Friends, dragons, ξένοι:
I propose to host (at my house and/or over my Internet connection if applicable) a weekly tabletop RPG this summer. Please indicate your interest, and **comment** with votes up or down, additional suggestions, etc.!

At this point we're pretty well decided that my game will be DND in Chammur - read up on the Setting if you want in!

SIGNUPS ARE HERE:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XZarCez66iwUR-zTxk-GvlHhMjKEQQ9od0Msv6sPdN0/edit#gid=0

Link to online sessions: https://middlebury.zoom.us/my/zschuetz

Participants

Big Idea

System

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Attitude and other random details

Participants

Possible Participants (green if you're interested regardless, pink if you're interested only in some options (say which), ~~strikethrough~~ if you're not interested/available.) Looking for 3-6, but if we get more, there is the possibility of increasing the frequency and/or rotating attendance (e.g. two different groups a week, or one group where every session a few people sit out).
Lex*, EnT*, Gospel*, ~~Hh*,~~ Emily J*, Erin*, Kristen*, Brant*, Rebecca*, Cicilia*, Guida*, Emily A, Meaghan, Melanie*, Avery*, Ben*, Jake*, Petar, Rachel, Kat, ~~Kristy*~~, ~~Adam~~, Ian, Solon, Wendy, Dan. dragons@middleburycollege.onmicrosoft.com is the group email.

*remote
First session (https://middlebury.zoom.us/my/**zschuetz**): Emmings*, Toby*, Melanie*, Jake*, Ian, Rachel? Meaghan?

Big Idea

There will be a mix of games: a chunk of me hosting an Open Table game, plus others hosting their own short games. Scroll down to vote on the system and setting for mine, if you have a preference! If you want to run your own game, you can also add it to the list. (You'll need to "suggest" rather than edit directly; it's so I can easily keep track of changes.)

1. **Lex**: I'm interested in running a one-shot session of my friend's magical girl game, which I have slightly tweaked to be (even) more newb friendly (#seattleprivilege). It's called *Watch Out! Heartfelt Magical Girl Clash: Two Hundred Plus Plus!: Special Lex Edition*, and if that doesn't make you want to play it, what will? It's an easy, free-form game (the rules are less than two pages long) about a group of magical girls over the course of a single battle, in which we'll alternate between the progress of the battle and flashing back to the circumstances that brought us here. It is very very heavily focused on the characters and their emotions, so if you're more interested in the "G" than the "R" in RPG, it might not be your cup of tea. You absolutely do not need to know anything or have a character concept in mind to play--we'll create the world and our characters at the beginning of the session. Emphasis will be on **narrative drama** (characters having interesting dilemmas and story arcs) and **flashy escapism** (having awesome powers, getting cool stuff).
   Interested players:
      - ['suggest' your name here to sign up for this option]
      - Zach
      - Rebecca - maybe, I'm not great at the character narrative
      - Jake - are characters predefined, or do we get to have some flexibility in terms of deciding how we want? *Lex: We'll create characters at the beginning, so you'll be able to go nuts. Sorry for not clarifying.*
      - Rachel
   a. Lex: If people seem to enjoy that, I'd want to run something longer in a similar vein.
   b. Gospel alluded vaguely to wanting to run a couple sessions of DND in a custom setting he wrote.
   c. Other suggestions go here
2. **Zach:** I'll run a sandbox game in the Open Table style.
   Pros:
   + It's easy to add new people, even if only for a single session; hence visiting ~~dignitaries~~ family/friends/SOs can be included if desired
   + Missing a session is no problem (and I expect, during the summer, that that will happen a lot)
   + If a sub-group wants to have an additional session, we can make that happen without disrupting play for everyone else

Cons:

- Less overarching plot
- Randomly generated adventures (as they are likely to be, rather than carefully-crafted one-shot stories) might eventually get stale
- Violence is easy to procedurally generate; non-violence-based challenges still require more prep work on my part

System?

Systems I'm familiar enough with to run, roughly in order of my preference:

1. DND.

Pros:

+ At least broadly familiar to many
+ Has a lot of cool spells, abilities, and races already well established
+ Core concept is straightforward.
+ Already has treasure tables, Monster Manual, random encounter tables, etc. to make GMing easy.

