

PROFESSOR: I'm Sara Verilli. I'm the development director at the MIT Game Lab. I came to the Game Lab from the game industry, where I've worked as a producer and a game designer and a QA person. I've done an awful lot of jobs and seats. I've worked on Thief, Thief 1 and 2, Flight Ultimate.

I started at Looking Glass. And that's actually where most of my work was done. I then worked at Irrational for a while. And that's when I moved to the Game Lab.

I came on to be a specialist in production, production management, and QA testing. And those remain the areas that I teach in the course, specifically. We all do a little bit of everything. But I lead the lectures on agile and organizing your team and keeping it running. And I also do a lot of the testing lectures and focus testing lectures.

What am I playing now? Right now I am not playing, but I'm hoping to play soon, is the newest release of Minecraft, which has bunnies in it, which both I and my daughters are very excited about. So I am hoping that tonight I will be able to actually go home and arrange for a play session of Minecraft with them. I'm also playing a fair bit of Sentinels of the Multiverse. And most recently, we've been tackling the Pathfinders card game, which is almost a way to play an RPG in a short amount of time, except that takes almost as long as a full session of playing a sit-down RPG so far. We'll see if we can get faster.

Right now, I'm not actually working on any games. I was working on a climate change game. I'm moving away from that, and trying to think about what is a more interesting problem to work on, in the area of not just teaching game design, but using game design, using people learning game design to learn other subjects, as well. So you can tie two things together. And I'm playing around with how do you teach that? How do you structure a course that would do something like that?

I'm actually really excited to having a specific design question that we're asking the kids, the students, to look more deeply into, into making decisions for the player,

and making meaningful decisions. Because that's a part of games that the simpler your game is, the harder it is to invite your player to make meaningful decisions, and to set up situations where they are making those. But that tends to be the part of games that I, at least, find the most interesting-- the places where I'm making choices, and I can see how my choices have completely sunk my ship or enabled me to win the game. I like knowing that I, I have control of my destiny. And so getting the students to get to explore that aspect of games better and more deeper, I think, is really nice.

I'm currently also working on creating a game with the Step Lab Introduction to Game Design on MIT EdX. I think it's 11.126x, is the number, I believe. I've spend so much time making the course, I have not been looking into all the administrivia tack to do it. But working on that, trying to condense a game course into six weeks, has been really hard, and has made me really stop and think about what is the actual important things in game design?

I would like games to go-- well, they've already gone some of the places I want them to go. Games that are looking at more social-- integrating more social experiences. Games that aren't just-- board games where you're not just me playing against everyone else, but you're playing as a team, and you're playing cooperatively. And video games are also doing that. They've been doing that for years, in the massive multiplayer games, and things like that. But seeing video games go more for how do we work together? How do we make this a more social experience?

And what I really love to see is games getting to the point where players get to affect the games back, especially in the RPG space, where if I'm a big enough player, and I can now defeat everything in the game trivially, can I go in and change the game to make it more interesting for other players? Can I take some of that?

And then, that actually goes all the way back-- that was already being done back in MUDs, right? This not actually a new concept. It's just that production quality has gotten so high that you can't do that anymore. Well, with all the tools coming online,

can we bring that really neat players giving back into the game and creating experiences for other players? Maybe we can start bringing it back into the high-end games, too.