

EAE 4900: Introduction to Game Design

Instructor: José P. Zagal

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Office: 221, Building 72 (Entertainment Arts & Engineering)

Office Hours: Email for appointment

Class Time: W/F 3:00-4:20pm



Course Description

This course provides students a practical foundation in game design with a focus on concept development, design decomposition, and prototyping through the creation of non-digital games. Using physical prototyping, playtesting, and iteration students learn how to translate game ideas into game pitches, design documents, and game designs. Students will analyze and recognize play that exists in important games, stories, and other media.

Texts

Required:

1. Fullerton, T. *“Game Design Workshop 3rd Edition”* – AK Peters/CRC Press, 2014. (GDW)

Recommended:

2. *Rules of Play* by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, MIT Press
3. *The Game Design Reader* by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (eds), MIT Press

Please note that additional required readings may be listed in the class schedule. The additional readings will be available for download from the course website (Canvas).



Grading

- (20%): Class participation
 - Class participation is super important. Make sure not to miss class. Participation is **not the same** as attendance!
- (25%): Gamebook Project
 - Preliminary
 - Draft
 - Final
- (25%): Game Project
 - One Paragraph Game Ideas
 - Rules Draft #1
 - Playtest Report #1
 - Rules Draft #2
 - Playtest Report #2
 - Final Game Project
- (10%) Game Design Snacks
 - Game Design Snacks #1
 - Game Design Snacks #2
- (10%) Game Design Documents
 - 1-Page Game Design Document #1 (Arcade)
 - 1-Page Game Design Document #2 (Social/Facebook)
- (10%) 6 Degrees of Pac-Man
- ?? pts.: Extra Credit Opportunities

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-88, B = 87-83, B- = 82-80, C+ = 79-78, C = 77-73, C- = 72-70, D+ = 69-68, D = 67-63, D- = 62-60, F = 59-0. A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.

Late assignments – Late assignments will **not be accepted**. Assignments are due at the start of class unless otherwise stated.

Assignments

The following are brief descriptions of the assignments. Detailed instructions will be made available during the semester and/or discussed in class.

Participation

Class participation is important in order to be successful in this class. I expect you to have done the required readings **before** class and be prepared to explain and discuss them. **Asking questions and participating in class discussions and activities is an important part of the participation grade.** In this class there is no such thing as a stupid or inappropriate question. Attendance is **not** synonymous with participation!

Game Design Snacks

For this assignment you will articulate and generalize nuggets of game design wisdom in the form of wikipedia-style webpages that include examples. These will be posted and available for the class to comment on, improve, and revise.

Over the course of the semester you will write and develop:

- **2 Good and 2 Bad** Design Snacks with at least **1 example** for each.
- **2 examples** provided on **other** students' design snacks
 - (note: Individual Snacks must not have more than 8 examples)

1-Page Game Design Documents

You will create 1-page game design documents for two (existing) games. These documents will clearly communicate key concepts relating to the design of a game ways which can be understood by engineers, artists, producers, and professors. Further details will be discussed in class. For dates, refer to the schedule.

Game Design A (Vintage Arcade Game)

- **Gameplay 1-Page Document A.1**
- **Mood/Experience 1-Page Document A.2**

Game Design B (Facebook/Social Network Game)

- **Gameplay 1-Page Document B.1**
- **Mood/Experience 1-Page Document B.2**

6 Degrees of Pac-Man

Like the game “6 degrees of Kevin Bacon”, you will link Pac-Man to a modern videogame (from list provided) via a chronological series of videogames where each pair in the sequence, starting with Pac-Man, share a common game design element. Final submission will be a 7-slide presentation describing the complete sequence including examples from the games and descriptions of the game design elements. Further details, including an example, will be provided in class. You will have to present in class!

