

Video Game Development
- Course Syllabus -

GAME 1025

1. **Name of Course:** *The Business of Video Games*

2. **Number of Hours:** 42

Schedule: JAN 24 – May 2 6:00pm - 9:00p W

Location: HBC, Room 301.0

Instructor: Bill Louden

512-554-7634 C

wlouden@austin.rr.com

3. **Course Description:**

The course is designed for those interested in managing their own Game products, or those in established companies who have a need to better understand the business issues in Game products. The course will cover the basics of business management. Topics include: How to start it: incorporation, sole proprietorship, sub chapter S corporation, versus a normal corporation; How to do it: market analysis & marketing/sales, managing development, manage a budget, what costs don't you expect, tax implications, cost estimation, subcontracting work; How to protect it: negotiation, contracts, and intellectual property. Subject matter experts will give lectures. The course will cover the basics of game business management.

4. **Course Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify and define the issues of incorporation, including 'C' corporations, sole proprietorship, LLCs, 'S' corporations.
2. Identify and define how to do market analysis, marketing/sales, managing development, managing a budget, tax implications, and planning and subcontracting work;
3. Identify and define the key components of design, development, project management, commercialization, and launch of game products.
4. Identify and define the legal and intellectual property issues such as, contract types, negotiation, trademarks, patents, and copyrights.
5. Understand a basic Games Business P&L, revenue projections and development and operations costs.

5. **Prerequisites:**

None.

6. **Required Materials**

Video Game Development - Course Syllabus -

Required: *Business & Legal Primer for Game Development*; Gregory Boyd & Brian Green; Charles River Media; 15-Nov-06; 1st; ISBN: 1-58450-492-7

7. Evaluation:

Student must participate in class discussions and projects, and cannot miss more than three class meetings.

The coordinator will validate each student's achievement of the course objectives by signing and awarding individual a certificate of completion of ACC Video Game Development Program.

8. 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 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:

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. |

Video Game Development
- Course Syllabus -

| | | |
|----------|-------|---|
| 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 | 25% |
| Individual Reviews | 50% |
| Project Deliverable | 25% |
| | ----- |
| Total: | 100% |

9. **Course Outline:**

Modules:

1. Overview of the Industry, Genres, and History
2. The “idea” – entrepreneurship, brainstorming, and innovation. Researching and documenting your idea. Structuring the idea for commercialization.
3. The Game Design Document.
4. Platform choices – the tradeoffs of developing for consoles, PCs and handheld devices.
5. Business Formation – Why incorporate? Types of incorporation. Setting it up: business licensing, tax, and other start-up issues. Funding Presentations.
6. Doing the deal – Publisher/Developer Relationships. Contracts, NDAs, Contractor, and Licensing norms. Regulation of the Industry: US and International
7. Protecting your work – Intellectual property, patents, trademarks, and other legal aspects. Contracts – Common definitions: cross-collateralization, net sales, derivative works, ownership of the IP: technology, content, brand, tools.
8. Contracts – When things go wrong. Developer representations and warranties, Breach, Marketing guarantees, Audit provisions, termination clauses, milestone provisions, localization, and International issues.
9. The Business Plan I – Writing the plan, common mistakes, developing the “pitch,” and getting your project funded. Market Analysis I – How to research, analyze, and assess market conditions, Understanding audiences for different game genres. How to reach and keep given audiences.

Video Game Development
- Course Syllabus -

10. The Business Plan II – forecasting and managing the P&L.
11. Game Development and Production – Assembling and managing the team.
Market Execution – Pre-marketing, market development, and launch tactics. Execution when things go wrong.
12. Wrap-Up

10. **Assignments**

1. Week 3, Monday, February 7
 - Develop an idea for a new game and prepare a 5 minute, 4-5 page PowerPoint “pitch” to present your idea for funding. You will present your idea to the class.
2. Week 6, Wednesday, March 2
 - Follow-up your PowerPoint presentation with a 5-7 page business plan detailing, market estimates, corporate structure, development funding with milestones, deliverables, launch strategy, and market forecasts.

11. **. 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.

Video Game Development

- Course Syllabus -

- 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.

Deleted: Need to add something else that says that some topics are going to sound like a broken record – that's because they're important! ☹️