

Game Design as a Cultural Practice LMC 4725 / 6325 - Spring 2015

Dr. Bobby Schweizer
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Class: Skiles 346
TR 3:05pm-4:25pm

Lab/Office Hours:
TSRB 113
Tu. 9:30–11am
or by appointment

TA: Bill Tsikerdanos

This course engages with perspectives on game design as they are rooted in multiple creative cultures. Through historical research, analysis, and discussion we will understand how different groups have used this expressive medium. In turn, students will be using critical writing assignments to inform experimental game design projects.

Assignments throughout the semester will ask you to put the readings to work as you play games, write critical analyses, and work on a series of short game projects. Students will learn game design methods and the considerations that inform this process while gaining familiarity with the Unity engine.

Graduate students enrolled in the course will also be expected to conduct research during the semester that produces a term paper. This work can either connect existing research interests to the critical perspectives of this course or serve as a new area of inquiry. We will discuss these papers individually and as a group during the course of the semester.

Readings

You will need to purchase two texts, both available online.

- Miguel Sicart's *Play Matters*
- Tracy Fullerton's *Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games*, Third Edition textbook. (NOTE this book is available through Amazon's rental service for around \$20 for the semester and can be read using a Kindle App on any computer, tablet, or Kindle device.)

All other readings will be available either on T-Square or as a link on the website syllabus. Readings are subject to change, but notice will be provided in these instances. Unless otherwise indicated, all the week's readings should be completed for Tuesday's class meeting. Please bring all readings to class for discussion. It's much easier to discuss something when you have it in front of you.

Games and the Game Lab

We will also be playing games during the semester. Some of these you may be asked to acquire, while others are freely available. All required games will also be made available in the Experimental Game Lab (TSRB 113) and can be played during office/lab hours or during other sessions by appointment

Learning Outcomes

This course will provide advanced understanding of the process of game design and how games are situated in our culture. You will be able to:

- Create inventive design artifacts with an awareness of history, audience, and context.
- Communicate insights and criticisms of digital media artifacts
- Contribute to the development of new genres and forms of digital media
- Appreciate and evaluate future trends in the development of digital media.
- Work effectively in teams to accomplish a common goal.
- In addition, you will produce portfolio-worthy projects that will demonstrate your skills in game design.

Assignments

This course consists of a variety of assignments spread throughout the semester, some of which are broken down into multiple deadlines that will be graded independently. Undergraduate and graduate students will be graded using the same points scale for the standard course assignments.

Details for each assignment will be posted on the class website and T-Square throughout the semester.

Grading (200 Points Total)

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|-------------------------------|----|
| Game Review | 10 |
| Simple Interaction Game | 20 |
| Close Play Recording/Analysis | 25 |
| Twine Game | 15 |
| Game "About" Something | 30 |
| Game Critique | 25 |
| Multiplayer Game | 45 |
| Participation | 30 |

Participation in class discussion, design exercises, and playtests are a significant part of the learning process because they allow you to explore content and design process collaboratively. Participation challenges you to question, refine, and articulate your own ideas and interpretations and you are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the readings and lectures. Your participation grade will be determined by your application of insights and references from assigned readings and lectures in classroom discussions and activities.

Students who assist others in and out of the classroom will have their efforts reflected in their grade. If somebody helps you work through a problem in Unity, gives you feedback on a paper, provides you with some art, or otherwise goes out of their way to support you, send me an email detailing their deeds.

Plan

| Week | Topic | Reading | Activities & Assignments |
|-----------------|--------------|--|---|
| 1 Jan 6, 8 | Salutations | Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum - Well Read: Applying Close Reading Techniques to Gameplay Experiences Zagal - Characterizing and Understanding Game Reviews | |
| 2 Jan 13, 15 | Introduction | Fullerton (GDW) - Role of the Game Designer Gingold - What WarioWare Can Teach Us About Game Design Juul - History of Matching Tile Games (T-Square) | Thursday: Intro to Unity Due Friday, Noon: Game Review |