Game Project

You will design a 2-player non-digital game. The game should be playable inside the classroom and not take more than 30 minutes. Ideally, people should be able to play your game while sitting down at a table. You will probably use some combination of dice, cards, counter, boards, and figures. You may also design your own components or use “non-traditional” elements. However, keep in mind that the game (components + rules) should fit in a regular-sized board-game box (12”x12”x3”) and that they should be re-usable. It’s ok if they fit in a smaller box. This project has several deliverables. Please refer to the course syllabus for when these are due. We will also be playtesting each other’s games in class. The main phases/deliverables are:

Gamebook Project

You will write a short *Fighting Fantasy* Gamebook. In a gamebook the story is read through a series of numbered text sections. At the end of each section the reader must make a choice (relative to the narrative) and continue reading the text section that corresponds to that choice. Gamebooks are also referred to sometimes as “Choose your own adventure” books. For this assignment you will use the *Fighting Fantasy* rules system. This system incorporates a role-playing like system with stats as well as dice-rolling. The theme of your gamebook can be whatever you like (e.g. fantasy, horror, modern day, etc.) and it must have at least 25 sections (at least 3,000 words). You must use the template provided. This project will have three deliverables. See below for when these are due. You will also read each other’s gamebooks in class.

Class Schedule

Aug 23	Introduction & Class Overview - What's a Game - Talking about games	Aug 25	What's Design, Acting Like a Designer Reading: GDW, Ch.1 "Role of the Game Designer" and Ch.12 "Team Structures" DUE: One Paragraph Game Ideas #1
Aug 30	Brainstorming / Ideation Reading: GDW, Ch.6 "Conceptualization"	Sep 1	NO CLASS DUE: Game Design Snacks #1
Sep 6	NO CLASS	Sep 8	Playtesting and Prototyping Reading: GDW, Ch.7 "Prototyping" and Ch.9 "Playtesting" DUE: Game Design Document #1
Sep 13	Goals Reading: GDW, Ch. 2 "The Structure of Games" and Ch.3 "Formal Elements"	Sep 15	In-Class Playtest DUE: Game Project Rules Draft #1
Sep 20	Goals Reading: GDW, Ch.5 "Working with System Dynamics"	Sep 22	Decisions and Choices Reading: GDW, Ch. 11 "Fun and Accessibility" DUE: Game Project Playtest Report #1
Sep 27	Story and Narrative Reading: GDW, Ch.4 "Working with Dramatic Elements"	Sep 29	Story Structures Reading: "How to Write a FF Adventure" DUE: Gamebook Preliminary
Oct 4	Storyworlds - Games as story machines	Oct 6	In-Class Playtest Gamebook DUE: Gamebook Draft
Oct 11	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK	Oct 13	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK
Oct 18	Game Balance Reading: GDW, Ch.10 "Functionality, Completeness, and Balance"	Oct 20	Game Balance DUE: Game Design Snacks #2
Oct 25	GUEST LECTURE (TBA)	Oct 27	In-Class Playtest DUE: Game Project Rules Draft #2
Nov 1	Design Documents and Communication Reading: GDW, Ch 14 "Communicating your designs"	Nov 3	Advanced Formalisms - Game Design Patterns DUE: Game Project Playtest Report #2
Nov 8	Probabilities Reading: TBA	Nov 10	More Probabilities DUE: Game Design Document #2

Nov 15	Social Play Reading: TBA	Nov 17	More Multiplayer and Social DUE: Gamebook Final
Nov 22	NO CLASS	Nov 24	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING
Nov 29	Games as Culture Reading: TBA	Dec 1	In-Class Presentations DUE: 6 Degrees of Pac-Man
Dec 6	Expression and Art Reading: TBA		
Dec 11	DUE: Game Project Final		

Other Relevant Information

ADA Statement

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, (810) 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Faculty and Student Responsibilities

All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

Non-Contract Note

Note: The syllabus is not a binding legal contract. The instructor may modify it when the student is given reasonable notice of the modification.

Plagiarism Software Policy

Your professor may elect to use a plagiarism detection service in this course, in which case you will be required to submit your paper to such a service as part of your assignment.

Copyright Notice

By participating in this course, students allow the instructor and the university to use materials submitted to the class for educational use, including but not limited to presentations and research conducted by the instructor. Copyright is retained by the student.

Accommodation Policy

The instructor shall offer no accommodation based on class content. Students must learn to negotiate personal beliefs with objectionable content in a professional manner. Should students require assistance in this they may solicit informal advice from the instructor, however no formal exceptions nor accommodations shall be provided for content.

Statement

I have read and understand the course syllabus. I am also aware that the course syllabus may change during the quarter. The class instructor will make sure that the online version is up to date and will announce changes during class in a timely manner. It is my responsibility to stay abreast of any changes that may occur.

Name _____

Date _____

Signature _____

If there is anything you would like me, as your instructor, to know about you for this semester, please write it down here or send me an email. This includes any special needs or requirements you may have.
