GAME 1000
Course Syllabus

Name of Course: Video Game Production, GAME 1000

Number of Hours: 42.0

Course Description:

This course provides an overview of video game production. The course covers roles of publishers, developers, and dev team members, the phases of production, common issues, risk and scheduling across platforms, genres, licenses and online. Game development and publishing are complex collaborative efforts. Issues of design documentation, content creation, team roles, group dynamics, risk assessment, people management and process management are addressed in this course to begin to understand video game product development. Five phases of product development management are covered: requirements synthesis to technical definition, development plan construction, plan management, problem management, process assessment and improvement and QA/Test.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the inner working of a game development team, as well as the big picture roles of developers and publishers in bringing titles to market.
2. Understand the phases of production and how dev team members contribute during each phase.
3. Identify common issues, risks and scheduling challenges encountered during production and how to address them.
4. Understand the role of the producer in the game development process.

Required Materials:

The One Minute Manager Anniversary Ed : The World's Most Popular Management Method by Kenneth H. Blanchard & Spencer Johnson, William Morrow Publisher, ISBN: 0688014291

Leadership and the One Minute Manager : Increasing Effectiveness Through Situational Leadership by Ken Blanchard & Patricia Zigarmi, William Morrow Publisher, ISBN: 0688039693

The Game Producers Handbook, Dan Irish, Thompson Course Technology, ISBN 1592006175

Prerequisites:

This is an entry-level course. Students are encouraged to have experience producing are least one aspect of a game – code, art, design, writing or direction.

Evaluation:

Grading Policies
College work must exhibit higher order thinking skills including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Mere knowledge about a situation or demonstration of comprehension of the material is not sufficient to prepare you for employment consideration. As a Video Game Development student, you must consistently apply higher order thinking in order demonstrate mastery of the material covered in this course. Grades are given for results not for effort. Read the definitions for each grade noted below, as this is really how grades are determined.

Grading is based on an absolute scale - you are not competing with anyone else, but you will be challenging yourself. There are no distributions of grades; hence, all of you can earn an A in this course. Note: Students earns grades, faculty members do not give them. Your final grade will be based on both individual and learning team performance.

Your final grade will be based on the points that you earn during the course. You may receive "fractions" of points on some assignments. When calculating your final grade, I will use the standard rounding convention – meaning that scores with a fraction of ½ or greater will be rounded up, those with a score of less than ½ will be rounded down. I will use the following grading scale to calculate your letter grade.

The grading scale is based on a 100-point (or percentage) scale:

A	90 and above	**A** = Excellent performance. Work is exemplary and worthy of emulation by others. Student is in full attendance and constructively contributes to the learning environment.
B	80-89	**B** = Above average performance. All assignments are complete and exhibit a complete understanding and an ability to apply concepts.
C	70-79	**C** = Average performance. Accomplishes only the minimum requirements. Oral and written communication is at an acceptable level for a college student.
D	60-69	**D** = Demonstrates understanding at the most rudimentary level. Work is minimally passing.
F	< 59	**F**= Work is not passing, characterized by incompleteness, lateness, unsatisfactory demonstration of understanding and application.

Grades will be based on:

40% class participation, 20% attendance, 40% assignments and quizzes

Week 1

- Introductions
- Class structure
- Overview of syllabus
    - Drive out specific questions
- The big picture, upcoming attractions
    - Profile local game company
    - Interview with industry figure
- Assignment for week 2

Week 2

- Present week 2 assignments
- The game business
- How mainstream games are sold
- The revenue stream
    - What this means for developers
- Interview assignment
- Assignment for week 3 (local game company profile)

Week 3

- Present week 3 assignments (Local game company profile)
- Product life cycle
    - Dev cycle
        - Iterative prototyping
    - Financial cycle
    - IP cycle
- Interview assignment
- Assignment for week 4

Week 4

- Present week 4 assignments
- The development team
    - Roles and responsibilities
- Assignment for week 5 (the interview)

Week 5

- Present interviews

Week 6

- Finish interview presentations (if necessary)
- What does a producer do?
- Planning and scheduling
- Assignment for week 7

Week 7

- Present week 7 assignments
- Habits of effective producers
- The vision thing
- Risk assessment and management
- Assignment for week 8

Week 8

- Present week 8 assignments
- Game design and the producer's role
- Game design documents overview
- Assignment for week 9

Week 9

- Present week 9 assignments
- Game design and the producer's role
- The game design document
    - Blueprint, backbone, springboard
- Assignment for week 10

Week 10

- Present week 10 assignments
- Processes for producing a game
- Tools and techniques
- Budgets
- Assignment for week 11

Week 11

- Present week 11 assignments
- One Minute Manager

    - Commonsense methods for managing people
    - One minute goals, praisings, reprimands
- Assignments for week 12

Week 12

- Present week 12 assignments
- Leadership and the One Minute Manager
    - Situational leadership
    - Leadership and developmental stages
- Assignment for week 13

Week 13

- Present week 13 assignment
- The producer as manager
    - People skills
    - Providing a workplace conducive to getting work done
- Teams and team building
- Assignment for week 14

Week 14

- Present week 14 assignment
- Other views
    - How to promote from within
    - The enemy is us
    - Is crunch time a desirable strategy?
    - Goals instead of milestones?
- Class postmortem

Video Game Development Program Philosophy

The Video Game Development Program has been designed, developed and implemented in partnership with leading video games studio managers and directors in Austin. The video games industry has undergone significant changes in how games are developed. They are rarely developed by a few persons working in isolation. Today's games are often developed by teams of 50 to 200 on schedules from 2 to 3 years with budgets of $10M to $20M. The large publishers drive the game development funding and schedules. Consequently, it is critical that personnel in the industry communicate and collaborate effectively.

This drove the certificate requirements definition. Students are required to successfully complete courses in four categories:

1. The base industry courses: Video Games Industry, Business of Video Games and Video Games Development.
    a. Students will understand what drives the industry, why games are developed, what is needed for success and how to get from idea to delivery.
2. The course specialization courses: Video Game Programming, Video Game Art, Video Game Design and Video Game Production.
    a. Students will understand the requirements, objectives, limitations and goals of the different disciplines in a studio. This is essential for communication and collaboration.
    b. Students in these core courses will be cross-discipline in order to build an understanding and appreciation of how different discipline teams collaborate and contribute to the final product.
3. The five specialization electives.
    a. Students will develop skills in the discipline in which the student will seek employment.
4. Non-specialization electives
    a. These are different per discipline, but will give you a deeper understanding of what other disciplines do and how they function. The goal is to help you understand how to work with others on the team and to get the 'big picture.'
5. Capstone Project
    a. This multi-person team project will simulate the real video game development environment. Students will develop a concept, turn it into a design, implement the programming and art required and produce it on the committed schedule. Go/no go milestones and final "publisher" acceptance reviews will mimic the industry. The students will have a deliverable for their portfolio that can be used for employment purposes.

Throughout the program each course will focus on knowledge transfer, skill building and teamwork. There will be a heavy emphasis on projects that will broaden and deepen each student's portfolio development. Portfolios are critical to demonstrating an individual's capabilities. Some projects will individual, many will be team based. How much a student gets out of each course will largely be determined by how much the students puts into the course. Video game development is highly complex, difficult work. The courses are designed to prepare students for that environment. So, come expecting to work hard.

The program is designed to reinforce key concepts such as teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation across all disciplines in the games development and management process. Many concepts are repeated throughout the program because they are extremely important to successful game development.