

GAM 355 Solo Game Development

Instructor: Dr. Bobby Schweizer
Term: Autumn 2017
Meeting time: M/W 3:10PM – 4:40PM
Location: 14EAS (Daley) 212 at Loop Campus

Email: b.schweizer@depaul.edu
(Please prefix all email with GAM 355)
Office: Daley 1630

In GAM 355, students independently create a complete short, minimalist video game while serving as its designer, programmer, and artist. The project is structured around a compressed development cycle that supports an appropriately scoped, polished game. From brainstorming an innovative concept to rapidly prototyping and iterating on gameplay, the course focus on core gameplay loops and game feel.

Students will be able to:

- Apply previously acquired design and development skills in the creation of a single, complete videogame.
- Strengthen their ability to rapidly iterate the design of a game project.
- Identify and plan for milestones in the development process while recognizing the demands of game development as a multi-disciplinary creative endeavor.
- Appraise and critique the works of their peers through structured feedback mechanisms.
- Consider the affordances and constraints of working on a game project independently.

You should use this class to find your voice as a developer. What kinds of games do you want to make? What inspires your creativity? How do you harness your strengths and overcome your weaknesses? Where do you want to improve as a game maker?

Required Tools and Material

- Unity 5 (2017.1.0.p5)
- *Spelunky* by Derek Yu (Boss Fight Books, 2016) <https://bossfightbooks.com/products/spelunky-by-derek-yu> (eBook available for \$5)
- Design notebook – whether a small notebook or a iPad app, something you can bring with you to sketch, doodle, and jot down ideas. There will be periodic notebook checks during the term.
- *itch.io* and *discord* accounts

In support of your own practice, we will look at material from other developers for reference, including a survey of noteworthy games developed by single authors in short timeframes, and developer diaries, blogs, and post-mortems. These will be provided to you using D2L.

Structure

The class will be divided into teams of four. Working independently does not mean working alone, so your team will provide you with regular feedback and assistance. Members of each team will be responsible for helping their teammates achieve their goals.

You will be prototyping a few game ideas before deciding on one to work on for the term. Once you have settled on an idea, there will be four major due dates corresponding to levels of completion (structural, functional, internal and refinement). Dates are indicated on the course schedule.

There will also be homework assigned weekly such as readings and design prompts that will factor into your participation grade. Keep all of these in your design notebook. You will be using Discord to regularly post updates about your work, ask questions, and share sources of inspiration.

Mondays are discussion days and Wednesday are critique days. We will also have three “pairs studio” in which one person works on their game for a whole class session while another helps.

The course schedule is available on D2L and subject to change.

Grading

Grades in this class value your process and progress. It is about giving and receiving feedback while incorporating the lessons learned in our discussions along the way. In-class participation and your weekly developer diary accounts for half of your grade. I will grade your game halfway through the term and then again at the end, but along the way I will let you know your progress as different builds are due.

It is important to give your peers fair and constructive feedback so they know what changes to make to earn a good grade on their games.

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Prototypes | 30 |
| Mid-Term Iteration | 30 |
| Final Build | 70 |
| Participation | 35 |
| Critiques & Studio | 35 |
| Total | 200 points |

'A' work exceeds expectations, 'B' work meets expectations, 'C' work falls just short, and 'D' work is inadequate.

The grading scale for final grades is as follows:

| | |
|----------|----|
| 94 - 100 | A |
| 90 - 93 | A- |
| 87 - 89 | B+ |
| 84 - 86 | B |
| 80 - 83 | B- |
| 76 - 79 | C+ |
| 72 - 75 | C |
| 68 - 71 | C- |
| 65 - 67 | D+ |
| 61 - 64 | D |
| 0-60 | F |

Because so much of this course is based on peer-feedback, you must be in class with your project ready to play on critique days to receive credit.

Late work will not be accepted.

COURSE POLICIES

Participation & Attendance: Your participation will be measured during discussions, critiques, studios, and on Discord. During discussion, you are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to make up the work. Lectures are video recorded and posted to D2L. Excused absences must go through the Office of the Dean of Students.

Attitude: A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others while someone else is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise, you may be asked to leave the classroom. I will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such issues.

Civil Discourse: DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be Socially Responsible Leaders. It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. Again, I will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

Digital Devices: While class is in session, your attention should not be divided between classroom activities and your personal devices.

Writing: While this class does not emphasize essay writing, developer diaries 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.

COLLEGE POLICIES

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email.

Online Course Evaluations

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in CampusConnect.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

Student Rights

To learn about your rights as a student please read DePaul's policies located here <http://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. For more information on requesting an Incomplete: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: <http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment>

Students with Disabilities

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)
- Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.
- Phone number: (312)362-8002
- Fax: (312)362-6544
- TTY: (773)325.7296
- www.studentaffairs.depaul.edu/csd