Cons:

- Not the easiest for new players to remember all the details, especially if you're a caster
- Not super flexible in terms of character creation and abilities if you have something specific in mind
- Heavy emphasis on violence in abilities; nonviolent solutions depend much more strongly on player skill and judgment calls rather than mechanics
- Pretty much limited to fantasy setting unless everyone wants to learn d20 Star Wars

Interested players:

- Rebecca - If I can use a character I already have it will be easier to jump into a new adventure, and my schedule is likely to be intermittent
- Ben
- Melanie
- G

2. GURPS.

Pros:

+ Way flexible character creation and development
+ Rules, abilities, and mechanics support just about any setting and character concept
+ System I know and like the best overall
+ More interesting nonviolent options built-in
+ Core concept is even simpler than DND.

Cons:

- Details are even harder to master than DND. There's just a lot to it.

Interested players:

- Rebecca - is this like Pathfinder?
- Ben - My only concern is that GURPS can be kinda rules-heavy, but it seems like you know how to manage that Zach.
- Melanie - I love GURPS

3. Prime Time Adventures.

Pros:

+ Focused on the narrative, which at least some of us favor
+ Relatively simple mechanics.

Cons:

- I've never played, so would be less confident in running it
- Lack of rules, explicitly specified abilities, and "default actions" not only allows but also requires more involvement and creativity from everyone

Interested players:

- Lex

4. Star Wars: Age of Rebellion.

Pros:

+ Interesting dice mechanics add nuance beyond success vs. failure.
+ Should be relatively easy to learn.

Cons:

- I've never played, so would be less confident in running it
- Character rules are pretty much limited to Star Wars setting

Interested players:

- Rebecca - I've played a little of this, so am familiar with the mechanics
- Lex
- G

5. FATE.

Pros:

+ Narrative focus, which at least some of us favor
+ Relatively simple mechanics.

Cons:

- I've played a bit but never run it
- GMing strikes me as a bit more work than other systems

Interested players:

- Lex - this would be my first choice

Setting?

Settings I'm interested in exploring, in no particular order

1. Chammur, city of stone (from Street Magic, adapted as necessary to fit the system & purpose). Transplanted to the Forgotten Realms, this becomes essentially a Generic Fantasy Setting.

Pros:

+ I'm already familiar with the setting, have a map, and lots of ideas for NPCs and adventure hooks.
+ This gives us the flexibility to include just about anything

Cons:

- There may be occasional references not everyone will appreciate if you haven't read the book

Interested players:

- Rebecca - I have no problem reading the book again
- Melanie, Lex (under Generic Fantasy)

2. Kaladesh.

Pros:

+ Highly evocative art style establishes "feel"
+ Well-established setting details, races, NPCs. ~~(Chandra Chandra Chandra)~~

Cons:

- May be references not everyone will appreciate if you don't play MTG
- Low-magic setting limits character options somewhat
- Can't use my beautiful random encounter table
- Main conflict (Consulate vs. Renegades) already established - may leave less room for sandbox exploration and individual goals

Interested players:

- ['suggest' your name here to vote for this option]

3. Star Wars (Rise of the Rebellion era).

Pros:

+ Really well-established setting details, races, NPCs
+ Obvious soundtrack possibilities.

Cons:

- Can't use my beautiful random encounter table (and designing/adapting challenging adventures will be significant work)
- May be references not everyone will appreciate if you're not familiar with the Extended Universe

Interested players:

- Rebecca - I love references nobody else gets
- Lex - on the condition that everyone has at least a passing familiarity with / interest in Star Wars
- G

4. ReNewable (Gospel's satirical real-world DnD Setting)

Pros:

+ Silly, biting satire of real-world politics and events
+ Hilarious puns encouraged - open-source world allows for contributions.

Cons:

- Gospel has limited time, and could only probably do a short adventure
- Satire can get to be a bit of a downer after not too much play.

Attitude and other random details

Same Page Tool – Checklist

These are just a few points that should help clarify our approach for this particular game for the summer. The choice I'm leaning towards is underlined; other options are listed for contrast. Some of these we'll want to discuss and decide as a group.

