333 Project

- a simulation of reality:
  - building a substantial system
  - in groups of 3 or 4 people

- "three-tier" system for any application you like

- 3 major pieces
  - graphical user interface ("presentation layer")
  - processing in the middle ("business logic")
  - storage / data management

- examples: many web-based services
  - Amazon, Ebay, other web stores
  - news, information services, bots
  - email, chat, ...

- your project:
  - make something of roughly this structure
  - but smaller, simpler, defined by your interests

Project proposal

- by Wednesday March 12 (preferably earlier)
  - discuss project with bwk to be sure it's generally ok

- proposal due Friday March 14 (before break)
  - email from project manager to bwk, ljia, gewang
  - Subject: Project proposal
  - about 2 pages worth of text, pictures, etc.
  - plus URL of initial project page

- people, project name / title
  - names, email addresses, primary role(s)
  - list one person as project manager, acts as contact

- project vision / goal
  - a short paragraph on what it is

- feature list
  - major pieces, how they fit together

- major design choices
  - web vs. standalone, languages, tools, environment

- these are not binding commitments but should be your best guess based on significant thought and discussion among team members
  - bwk, Limin and Ge are happy to talk about your ideas
  - spend some time thinking about it
  - don't just throw together a page at the last minute because it's due

- all components of the project are graded
Process: organizing what to do

- use an orderly process or it won't work
- this is NOT a process:
  - talk about the software at dinner
  - hack some code together
  - test it a bit
  - do some debugging
  - fix the obvious bugs
  - repeat from the top until the semester ends

- classic "waterfall" model: a real process
  specification
  requirements
  architectural design
  detailed design
  coding
  integration
  testing
  delivery

- this is overkill for 333
- however, some process is essential ...

"Staged delivery" model

- conceptual design
  - roughly, what are we doing?
  - blackboard sketches

- requirements definition ("what")
  - gather ideas about what it should do
  - specify with written docs, prototypes, scenarios
  - potential users, competitive analysis, prototyping
  - this should not change much once you're started
    it's too hard to hit a moving target

- architecture / design ("how")
  - map out structure with design diagrams, prototypes
  - explore options & alternatives on paper
  - partition into major subsystems
  - specify interactions between subsystems
    interfaces, information flow, control flow
  - decide pervasive design issues
    language, environment, storage, error handling
  - make versus buy decisions taken here
    [aside on what you can use from elsewhere]

- implementation ("what by when")
  - deliver in stages, each of which is complete, working
    what will be in each release?
  - test as you go: easy to break => lower grade
Make versus buy

- you can use components and code from elsewhere
- design has to be your own
- so does selection and assembly of components
- so does the bulk of the work
- it's fine to build on what others have done
  - identify what you have used, where it came from

Interfaces

- the boundary between two parts of a program
- a contract between the two parts
  - what are the inputs?
  - what are the outputs?
  - what is the transformation?
- who manages resources?
  - especially memory
  - shared state
- critical thing is to hide design decisions behind interfaces, so they can be changed later without affecting the rest of the program
  - data representations and formats
  - what database system is being used (if any)
  - specific algorithms
- in previous years, "I wish we had done interfaces better" is one of the most common comments
  - less often: "We thought hard about the interfaces so it was easy to change things."
Deciding what to do

• formal processes are nice, but you still have to do a lot of thinking and exploring informally
• do this early, so you have time to let ideas gel
• make big decisions first, to narrow the range of uncertainty later
  - Web based or standalone, Unix or Windows
    build the GUI in Java or VB or Tcl/Tk?
    what kinds of windows will be visible?
    what do individual screens and menus look like?

• McConnell: "large grain" decisions before "small grain"
• think through decisions at each stage so you know enough to make decisions at next stage
• this is more iterative than this might imply
  - don’t make binding decisions until you are all fairly comfortable with them
  - what do users see and do?
    scenarios are very helpful (storyboards)
    sketches of screen shots
    diagrams of how information, commands, etc., will flow

Other ways to think about it

• "elevator pitch"
  - what would you say if you were alone in an elevator with Bill Gates for 60 seconds?
  - attention-grabbing description
  - a paragraph without big words but good buzzwords
• 5–7 slides for a 5–10 minute talk
  - what would be the titles and 2-3 points on each slide?
• 1 page advertisement
  - what would be the main selling points?
  - what would your web page look like?
• talk/demo outline
  - how would you organize a talk and demo to give at the end of the semester?
  - what would you want working for the demo?
• business plan
  - how would you pitch it to an angel or venture capitalist?
    what does it do for who?
    who would want it?
    what’s the competition?
    what are the stages of evolution or major releases?
• job talk / interview
  - what did we do that’s really cool?
Roles: who does what?

- not all of these need be explicit, but projects have to do these tasks
  - **project manager**
    - orchestrates code, testing, documentation, etc.
    - in charge, but not necessarily the technical lead
  - **architect**
    - how do the pieces fit together
    - makes it look like the product of a single mind
  - **user interface designer**
    - makes it look like the product of a single mind
  - **developer**
    - you all have to do a significant part of this
  - **quality assurance / testing**
    - responsible for making sure it always works
  - **toolsmith**
    - support, builds, export packaging
  - **documentor**
    - manual, internals doc, web page, blurbs, presentation
  - **risk officer (McConnell)**
    - what are the risks? what could go wrong?
    - not the project manager!!

Things to do from the beginning

- **think about schedule**
  - keep a timeline of what you intend and what you did
- **plan for a sequence of stages**
  - do not build something that requires a "big bang" where nothing works until everything works
  - always be able to declare success and walk away
- **simplify**
  - do not take on too big a job
  - do not try to do it all at the beginning
  - do not try to do it all at the end -- that’s disaster
- **use source code control for everything**
  - RCS or CVS is mandatory
- **leave lots of room for “overhead” activities**
  - testing: build quality in from the beginning
  - documentation: you have to provide written material
  - deliverables: you have to package your system for delivery
  - changing your mind: some decisions will be reversed and some work will have to be redone
  - disaster: lost files, broken hardware, overloaded systems are all inevitable
  - sickness: you will lose time for all kinds of unavoidable reasons
  - health: there is more to life than this project!
2003 Schedule

February

S M Tu W Th F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9 10 11 12 13 14 15
16 17 18 19 20 21 22 ← you are here
23 24 25 26 27 28 29

March

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 meet with bwk by 13th
9 10 11 12 13 14 15 initial proposal
16 17 18 19 20 21 22 spring break - enjoy
23 24 25 26 27 28 29 draft plan, TA meeting
30 31

April

1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11 12 prototype
13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26 alpha test
27 28 29 30

May

1 2 3 beta test
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 demo days
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 Dean’s date

Some mechanics

- groups of 3 or 4
  - find your own partners (newsgroup, etc.)
  - grad students in groups of their own

- Limin and Ge will be first-level managers

- weekly meeting of your whole group with your manager each week after break
  - everyone should attend essentially all of these

- be prepared:
  - what have we accomplished
  - what didn’t get done
  - what do we plan to do next

- these are a graded component

- this is my attempt to make sure that things don’t get left to the last week