

Game Design 1

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Office Hours: Mon & Tues, 10-Noon (preferably by appointment)

Office Location: Morton 336

Email Hours: Monday-Friday, 10am-6pm

Meeting Times: Thursday, 1-4:50pm

Location: Morton 201, Visual Art & Technology Lab

Course Description

You enter the classroom and see DESKS, BOARD GAMES, A PROJECTOR, GAME CONSOLES, wall to wall WHITE BOARDS, and some fellow CLASSMATES. The TEACHER welcomes you and invites you to take an empty SEAT. You are facing NORTH.

This class is a quest. Your classmates are your party members. On this quest you will gain experience. Your party will collect items and create an inventory. By the end of this quest your reward will be the ability to make new quests.

Course Structure

The course hinges on an overarching metaphor of treating the semester as a collaborative and interactive Role Playing Game (RPG). Your individual statistics (stats) and experience points (XP) will be tracked and updated every class period. Though personal stats will depend on your participation and research, working together as a “questing party” will greatly enhance overall party progress and XP.

Each student should think of their abilities and strengths in the course as core statistics. Below is a simple rubric of analogies to consider:

Strength: Project Leadership / Management

Dexterity: Programming / Code

Constitution: Debugging / QA

Intelligence: Artistic Direction

Wisdom: Sound Design

Charisma: Story Telling

These are not hard and fast comparisons, but are suggestions for you to play to your best trait(s). The power of the party becomes dependent on balancing skills and traits – in other words, having a party of four Clerics will never get you far. Though all students will get to develop skills in all areas / stats – by collecting items, and gaining buffs from their party members – think about how your particular skills can help the party overall.

The structure of the course will mutate and evolve over time. As the party progresses an inventory of prefabs, code snippets, character designs, HUD displays, and story trees will be forged collectively or collaboratively. The inventory will be managed and maintained

as a repository that all students will have access to in and out of quest (via a shared dropbox folder).

The RPG of the class is intended to be fun and light – to be something you can wear softly, and choose to take as seriously or as casual as you like. That being said, the RPG of this course has, like all games, limitations and rules. Some rules are meant to be broken (and we will be talking about cheats and spoilsports during the semester). However, the main rule is that you are getting what you want out of this class. In short, the structure is meant to show the creative power that game design can have for creating communities of collaborative discovery.

Attendance

The Visual Art & Technology policy for classes is that attendance is mandatory. The success of this class depends on student participation and engagement. If *you* are not here for demos, class critiques, group discussions, and collaborative activities, then *we* all suffer.

You are allowed two absences. After the third absence your final grade will be automatically lowered by one letter. If you are >10 minutes late you will be marked tardy and three tardies equal an absence. As will be noted later, class participation is part of your grade. This means even if you are here, you must be present. Coming to class unprepared or wasting class time could result in being marked absent.

The only exception to this policy is in the case of extreme illness/injury. Please talk with the professor privately about any concerns you have about this policy.

Grading

Grading in this course is not directly tied to student XP. Some students will have higher levels than others depending on skill set and special abilities and it would be punitive to evaluate your grade based on these circumstances. In order to anchor independent growth over the course of the semester the following grade breakdown will be used:

Questing Participation: 25%
Side-Quests: 25%

Save Points / Final Bosses: 35%
Inventory Crafting: 15%

Grading for assignments and projects will be based on a combination of criteria:

- Aesthetic Consistency
- Technical Execution
- Creative Interpretation/Imagination
- Risk
- Intellectual Rigor

These criteria are not weighted for specific preference/importance. With this in mind, students should consider the choices they make in designing and executing their work.

Furthermore, students can expect that the above criteria will be applied in critiques as a starting point for discussion and evaluation.

Cellphone Policy

Cell phones are forbidden in class. At the beginning of class, students will be asked to switch off their phones to prevent texting, checking social media, and distracting yourself or others. This policy is enforced to insure class participation and also to collectively agree we are committed to respecting one another.

Copyright and Plagiarism

We will be discussing copyright and its implications on our culture over the course of the semester. For the purposes of this class, however, you *must* consider the copyright of your work and the work of others. Our inventory will be a repository of intellectual property that we are creating collaboratively (eventually distributed via a Creative Commons License). Understanding copyright and intellectual property will be an essential asset for you to wield in your creative and professional careers and future quests.

To reiterate, all work produced in the class must be of *your own creation or in collaborative consort with party members*. Any assignments submitted during the semester that uses appropriated imagery, code, music, text, or other forms of intellectual property must be properly cited and articulated to the professor. Failure to do so will be considered plagiarism, which will result in immediate academic reprimanding or reporting to the honor board.

