

Video Game Development

- Course Syllabus -

GAME 1008

1. **Name of Course:** *Publisher Relations*

2. **Number of Hours:** *42 Hours*

3. **Course Description:**

Topics covered in this course include: dealing with external producers, being an internal producer and dealing with external developers, being an internal producer and keeping your own company excited about the product (video game), internal and external marketing, public relations, market analysis, market surveys, product positioning, competitive analysis, product forecasts, market trends, and viral marketing. Also discussed is the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy of the sales group (if they think it will sell 10,000 copies, that's all the money they put behind marketing the product).

4. **Course Learning Objectives:**

1. *Identify ...*
2. *Understand*
3. *Develop...*
4. *Design...*
5. *Program...*
6. *Build...*
7. *etc*

5. **Prerequisites:**

Video Game Production (or approval of the course director)

6. **Required Materials** (Available at the ACC Bookstore):

The Product Manager's Handbook : The Complete Product Management Resource by Linda Gorchels, McGraw-Hill Trade, 2 edition, ISBN: 0658001353

7. **Evaluation:**

General 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ 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:

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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.

The breakdown for the four areas of the student's final grade is as follows:

Attendance and Participation	30%
Assignments	30%
Project Deliverables	40%

Total:	100%

8. **Course Outline:**

Modules:

1. *Introductions, course overview, syllabus, questionnaire [name, contact information, what do you want from the class, what does the student want to learn about the industry, which companies interested in, what games interested in, student skill set (type of position interested in), etc.] HMWK – Predictions about the future of gaming.*
2. *Industry history, trends (hardware/software), predictions review and discussion, publishing trends, guest speaker*
3. *Online games, Dev/Live cycle, Launch, testing, Customer Support, Player Relations, Localization*
4. *Retail games, Dev cycle, OL/Retail games, mass market goals, game demographics, guest speaker*
5. *Mobile games, casual games, ports, guest speaker*
6. *Company profiles, entry level checklist, job descriptions (skill sets, salary review), guest speaker (HR)*
7. *Resume/pitch** - pitch/portfolio assignment, team selection (or individual depending on class size), sample pitches, team picks a game*
8. *Sales vs. marketing, marketing cycle – analysis, positioning, viral marketing, surveys, forecasting, timing, self fulfilling prophecy*
9. *marketing strategies – Online/Retail, web sites, PR, guest speaker*
10. *Publisher/developer relations, internal vs. external, business vs. product goals*
11. *Milestone submissions, contract obligations, license requirements, guest speaker*
12. *Developer business – running a development studio, headhunters, brokers, project budgets*
13. *Contracts 101 – 5 basic parts, real ones, pitfalls, resources, pitch assistance and work in teams*

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- 14. Pitch presentation to an industry panel as publishers and review, Course review, industry contacts, pitch results, final words of wisdom*

9. 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.