

GAM 355 Spring 2023

Solo Game Dev

Instructor: Allen Turner (He/Him)

Office: Jarvis Collaboration Center C112M: Hours Mondays 10 – 12:30pm

Contact: You may contact me at aturner8@cdm.depaul.edu. I'm teaching a lot of classes and engaged in a bunch of projects so please allow for up to 24 hours to get a response.

Class Description:

Students independently create a complete short video game 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 focuses on core gameplay loops and game feel. A survey of noteworthy games developed by single authors in short timeframes provides students with references to draw from.

PREREQUISITE(S): GAM 340 and GAM 341.

Breakdown

In this class your goal is the development of a single small game and my goal is to guide you through that. As such we will be focused on the iteration process with check-ins and milestones. The game you develop needs to be small, connect to a meaningful experience and allow you to provide a clean, clear, polished game experience that is complete (regardless of your intention to keep adding more to it after class).

- Clean, Complete, and polished means the following things.
- Your game has an opening screen and closing screen and well-designed UI.
- Your game has a central experience that connects to a real world thing. You provide interactions and play that connect the participant to the big ideas of this real world thing. (what this means is that all projects are non-arbitrary. They have an explicit purpose and message and this must come across in your incubation and documentation, as well in deployment and play of the game.
- Your core game play is elegant and functional. It does not crash and it allows for players to explore its extents.
- You have audio designed and implemented for it that enhances the experience.
- It has good feedback allowing the player to identify critical information, states, and outcomes.
- Your process is well documented.

We will meet in class to review work during milestones but we will also have several class sessions where we do not meet because it is presumed that you are spending this time working on your projects.

We will be engaging in non-synchronous conversation about struggles and issues in our Discord server so you must join the class discord.

Engines:

The following game engines are allowable.

Unity, Unreal 4, Construct, Gamemaker, Renpy, Twine (with caveats): Unity and Unreal are preferred.

Milestones:

- Week 1: Introductions, Idea Generation (Fill out treasure maps), Tech and tools discussion (What engine and why?)
- Week 2: Treasure maps due.
- Week 3: First prototype
- Week 4: First Playable: Playtest 0
- Week 6: Art Build: Playtesting 01
- Week 7: Beta Build Playtesting 02
- Week 11: Ship Build/Video/Trailer

All milestones require a post in the discussion forums on D2L to show us your progress. That post should include any documentations you need to have and videos of the current state of play in your game. If you miss a post that detrimentally affects your grade. So post and post often every week.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to show practical understanding of their chosen game engine.
- Students will be able to produce a full game cycle on their own using homemade or third party acquired assets or a combination.
- Students will be able to clearly communicate their game dev strengths when joining other projects.

Grading

Social: 33% Goodwill and participation in class. This means focus, critiquing, posting resources you find, engaging on the forums and discord, and helping others find solutions. Help to build a good learning ecology and you too will learn better. Make sure you are on the class Discord.

Projects: We'll be taking it slow with one game project which will be composed of multiple little milestones. These little steps will be multiple checkpoints marked by particular tasks in the game dev process. These tasks are all pass fail but the accumulation of them will get tallied into your final grade. You must have a complete functioning game to pass this class. If you don't have that bare minimum, then you do not pass.

Time Spent: The reality of game design is that it is tedious work. At the end of the day, how well your game looks and plays, is a function of how much time and energy you put into it. You need to put time and research into developing this skillset. How much effort you put in will show in your work. If you do basic work you will get a basic result and grade. If you dig in deep and research ways of really showcasing your ideas your work will shine and so will your grade.

Course Policies

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly 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. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.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://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

Incomplete Grades

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their success. There are two office locations:

- Loop Campus – Lewis Center #1420 – (312) 362-8002
- Lincoln Park Campus – Student Center #370 – (773) 325-1677

Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gergory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course. If during a lab period, you are on social media instead of attending to the current project, to a level that you must be asked to cease the social media, it may be considered an absence as you are not actually present in the class work.

Class Discussion: Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

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 when the instructor 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 a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student 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. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

Cell Phones/On Call: If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.