Required Materials

This class requires that you download an educational/free version of Unity as well as a copy of Brackets for coding. We will also be experimenting with Tiled Map Editor for later projects (download at the following link: <http://thorbjorn.itch.io/tiled>). If working with 3D characters/environments, it is also recommended that you download and educational copy of Maya or the latest version Blender. Other software that will benefit you will be provided by the department of Visual Art and Technology to majors and minors.

On top of this software requirement, you must also have:

- Pen + Paper for taking notes, making sketches, and journaling
- USB Hard Drive / Flash Drive (64GB+)
- USB or Bluetooth 3-click mouse and NumPad
- Active Dropbox account
- Active Registration with Unity Answers and Stack Overflow
- (Optional) Monthly subscription to Digital Tutors
- (Optional) Active Steam Users Account and/or Itch.io account

Required Reading / Playing

All reading materials for this course will be provided by the professor or available online. With the exception of content already distributed for free online, it is requested that you limit the circulation of printed material to personal use. The professor encourages you to support the authors of the text whenever possible.

During the semester students will be asked to make case studies of early games using emulation software on their personal computers. These case studies are meant to get students looking at canonical platform games and other independently developed titles investigating how we navigate through level design, story, and interaction. The professor will give a list of games for these play-thrus when they are assigned.

Though not a mandatory requirement, it is also highly recommended that you attend the conference/jam for Games++ this semester. This event, organized by VA&T faculty and other local games enthusiasts, is a great opportunity for students to learn and participate in a local game development and design. More information and reminders about this event will occur later on in the semester.

Side Quests / Inventory Crafting / Save Points / Final Bosses

There are a number of different assignments that will be distributed throughout the semester. Assignments are broken into two tiers: short-term and long-term. Short-term assignments will be labeled **Side Quests** and **Inventory Crafting**. Side quests will look like weekly homework (or in class) assignments to gain XP and access to inventory equipment. Inventory Crafting won't have specific due dates, but won't be as labor intensive as longer-term projects. For Inventory Crafting, it is expected that as a party member of this quest you will contribute *at least five items* for our inventory. This will easily be accomplished during our quest and can take on a variety of item contributions as stated above. Some items will be marked "common" items, such as a torch (for lighting). But crafted items (made by party members) will have particularly useful properties to assist everyone in the quest. Side quests will often be assigned to make sure party members are equipped and trained to use inventory items properly when making new quests.

Save Points and **Final Bosses** are longer-term assignments that will act as midterm and final projects. Objectives and details of these assignments will develop as the party levels up and gains XP. Prompts, expectations, specific breakdown of guidelines for these long-term assignments will be handed out in a timely way to make sure that party members have ample time to complete these projects.

All assignments will be turned in electronically to the Professor **SATURDAY** before midnight in order to receive a full XP and credit.

Weekly Schedule

[subject to change]

Week 01 – January 21

Introduction / Starting the Quest / Building a World Together

Viewing / Playing: *Magic: The Gathering* Cards, *Mountain*

Side Quest: Campfire Backstory of an Inanimate Object

Week 02 – January 28

Campfire / Shaping Expectations / First Stages of Ideation

Viewing / Playing: *Apples to Apples*, *Metagame*, *Cards Against Humanity*

Side Quest: Folktale Cardgame

Week 03 – February 4

Playtesting / Folktale Cardgame development

Con't Side Quest: Folktale Cardgame

Week 04 – February 11

Playing Folktale Cardgames / Creating Sub-Parties

Side Quest: Ideation for Game Projects

Week 05 – February 18

Ideation Presentations

Viewing / Playing: *Passage*, *Kentucky Route Zero* (depending on time)

Side Quest: Game Design case study 01

Week 06 – February 25

Case Study reports / Creating assets and maps

Side Quest: SAVE POINTS

Week 07 – March 3

SAVE POINTS

Side Quest: Go to Town, Find an Inn

Week 08 – March 10

Building a Map / Unity Intro

Viewing / Playing: *Stanley Parable*, TBD

!---Games++ on Saturday March 12---!

Week 09 – March 17

Collisions and States

Side Quest: Level Up / Stat Check

!---Spring Break---!

Week 10 – March 31

Animation / Triggers / Coding

Side Quest: Game Design Case Study 02

Week 11 – April 7

Case Study Reports / Inventory Building

Side Quest: Miniboss (Gearing up for FINAL BOSS)

Week 12 – April 14

Miniboss preparations / Con't Development

Week 13 – April 21

Con't Development / Final Journey

Week 14 – April 28th

Mini Boss / Individual Campfire

Week 15 – Final Exam (TBD)

FINAL BOSS DUE