CIS 5640: **Introduction to Game Design**

Lab 7: Frankenstein

Welcome to Lab 7! In this week's lab, we will be practicing our systems design thinking by adding a new system to an existing game. Each team will **randomly draw** one game from a selection of four that we've played earlier this semester: **Pig, Crazy Eights, Egyptian Rat Screw, and Go Fish**. These games are all very simple, and consist of basically just one core system.

As systems designers, your challenge is to take this base game and enhance it by integrating mechanics from other games. You can choose to take small systems from any of the remaining three games or even from other simple games you're familiar with, as long as the final result remains rooted in your chosen base game. This is your chance to experiment, iterate, and discover how different game systems interact!

Task Details

Step 1: Form Teams & Draw Games

- Each team will **randomly draw one game** from Pig, Crazy Eights, Egyptian Rat Screw, and Go Fish.
- Once you have your **base game**, quickly discuss & get refreshed on its core mechanics and player experience.

Step 2: Mash Them Up!

- Brainstorm how to enhance your base game by adding a system from another game.
    - You can use the remaining three base games OR take a system from other games you know (the simpler the easier, don't just go crazy trying to integrate multiple systems from Elden Ring)
- Create a draft ruleset for your new version of the base game.
- You can refer to the tips on the next page!

Step 3: Prototype & Playtest

- Playtest your new game using **basic materials (cards, dice, tokens, paper, etc.)**.
- Watch for:
    - Unintended interactions or **broken mechanics**.

    - Player behavior & **Balance issues** (too easy? too hard?).
- Refine the rules based on feedback. Practice the iteration process we've discussed.

Step 4: Present & Reflect

- Each team presents their **game concept** and what they learned.
- Discuss:
    - What was the most challenging part of integrating the new mechanics?
    - What worked well and what didn't?
    - How would you improve the game with more time?

Examples

Example 1: Crazy Eights + Pig

- Players roll dice like in Pig, but the result determines a bonus or a punishment.
- Rolling a 6 lets gives the player a bonus eg. transform one of their cards into a wild card.
- Rolling a **1** forces the player to skip their turn.
- Players can keep rolling until they get a 1 or are satisfied!
- Special **wild card effects** can let you reroll the dice or swap dice results with opponents.

Example 2: Go Fish + Egyptian Rat Screw

- Players ask for cards as in Go Fish, but if two identical cards appear on the table, a **slap mechanic** is triggered like in Egyptian Rat Screw.
- If a player slaps incorrectly, they lose their turn.
- Players can also bluff when asking for cards to add a deception element

These are just examples! Don't let these examples limit your imagination!

Tips

- **Dissect your systems**:
    - What kind of gameplay experience does each system provide?
    - What are the inputs and outputs of each system?
    - What are the core mechanics of each system?
- **Remember core principles**:
    - What is the game loop of your game?
    - How do players take action to move towards their goal?
    - Does your mash-up create meaningful player choices?
- **Consider player experience**:
    - If both original games provide a similar experience, will the mash-up feel redundant?
    - If they provide very different experiences, how can you smoothly transition between them?
- **Embrace tension & synergy**:

    - Some mechanics might seem opposed, but tension can create interesting decisions.
    - If both systems complement each other, lean into their strengths and make them feel seamless.
- **Keep it simple:**
    - Avoid overcomplicating the rules—your game should be easy to explain and play.
    - Test a minimal viable version first, then refine it based on playtesting.

This is your chance to experiment, iterate, and have fun—let's see what wild game systems you create!