GAM 399: Making Deep Games: SYLLABUS

Class Meeting Time & Location
Wed. 1:30pm-4:45pm
CDM 436A

Instructor
Doris C. Rusch
Office: CDM building, room 513
Office hours: Monday 5-6:30pm & Wed. 5-6:30pm
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Course Description:

In this workshop-based class, we are going to explore how to design games that can illuminate the human condition. We will look to personal experiences as inspiration sources for game ideas and use metaphor and analogy to create games on complex, abstract ideas, such as loyalty, dignity, courage or trust.
Our goal is to raise awareness for the expressive potential of videogames, the many decisions that go into a design process and to push the boundaries of games.
Prerequisites: GAM 224 or GAM 226 (or permission from instructor).

Learning Goals:

Students should learn to:

- Clearly identify a theme, experiential goal and vision for a game and make games that are "about something".

- Become more conscious of their experiences and use them as inspiration sources for a broader range of games that illuminate the human condition.

- Use metaphors to grasp and model abstract ideas in order to expand games' experiential and emotional scope.

Resources

As a student in the class, you have access to the CDM Gaming labs (see http:// defrag.depaul.edu for details). If you're working on an assignment, you have priority for the use of the lab hardware and software. Student ID is required to use the labs.

Supporting literature:

Since you need it for one of the assignments, you should buy at the beginning of class: Neil Gaiman: *The Sandman, Vol. 4: Season Of Mists.* You can get it on Amazon. A used copy costs about $8. A new copy costs between $10 and $14. It is well worth it!

Otherwise, there is no dedicated textbook to accompany the course. However, there is a range of required readings that are made accessible to students on D2L as pdfs or, if available on the web, as URLs. These texts are liable to change, but an overview can be found in the lesson plan.

Policies

- Class Requirements:

- 11% attendance
- 44% in class exercises / participation
- 45% home assignments

Grand total of 100 possible points.
A = 91+
A– = 90
B + = 89
B = 88-81
B– = 80
C + = 79
C = 78–71
C– = 70
D + = 69
D = 68– 61
D – = 60
F = 59 or lower

- As home assignments (i.e. presentations and design exercises) provide the basis for particular units in the course, they cannot be submitted late. Assignments vary in terms of effort they require, but since they are all equally important for the course, they all "count" the same. Please note that missing an assignment means that you will not be able to do the in-class exercise building upon it and will not get a grade for the in- class exercise either. Regular attendance is required. Your assignments may not be considered for grading if you miss more than 10% of sessions without justification.

- Please note that some of the main assignments for this class consist of in-class playtesting of your projects. Since these assignments require your presence on the day of playtesting, deadlines are fixed and extensions cannot be granted.

- While this class does not emphasize essay writing, game rules and text are expected to be clear, spell-checked, and demonstrate a high proficiency in written English. The Writing Center offers free one-on-one professional advice from published writers about all types of

academic, creative, and professional writing and oral presentations. Go to
http://condor.depaul.edu/writing/ for more information and to set up appointments.

● Email: Email is the preferred means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. My email is drusch1@cdm.depaul.edu

● Plagiarism: It is your professional responsibility to ensure that all submitted work is your own. Please read DePaul's policy on plagiarism and other academic integrity violations at: http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/ContributionFolder/Resources/ Students/ ViolationDefinitions.html#aiPlagiarism

● Student rights: You have rights as a student. To learn about these rights please read DePaul's policies for students regarding student rights, located herehttp:// sr.depaul.edu/catalog/catalogfiles/current/ undergraduate%20student%20handbook/ pg51.html

● Incomplete: An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final and approved by the Dean of the School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

● Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussion will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of the course) and be sure to contact the following office for support and additional services:

    Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD)
    Lincoln Park Campus, Student Center #370, 773.325.167 7phone
    Loop Campus, Lewis Center #1400. 312.362.8002 phone
        o www.studentaffairs.depaul.edu/csd
        o csd@depaul.edu

LESSON PLAN: please note that this lesson plan and the assignments are not part of the syllabus anymore and liable to change.

