14:16:33 What is the range for shininess?

It can be most anything. I like a range of ~ 3. To 20.

14:18:40 Also, I don't see anything on CS550 400-Ed Discussion.

That's because nobody has posted there. The CS450-400 people are very active on Ed Discussion. I have complained to our Canvas folks that there is no way for sections to share posts, which would really help. I don't think Ed Discussion can do that.

14:35:34 Just wondering but can the animations [in Project #4] be split between multiple animated objects?

Not split but added to.

14:35:41 Is there a way to keep it from getting too rough? Like if you animate a sphere growing, would you need to keep adding vertices?

You could keytime animate slices and stacks if you wanted to.

14:47:52 Real life transparent objects also tend to have a different IOR than air, so what you see is refraction...I'd love to know how people approximate those effects in real time. it's very impressive what some games do with their glass shaders etc.

True, but OpenGL transparency doesn't worry about refraction, it just does “see through”. You can do refraction-ish effects using shaders. We talk about that in CS 457/557.

14:54:17 Does the order of rendering matter... I.e. draw ground, then water, or draw water then ground? [when doing transparency]

As much as you can, you'd like to draw everything from inside-to-outside.