

GAME 1005 Video Game Design I

Class Includes: Class Discussion: Historical Overview of Video Games and Game Design; Basic understanding of games as systems and acceptance of a shared taxonomy for discussion: vocabulary, simple rules systems; Platform issues and considerations, different game editors, common game design mistakes, gender specifics in games, implicit politics in games, emerging topics.

Class Work: Research/play games both inside and outside of class, change existing rules systems, design games on paper. Case Studies: Popular games deconstructed and seen as systems. Class Project: Designing a game idea from scratch.

Prerequisites: None

Class Schedule: Tuesday, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Room: HBC 102.3

Instructor: Pete Warner

Course Description: This course will offer you a historical and practical overview Video Games and of Game Design in general. As the first class in the Design sequence, it will teach a basic understanding of games as systems and a vocabulary for game discussions which will be utilized throughout the sequence. In this class, you will learn, research, and play various games and seek an understanding of the Game Design fundamentals common to all types of games as well as the unique challenges and capabilities of today's modern video games. Class projects and assignments will include reviewing games, modifying existing game rules in order to create different player experiences, and designing new games.

Approved Course Text: Game Design Workshop by Tracy Fullerton, Christopher Swain & Steven Hoffman, CMPBooks, ISBN: 1-57820-222-1

Instructional Methodology: Lecture and Discussion. Outside research and projects.

Course Rationale: This course is designed to introduce the student to the basic concepts of Game Design for both the purpose of giving non-game-designers an understanding of the challenges and processes of game design and that of preparing the students for further studies in the field of Game Design.

Course Objectives / Learning Outcomes: The students will learn to critically evaluate existing games, to modify the rules of games in order to change the experience of game play, and to create their own game designs. By presenting the students with both a historical overview of and a vocabulary for game design, we will enable them to see where their designs fit into the greater whole of

gaming and to effectively communicate their designs to others. In this class, students will develop concept documents for games of their own design.

Who Should Enroll in this Course: This course is required for all students in the Video Game Development technical certification program.

Course Modules:

- Role of a game designer: Advocate for the player, playtesters, passions and skills, communication, teamwork, process, inspiration, creativity.
- The design process: Iterative design.
- Formal elements: Players, Objectives, Procedures, Rules, Resources, Conflict, Boundaries, Outcome, Dramatic Elements,
- Dramatic Elements: Challenge, Play, Premise, Characters, Story. Emergent qualities
- System Dynamics: How the formal and dramatic elements fit together and their interactions.
- Deconstructing Games into Systems
- Conceptualization: Refining ideas.
- Brainstorming: Team brainstorming, idea trees, list creation.
- Prototyping: Physical prototypes, software prototypes.
- Playtesting: Design review, bug testing, focus group testing, usability testing.
- Functionality: Foundation, structure, formal details, refinement.
- Completeness: Loopholes, dead-ends.
Balance: Variables, dynamics, starting conditions, skill.
- Design Documentation: Contents, example design documents, templates.
- Fun and Accessibility: Challenge, player choices, decision types, dilemmas, puzzles, rewards, punishments, anticipation, surprise, progress.
- Controls and Interfaces: Cameras, input devices, visual displays, menus.
- Team Structures: Designers, Programmers, Artists, QA, Specialized media, Production.
- Scripting: Introduction to scripting.
- Understanding the Game Industry: Marketing, platforms, sales figures, growth.
- Selling Yourself: Resume, skillsets.

Grading and Examinations:

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 earn 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ or greater will be rounded up, those with a score of less than $\frac{1}{2}$ 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:

How points and percentages equate to grades

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.

There will be no traditional exams in this course. Your grade will be based on the quality of the written works which you submit (e.g. game reviews), the quality of your projects and presentations (e.g. original game concept document, game rule modifications), class participation, and various quizzes which may be offered. Each assignment will be graded on a 4-point scale (with 4.0 as the maximum value). A letter grade will also be given for clarity (e.g. 3.6 = "A-"). The breakdown for the four areas of the student's final grade is as follows:

Midterm (40% of final grade)

Design a simple game

Pitch to class (presentation)

5 min of gameplay(story)

50% Presentation

50% Documentation

Final (50% of final grade)

Choose a game you have played and write a design for additional content, level or system.

100% documentation

Attendance and participation (10% of final grade)

Grade Policy and Scale: Your final grade for the class will be calculated by averaging the points received for each of the four areas and then weighting that area average according to the table above. Once this weighting and averaging has occurred, the following table will be used to determine the your final grade for the class. It is possible that a curve may be applied to the final class grades.

3.5 - 4.0 A

2.5 - 3.4 B

1.5 - 2.4 C

0.5 - 1.4 D

0.0 - 0.4 F

Late Assignment Policy: For each day that an assignment is late, 1.0 point will be deducted from the grade for that assignment. Since assignments are graded on a 4-point scale, this represents the loss of a full letter grade per day that the assignment is late. The maximum number of points deducted in this way will be 3.0 .

Incomplete: A student may receive a temporary grade of "I" (Incomplete) at the end of the semester only if ALL the following conditions are satisfied:

1. The student is unable to complete the course during the semester due to circumstances beyond their control.
2. The student must have earned at least half of the grade points needed for a "C" by the end of the semester.
3. The request for the grade must be made in person at the instructor's office and necessary documents completed.
4. To remove an "I", the student must complete the course by two weeks before the end of the following semester. Failure to do so will result in the grade automatically reverting to an "F".

Freedom of Expression Policy: It is expected that faculty and students will respect the views of others when expressed in classroom discussions. As a course with a high level of discussion, it is imperative that everyone in the class feel comfortable expressing their views.

Academic Integrity: A student is expected to complete his or her own projects and tests. Students are responsible for observing the policy on academic integrity described in the Current ACC Student Handbook.

“Acts prohibited by the college for which discipline may be administered include scholastic dishonesty, including but not limited to cheating on an exam or quiz, plagiarizing, and unauthorized collaboration with another in preparing outside work. Academic work submitted by students shall be the result of their own thought, research or self-expression. Academic work is defined as, but not limited to tests, quizzes, whether taken electronically or on paper; projects, either individual or group; classroom presentations, and homework.”

The penalty assessed for violations will be in accordance with the current ACC Student Handbook policy. See <http://www.austincc.edu/handbook/policies4.htm> for more information.

Attendance and Participation Policy: The official college policy states that students are expected to attend classes and will be held responsible for all material covered in class. Regular attendance helps ensure satisfactory progress towards completion of the course. Participation in this case means actively participating in the class assignments and discussions. As you can see above, Attendance and Participation will account for 20% of your final grade in the class.

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 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 optional courses that will give you a deeper understanding of what other disciplines do and how they function. They will help you understand how to work with others on the team and to get the 'big picture.' These courses do not count towards the Video Game development certificate.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.