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| 3 Jan 20, 22 | Play | Play Matters Ch. 1, 2 Fullterton - The Structure of Games | Thursday: Unity Pt. 2 |
| 4 Jan 27, 29 | Foundations | Play Matters Ch. 3, 4, 5 Values at Play Ch. 1, 2 | Due: Simple Interaction Game |
| 5 Feb 3, 5 | Game Elements | Fullterton - Working with Formal Elements, Dramatic Elements Values at Play Ch. 3 Begy - Experiential Metaphors | Due: Close Play Recording |
| 6 Feb 10, 12 | People | Rusch - Mechanisms of the Soul: Tackling the Human Condition in Videogames Hudson - Twine, the Video-Game Technology for All Friedhoff - Untangling Twine: A Platform Study | Thursday: Studio Twine Due: Close Play Design Analysis |
| 7 Feb 17, 19 | Identity | Keogh - Just making things and being alive about it: The queer games scene Gallagher - No Sex Please, Finite State Machines: On the Melancholy Sexlessness of the Video Game | Due: Twine Game |
| 8 Feb 24, 26 | Where Ideas Come From | Fullterton - Conceptualization & Prototyping Kazuko Shibuya – Square Developer Interview | Paper prototyping |
| 9 March 3, 5 | Dynamics | GDW - System Dynamics Bogost - Procedural Rhetoric | Digital prototyping |
| 10 March 10, 12 | Interpretations | GDW - Playtesting, Functionality Seif El-Nasr et al - Assassin's Creed Multicultural Read | Thursday: Playtesting Due: Game About System/Experience First Iteration |
| 11 March 17, 19 | — Spring Break | | |
| 12 March 24, 26 | | Uricchio - Simulation, History, and Computer Games Winner - Do Artifacts Have Politics? In-Class Viewing: WarGames | |
| 13 March 31, April 2 | | Play Matters Ch. 6, 7 Miller - "The Accidental Carjack: Ethnography, Gameworld Tourism, and Grand Theft Auto" | Due: A Game About a System or Experience Final |

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| 14 April 7, 9 | Playing Together | Garfield - Design Evolution of Magic the Gathering Lowood - Joga Bonito: Beautiful Play, Sports, and Digital Games Barthes - The World of Wrestling | Thursday: Studio Due: Game Critique |
| 15 April 14, 16 | Industry | GDW - Understanding the Game Industry VC&G Interview: Carol Shaw, The First Female Video Game Developer | Due: Multiplayer Prototype |
| 16 April 21, 23 | DEAD WEEK | | Tuesday: Playtesting Thursday: Studio |
| 17 April 28 | EXAM PERIOD | April 28 - 11:30 AM to 2:20 PM | Due: Multiplayer Unity Game |

Attendance, Participation, and Policies

Participation in class discussion, design exercises, and playtests are a significant part of the learning process because they allow you to explore content and design process collaboratively. Participation challenges you to question, refine, and articulate your own ideas and interpretations and you are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the readings and lectures. Your participation grade will be determined by your application of insights and references from assigned readings and lectures in classroom discussions and activities.

Please note that there are three kinds of absences that will not be counted against your participation grade so long as you provide appropriate documentation within one week of the absence and make up any missed classroom activities:

- If you have a personal illness or family emergency and provide me with a note from the proper authority.
- If you have a GT extracurricular activity and provide me with a note from your coach or advisor.
- If you have an internship or job interview and provide me with documentation from the company in question (the invitation to the interview is ideal in this case).

Computer Usage Policy

Computers should only be for class work. Lab computers and laptops may be used for note taking, looking at readings, and research, but please don't cruise Facebook or Pinterest or Friendface. Non-course related computer usage will reflect poorly upon your participation.

Phone Policy

Please silence your phones and put them away. If they stay in a bag or your pocket it will be easier to avoid compulsively checking them. No texting, Instagramming, Tweeting, Yik-Yakking, or whatever else is popular that week. Phones usage in class will result in penalties to your participation grade.

Contact

You can contact me during office hours or by email. Please put “LMC 4725 or 6325” in the subject header when sending me email. If you have a conflict with office hours, send me an email indicating the conflict and we can arrange an individual meeting time. I’m also happy to meet you in Clough, the library, or another coffee shop by appointment.

Last Day to Drop

February 27, 2015

Disability and Special Needs

Students with disabilities and special needs should register with the ADAPTS. I will make every effort to accommodate any learning needs a student might have, but it is your responsibility to register with ADAPTS and to meet with me in the first 2 weeks of class.
<http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/>

Honor Code and Plagiarism Policy

You are expected to conduct yourself according to the Georgia Tech Code of honor, which can be found here: <http://www.honor.gatech.edu>

Debate, Diversity, and Respect

In this class, we will present and discuss a diversity of perspectives. Although you may not always agree with others’ perspectives, you are required to be respectful of others’ values and beliefs. Repeated inappropriate or abusive comments and/or behavior will be cause for disciplinary action. If you feel that your perspectives are being ignored or slighted, or you in anyway feel uncomfortable in the classroom, please contact me immediately.