“How to Kill a Vampire or Using and Developing Learning Games in Higher Education”

by

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Abstract:
Education has become more complex while students are less engaged and textbooks are dated and expensive. Media and specifically games have become more pervasive, with students playing games regularly. Commercial games for entertainment engage players, and our students expect the same from learning games. However, many educational games lack the quality and fun factor that commercial games exhibit. To address this challenge, in this talk, I describe an approach to creating high quality, learning games that complement and address core curriculum for university courses. Specifically, I outline our approach to creating a serious yet engaging, commercial quality art history game that teaches complex knowledge of the historical interrelationship between banking, trade, patronage, civic works, and art history. I will also show the first examples from our Calculus game. In our process, game designers and content experts divide course content into self-contained units focused on narrow learning outcomes and apply industry standard practices for developing commercial games.

Bio:
André Thomas has spent 20 years in CGI production and was formerly the Head of Graphics for EA Sports Football games (NCAA, Madden, Head Coach, NFL Tour). The Madden franchise is the longest running and most successful sports franchise in the history of the games industry. André was able to turn his passion for Computer Graphics into a career in 1994, when he created graphics for such notable feature films as Men in Black, Con Air, Independence Day, and Tomorrow Never Dies. He worked on the 3D feature film Valiant in 2003, after which he worked on Ant Bully. In 2007, André joined Electronic Arts and worked on over 15 shipped football games. André joined the faculty of the Visualization department at Texas A&M University in January of 2014, where he teaches Game Design, Game Development and interactive graphics techniques and founded the Learning Interactive Visualization Experience lab – LIVE lab.

FRIDAY, March 13, 2015 @ 1:45 pm
McAdams Hall, Room 119