Do you play to win?

a) Yes, you totally play to win! The win conditions are… accomplishing quests, getting cool stuff, and getting out alive!

b) Good play isn't a win/lose kind of thing

Player characters are:

a) expected to work together; conflicts between them are mostly for show

b) expected to work together; but major conflicts might erupt but you'll patch them up given some time

c) expected to work together; major conflicts might erupt and never see reconciliation

d) pursuing their own agendas – they might work together, they might work against each other

e) expected to work against each other, alliances are temporary at best

The GM's role is:

a) The GM preps a set of events – linear or branching; players run their characters through these events. The GM gives hints to provide direction.

b) The GM preps a map with NPCs and/or monsters. The players have their characters travel anywhere they can reach on the map, according to their own goals.

c) The GM has no plan – the GM simply plays the NPCs and has them act or react based on their motivations

d) There's no GM. Everyone works together to make the story through freeform.

e) There's no GM. The rules and the system coordinate it all.

The players' roles are…

(ETA: Very much worth seeing this post by Vincent for a more in-depth set of possibilities)

a) …to follow the GM's lead to fit the story

b) …to set goals for their characters, and pursue them proactively

c) …to fling their characters into tough situations and make hard, sometimes, unwise choices

Doing the smartest thing for your character's survival…

a) …is what a good player does.

b) …sometimes isn't as important as other choices

c) …isn't even a concern or focus for this game.

The GM's role to the rules is…

a) …follow them, come what may. (including following house rules)

b) …ignore them when they conflict with what would be good for the story

c) …ignore them when they conflict with what "should" happen, based either on realism, the setting, or the genre

After many sessions of play, during one session, a player decides to have her character side with an enemy. This is…

a) …something that shouldn't even happen. This is someone being a jerk.
b) …where the character becomes an NPC, right away or fairly soon.
c) …something the player and the GM should have set up ahead of time.
d) …only going to last until the other player characters find out and do something about it.
e) …a meaningful moment, powerful and an example of excellent play.

A fistfight breaks out in a bar! The details of where everything is – tables, chairs, where everyone is standing is something that…

a) …is important and will be displayed on a map or grid, perhaps using miniature figures.
b) …is something the GM will describe and you should ask questions to get more information.
c) …you can decide on the spot using specific game rules (rolling dice, spending points, whatever)
d) …isn't really that important other than it makes for an interesting scene- pretty much anyone can come up with details.

In order to really have fun with this game, the rulebook is something that…

a) …everyone playing needs to have read and understood before play, because the rules and setting are both very important.
b) …everyone should know the rules very well.
c) …everyone should know the setting very well.
d) …everyone at least should know the basics of the rules.
e) …everyone at least should know the genre the game pulls from
f) …Only one person needs to really know the rules and it can be explained in 10 minutes or less to everyone else.

SPECIAL

Instead of "choose one" think of this as a checklist – pick which options apply, leave the ones that don't.

This game runs best when the players take time to create characters that are…

a) …built to face challenges using the mechanics and stats.
b) …written with extensive backstories or histories
c) …given strong motivations and an immediate problem or crisis
d) …tied into the other characters as (allies) (enemies) (as either)
e) …written with some knowledge, research or reading up on the game setting, real history or an actual culture

Fiction Hurdle Questions

Does everyone know the answers to these questions for this game? Hopefully between the game text and making choices above, the group can also be on the same page for the following points. If not, clarify!

What kind of conflicts make sense for this game? They will be basically team-vs-environment survival challenges. Many will be the kind that I expect you to fight your way out of, but that by no means implies that you can't find another way. If you ask, I can put your character, specifically, in tricky situations where they have to choose between their goals/values; otherwise, I'm not expecting a ton of personal moral conflicts. However, there are decisions to be made about what happens next to Chammur, and how you'll influence those events.

What kind of protagonists make sense for this game? You're expected to be basically heroic or at least morally neutral, and to be either suited for adventuring or have a strong reason why you're doing it anyway.
What kind of outcomes make sense for this game? We should talk about this a bit - to what extent, broadly speaking, do we expect/want characters to succeed at their goals vs. be thwarted and/or killed?