Unit	Topic	Assignment Due	Readings on D2L under "contents"
Sprint 1:	*Experience based design*	*Deliverable: card game*	
Week 1:	intro: what is "making deep games" all about? Experience based design; Designer as auteur; Examples; Know yourself.		Clint Hocking: Game Designers' Rant, GDC 2008 (http:// clicknothing.typepad.com/ click_nothing/ 2008/02/ gdc‑2008‑ part.html) Hillman Curtis: Process, Inspiration and Practice for the New Media Designer pp.41‑73. (chapter on "theme"). Stuart Brown: Play. How It Shapes The Brain, Opens The Imagination and Invigorates The Soul. pp. 109‑122.
Week 2:	present card game based on media experience; Identify the theme; Peer critique of gameplay experience and relation to identified theme.	1st assignment: experience inspired card game design	Brenda Brathwaite, Ian Schreiber: Challenges for Game Designers, p.9 (where ideas come from) Jesse Schell: The Art of Game Design. pp. 9‑22

Sprint 2:	Design for Emotions	Deliverable: Emotion Based Board Game	
Week 3	Designing for emotion; Emotion theory; Game modding to change emotional experience ("Zombies")	2nd assignment: analysis of emotional gameplay experience	Jarvinen: games without frontiers; Frome on game emotions
Week 4	Playtest and peer critique emotion based board games	3rd assignment: read "Akrasia" text Design an emotion based board game	Doris C. Rusch: text about "Akrasia"

Unit	Topic	Assignment Due	Readings on D2L under "contents"
Sprint 3:	*Metaphorical Game Design*	*Deliverable: metaphorical board game*	
Week 5:	What are metaphors and allegories? How to design games with metaphors? Play & analyze metaphorical games; Design exercises	4th assignment: read the chapter from "Metaphors We Live By" and "Phantom Tollbooth" Write 1-2 page analysis of metaphors	George Lakoff and Mark Johnson: Metaphors We Live By. pp. 61-96. Read chapter from "A Phantom Toll Booth"
Week 6	Playtesting of metaphorical board games	5th assignment: Read Neil Gaiman's graphic novel: "Sandman: Season of Mists" Make a board game based on one of the Endless from "Season of Mists" Post write-up of the design on D2L	
Sprint 4:	*Games 4 Change*	*Deliverable: design a board game 4 change that tackles a political or social issue*	

Week 7	What are Games 4 Change? Discuss approaches to Games 4 Change; Theme and Mechanics workshop	6th Assignment read readings and play McDonald's game and Sept. 12th post thoughts on D2L	Ian Bogost: Persuasive Games. Chapter on "Procedural Rhetoric. "pp. 2‑64. optional: Mary Flanagan: Critical Play. pp 223‑262. optional: Gonzalo Frasca: Videogames of the Oppressed. (http:// www.ludology.org/ articles/thesis/ videogamesoftheop pressed.html) Play: Frasca's: "September 12th" http:// www.newsgaming.c om/games/ index12.htm Play: McDonald's videogame: http:// www.mcvideogame. com/
Week 8	Playtest and peer critique board game 4 change	7th Assignment: design a board game 4 change that tackles a political or social issue Post write-up of the design on D2L	
Sprint 5	*Applied inspiration*	*Deliverable: board game based on museum visit*	*Sprint 5*

Week 9:	Museum field trip		
Week 10:	Tapping into the subconscious: Surrealist games; journeying; breathwork; playtest prototype of "deep" board game.	8th assignment, part I: design a "deep" board game. Bring first prototype to class	
Week 11:	Playtest final version of "deep" board game.	8th assignment, part II: iterate on board game and bring final version to class; Post post-mortem of the design on D2L.	

