

Using a Project Demo Meeting in Increase Sense of Community in an Online Course

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The Context

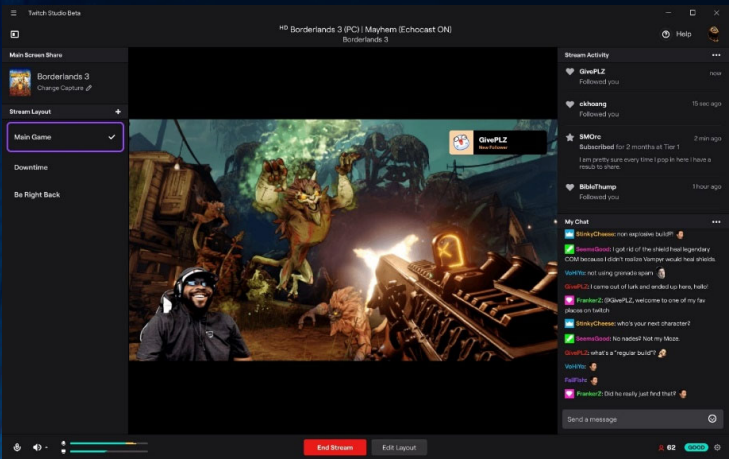
- GAME 140-DL1 “Applied Coding for Game Designers”
- Fully online, asynchronous course
- Biggest Deliverables: 6 Individual Game Programming Projects
- For each project
 - Tutorials walk students through creation of skeleton framework
 - Students are expected to implement their own content and customizations
- Problem: Students deserve a chance to showcase their hard work

The Solution: Project Demo Meetings



- At 6 set dates in the semester, students are invited to meet with the professor in a synchronous video meeting
- At the meetings, students are invited to demo their project before their (virtually) gathered classmates
- Students are required to demo projects at least 4 of the 6 times
- Students who can not attend enough meetings have the option to submit demo videos to Blackboard as make-ups

The Model: Game Streaming



- In order to minimize technical difficulties from having each student share screen and operate their games, the professor plays all the games on their shared screen
- The students don't literally demo their games, I demo them (i.e. play them) while asking them questions about their process
- The engagement model is like streamers who performatively play games on-camera for others' entertainment
 - Since many of my students are familiar with this sort of media, there is a culture of engagement (chatting) I can exploit
 - I make a point of reacting more hyperbolically than normal for entertainment purposes

Why do this?



- Diminish sense of isolation that can result in an async course
- Develop rapport between professor and students and between students
- Give novice game developers a chance to see someone else enjoying something they made
 - This normalizes the expectation that their work is meant to be seen by others
- Streaming model focuses technical constraints on a controlled environment (my shared desktop and internet connection)

Challenges



- Demo meetings can run long depending on how many people show up and the size of the projects
- Maintaining a high-energy character for the entire meeting can be grueling
- Finding meeting times at which most students will be available
 - This is easier right now due to the number of people working / studying from home

Questions?



- Email Rob or Ying-Ying if you'd like to know more
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