, I will be contributing as a writer on the written portions of the project. Whenever necessary I will also help gather resources for my team.

Student 6
Ambassador/Builder : I will visit other teams throughout the game and report back back to my team members with information on them. I will gather other team members to see if they are wiling to participate in our arena games. I will ask for feedback on the games, like what can we do to improve? and will keep all conversation captured. I will help with the Resource gathering in minecraft to make sure we have most of the essentials needed for building and survival.

Student 7
Builder/Documentarist: I gather resources for our team in game, as well as contribute with the building process. I will also be responsible for collecting and organizing everyone's photos and journals throughout the project, and will provide video capture of our project.

Student 7

In conjunction with the other writers on the team, I will be contributing to the written works involved with this project. Additionally, I will gather materials, both written and visual, for our final presentation.

Student 8

Builder/Presenter: I will be heavily involved with the gathering of resources as well as the building of the arena, the whole time I will also take screenshots of our progress. I will also be presenting at the end of the semester.

Student 9

Researcher/builder: After much practice I help the group with the building of our main project and collecting resources. My main job however is to collect research on other areas of our project such as if there are any articles or studies done in gladiator style minecrafting or other videogames as well as any and all research we can find on coliseums and other things we could incorporate into it.

Student 10

Researcher/Presentation Builder: I will be helping with gathering information for the final paper, and I will also be helping with getting information and visuals for the final presentation of our group.

Student 11

Ambassador/Builder : My role as team ambassador will be to evaluate our progress and raise questions/concerns on how we can improve our project. I will also visit other team's productions and provide feedback to the team.