Class Requirements

- 11% attendance (your physical presence)
- 44% in class preparedness (your active engagement and participation in the class!)
- 45% home assignments

A = 91+
A– = 90
B + = 89
B = 88-81
B– = 80
C + = 79
C = 78–71
C– = 70
D + = 69
D = 68– 61
D – = 60
F = 59 or lower

Assignments:

- Note: all assignments have a due date. Late submissions will cost you points and will only be accepted under special circumstances. If you need an extension, you must contact me BEFORE the due date, or risk losing points.
- All assignments are considered equally important and are thus rewarded 5points each.
- Many assignments are the basis for in-class activities, such as playtesting of your projects. Since these assignments require your presence on the day of playtesting, deadlines are fixed and extensions cannot be granted.
- Regular attendance is required. Your assignments may not be considered for grading if you miss more than 10% of sessions without justification.
- While this class does not emphasize essay writing, game rules and text are expected to be clear, spell‑checked, and demonstrate a high proficiency in written English. The Writing Center offers free one‑on‑one professional advice from published writers about all types of academic, creative, and professional writing and oral presentations. Go to http:// condor.depaul.edu/writing/ for more information and to set up appointments.
- Written assignments need to adhere to these formal specifications: font: times or times new roman. Font size: 12. Line spacing 1.5.

1st assignment due Sept. 12th: design an experience based card game

Step 1: in pairs, pick a (children's) book / movie / album / art piece / comic that strongly resonates with (both of) you.

Step 2: identify its core theme: in one word, capture what it is about?

Step 3: trace the theme: on how many levels is it represented in the artefact? How does every

aspect of the book / movie / album / art piece / comic help to convey the theme?

Step 4: design a card game that captures the core of the original experience. Pay special attention to how it transports through rules, mechanics and dynamics what you identified as the main theme.

Step 5: create deliverables:

- Make a 15min presentation to be presented in class that
    - states the basis for your card game (e.g. which book / movie…?)
    - shows a short clip, image or passage from the original artifact that captures the experience you are going for
    - states the main theme in one word
    - illustrates how the card game works and how it evokes through rules and mechanics the original experience

2nd assignment: due Sept. 19th : Game Analysis

Write a 1 page analysis of an emotional gameplay experience.

Step 1: pick a game (preferably one that has a significant fictional component) that provided a deeply moving emotional experience for you.

Step 2: in one paragraph, describe the game's platform, genre, content and core mechanics.

Step 3: analyze the game's emotional appeal: you might want to focus your analysis on a particularly, emotionally evocative moment-of-gameplay. Pay special attention to the goals, conflicts and core mechanics to get to the core of the emotional experience.

Step 4: upload your analysis to D2L before class on Sept. 19th.

3rd assignment: due Sept. 26th : Emotional Game Design

In preparation of the game design, read the following text available on D2L under contents:

- Rusch: Modeling Emotional Experiences in Videogames: A Post Mortem of "Akrasia"

Step 1: In groups of 2-3: pick an emotionally evocative topic (this could be a personal, political or social issue) and design a board game that allows the player to explore this topic from an emotional point of view. Whatever your topic, the game should enable the player to experience the subject emotionally, not just understand what it is about on a cognitive level. Focus is on "what it feels like", not just "how it works".

Step 2: Create mechanics. Work backwards. What should players experience during play? Choose dynamics that can create that play experience. Then choose mechanics that can create those dynamics.

Step 3: deliverables:
- Create the board game and bring to class on Sept. 26th
- Submit to D2L before class on Sept. 26th a written summary of the game's rules and mechanics and an explanation of how you think these rules and mechanics foster the desired emotional experience in the player.

4ᵗʰ assignment: due Oct. 3ʳᵈ: Metaphors

Step 1: read the following two texts that are posted on D2L:

- Johnson & Lakoff: "Metaphors We Live By" (pp. 61-96)
- Juster: The Phantom Tollbooth (pp. 9-32)

Step 2: analyze the metaphors in "The Phantom Tollbooth" and write a 1-2 page paper. Remember that a metaphor is "understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another thing" (see Johnson & Lakoff). What are the salient metaphors in the chapters you read? What are their different dimensions that constitute their structure? Post paper on D2L before class on Oct 3ʳᵈ.

