This project started a few months before we actually wrote it into a class and began production. I guess you could call it our pre-production phase. It was mainly us testing the StarCraft Campaign Editor and deciding whether or not we really wanted to do this. Once we made the decision to write it into a class and go for it, we still had a month or so to play around. We found the one truly original thing we could change about the campaign would be the voiceovers. That sent us down the path of creating some interesting characters and filling the in-game with plenty of stand-in parts. And that’s where most of our efforts went.

Although we referred to our Campaign as a ‘StarCraft Mod’, it was not a Mod in the generally accepted definition of that term. Usually, a Mod requires modeling, animation, Foley, and custom scripting or coding. In a sense, reworking the original game it spawned from and adding your own touch or interpretation – all the while working with the actual game engine. However, it was much different in our case because we were working with a campaign editor and not an actual game engine. This fact prevented us from customizing the game too much. Anything relating to graphics was locked down and many things such as map size, intros, and scripting options were predefined and unchangeable.

We were left with the ability to change the layout of the maps, storyline, and making custom voiceovers for our characters. About a month before the class started, both Carson and I had a map each that we had made and were testing. These two maps would later become Unforeseen and Thunderclap, basically map 1 and map 2. In January, we sat down and decided to do a 4 map campaign. We designed two more maps, Rout (#3) and Defiled (#4) and decided how the rest of the story would play out on these maps.

Once the maps and storyline backbone were designed, our heroes laid in wait. We then created 3 main characters: Vanguard, Kirellan, and Karone. We assigned them all some kind of motivation and rank and then decided which maps they would be in. The
in-game scripting followed all of that. We placed the characters in the game and decided what they would say and do. More characters resulted from the scripting, mainly stand-in parts. The two new main characters that emerged were Sandman and Jerome.

Our storyline changed a little part of the way through, but we didn’t have enough done at the time for it to really screw our timeline up. This small change was due to the fact that we had been keeping a few key things vague and hadn’t nailed them down yet. Once we made our final decisions on how the story would flow and end, we were able to lock down the stand-in parts and finalize the in-game parts of the main characters.

postMortem(“The Winter of Our Discontent”)

The Mission Briefings, were quite possibly the most important part of our unique touch to the StarCraft universe. This is where we developed our characters and unveiled the next step in the campaign. 90% of all the dialogue in our mod takes place in the Mission Briefings.

At first, this presented us with a bit of a problem and caused a few more along the way. How do we convey the mission information in a concise but interesting way? This is really the one and only area in the game to develop the characters, so they would all have to get some ‘screen time’ but we couldn’t drag each briefing out too long. Plus, we also had to consider the fact that the ‘.wav’ files were already going to be huge, thus extending download time and possible game ‘chunking’.

postMortem(“The Time Machine”)

About halfway through the semester we had finally knocked out the last of the Mission Briefings and could now begin the recording process. A short time before, we had already begun auditioning for parts in Crimson Irregulars. We utilized monologues from mainstream movies that most everyone would know, this gave us a little more time to finish the Mission Briefings scripts before we had to use them. This also made the first round of auditions easier on the applicants. Seeing how we were drawing from a non-actor pool, it made it easier for everyone to show his or her talent.

We went through two rounds of auditions and ended up with more talent than we had parts for. We kept everyone on that impressed us, eventually finding places for all of them. The first round was just reads of the mainstream scripts to see the range and ability and listen for the kind of voices we were wanting. By the time the second round of auditions came, the scripts were ready. We had each person read for the different
characters we thought they might work for. Everyone almost naturally fell into the roles and there was little deciding to do on our part.

Time seemed to move really fast once we picked the main characters. Thankfully, the recording sessions went really well and it only took a few hours to get all the Mission Briefings recorded. Otherwise, we would have definitely run out of time to finish everything.

postMortem("The Net") – http://ci.uact.edu

One of the first things we did once we got Unforeseen into beta was create a website. Its main purpose was to house the maps and allow others to test them and give us their feedback. Once we went into production a few months later, we upgraded the website.

The website was expanded and redesigned to promote our Campaign. The initial redesign was for the voice actors to come. All of our game documentation was put online for the voice actors to study and for anyone else interested to read. We also provided the beta testers a board to post their findings for us to review. We also filled the site out with maps and documentation, plus news updates on where we currently were on the project.

postMortem("The Fellowship of the Ring")

This was by far the best class I’ve had. Working with everyone on this project has been the highlight of my career here at UACT. I’ve been able to incorporate a lot of talented people on this project and it has made it that much better.

My worry about finding suitable voice actors was quickly dissolved as soon as we heard the first round of auditions. The crew we ended up using for the main characters really surprised me. They all took direction so well and pulled their parts off. The recording sessions we had were a lot of fun.

We knew from the start that, even though we weren’t doing a full mod, it would take a lot of time and effort and we might not finish. Our schedule did get knocked around by the voice auditions and other related issues. We figured it would set us back and it did. We are trudging onward and hope to finish – a few weeks off our mark, but finished nonetheless.