5ᵗʰ assignment: due Oct. 10ᵗʰ: Metaphorical Board Game Design

Step 1: read "Sandman, Vol.4: Season of Mists". Pay special attention to "the Endless" and their metaphorical /allegorical nature.

Step 2: In groups of 3-4: make a board game based on one of the "Endless" characters from "Season Of Mists". You are free in regard to the game's fiction (don't repeat the fiction form the graphic novel!). Consider the metaphorical nature of your main character: what are his / her goals? What are conflicts that could arise from that? How would he / she deal with these conflicts? Each element in the game should be metaphorical in nature.

Step 3: submit a 1-page write-up of the game incl. rules and mechanics as well as an explanation of their metaphorical meaning to D2L before class on Oct. 10ᵗʰ.

6ᵗʰ assignment: due Oct. 17ᵗʰ: Reading and Game Analysis

Step 1: read readings on D2L:

- Ian Bogost: procedural rhetoric (pp. 2-66)

Optional:

- Mary Flanagan: Critical Play (pp. 223-262)
- Gonzalo Frasca: Videogames of the Oppressed

Step 2: write 1-2 paragraphs summarizing the main statements from Ian Bogost's text and post on D2L. Answer the following questions to get you started:

- o How do games persuade?
- o What is procedural rhetoric?
- o Why are games potentially more persuasive than other media?

Step 3: play McDonald's the Videogame and Gonzalo Frasca's Sept. 12ᵗʰ (see links on D2L)

Step 4: choose one of the two games. Write 1-2 paragraphs summarizing the main points / statements your chosen game makes. Elaborate how it uses the rules to get its point across. Describe 3-4 examples to undermine your observations. Post on D2L before class on Oct. 17ᵗʰ.

7ᵗʰ assignment: due Oct 24ᵗʰ: Design a Board Game 4 Change
Work in groups of 3-4.

Step 1: Pick a personal, social or political issue that you want to change in some e.g. by raising awareness about it.

Step 2: if you are unfamiliar with the topic, do research on it.

Step 3: clearly identify the argument / point / statement you want to make. This one sentence statement has to be included in the write-up of your game.

Step 4: translate your high-level, rhetorical goals into the game's system (rules and procedures). How does the system work? What statements can you incorporate into the rules? Decide on the perspective from which the player shall explore the system (e.g. a game about Mexican kitchen workers will be vastly different depending on whether the player relates to the system from the perspective of a kitchen worker, a customer, or the boss of the restaurant). What is the game's goal, the conflict and what mechanics are best suited for persuasion?

Step 5: deliverables:
- Create prototype and bring to class.
- Submit to D2L a written summary of the game's rules and explain what statement each rule makes.

8th assignment, part I: due Nov. 7th: design a "deep" board game about a topic of your choice and bring first prototype to class

Step 1: in groups of 3-4, pick a topic. This is your chance to make a (board) game of your choice, but it should still be in line with the topic of this class. Spend time to really identify what kind of game you want to make. Consider these questions:
- What is the game's core theme?
- What kind of experience should it evoke in the player?
- Does the game have a purpose beyond entertainment and if so, what is this purpose?
- Do you want to use a literal or metaphorical approach?

Step 2: design a prototype and bring to class on Nov 7th.

8th assignment, part II: due Nov. 14th: bring final version of "deep" board game to class.

Step 1: iterate on the board game taking the feedback received in class into account.
Step 2: finalize the design.
Step 3: write 2 page post mortem of the design process and post on D2L until Nov. 14th.
- what was the original intent?
- How was it translated into the design?
- What feedback did it receive during the first playtesting?
- What worked / did not work?
- How did the lessons learnt from playtesting inform the design iteration?
- What are you happy / unhappy about in the final design?