

DC 380 / 480-201
Fall 2013

Meeting times: M 5:45 - 9:00pm (if you have a conflicting class and still want to participate, apply anyways. We can work something out!)

Location: CDM 920

Instructor: Doris C. Rusch (Game Design)
Office: CDM 513
Office hours: Mon 5:00 – 5:45, Wed 2:00–4:15

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Instructor: Anuradha Rana (Documentary)
Office: CDM 406
Office hours: Wed 12:00–3:00 or appointment

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Course Description (general):

Production of a digital game designed and developed by students and / or faculty within the Game Development Program. Students will work as a multi-disciplinary (i.e. design, programming, art, sound etc.) game development team under the supervision of faculty. The goal is to produce a complete game or level of a game that is suitable for festivals or distribution.

Production of a digital motion picture written by students or faculty within the Digital Cinema program. Students will work as crew under supervision of faculty members. Goal is to produce a completed digital motion picture suitable for festivals or distribution. This course has an additional fee.

NOTE: This particular section focuses on a transmedia project which uses a web-platform to host documentary episodes & experiential games that focus on mental health and wellbeing. The goal of the project is to explore and de-stigmatize mental health issues faced by college students and youth (for instance ADD, OCD, Anxiety, Stress, Eating Disorders and Body Image issues) challenge major cultural attitudes toward them, refer to resources for treatment, and showcase groups geared toward positive change in Chicago.

*For this purpose, two sections of the Project Bluelight are taught in parallel: one focusing on **game development**, the other on the production of the **documentary episodes**. Both sections will work closely together as well as include students and faculty at DePaul's nursing school, the counseling center and the health center.*

This project will fulfill the Junior Year Experiential Learning requirement in Liberal Studies.

Game Description:

The real-world goal of this transmedia project is to raise awareness for emotional health concerns, increase understanding, build empathy and fight stigma. By bringing together video, interactive sequences, animation, audio and other media on one web-platform, we hope to create an informative, compelling and coherent experience that helps people understand specific aspects of mental health from a phenomenological perspective. The goal is to provide an inside view of what it feels like to struggle with a wide range of concerns from ADD, OCD, bipolar to eating disorder, anxiety, insomnia and more. What is crucial is that a breadth of experiences shall be made accessible without labeling them so as to allow users to explore these topics without preconceptions or bias.

Games, have a unique potential of conveying experiences. The challenge thus is to create small, interactive sequences that make a range of emotional health concerns tangible to people with no first hand experience of them.

The game and documentary episodes are meant to support and complement each other, providing a true transmedia experience. This requires strong collaboration between the film and game teams. On top of that, both film and game need to collaborate closely with people who have first hand experience of particular emotional health concerns to create transmedia pieces that are authentic and grounded in experience rather than hearsay or aesthetic / artistic speculation.

Learning Goals:

This project provides unique and relevant learning opportunities the next generation of game developers should not miss out on:

- 1) ***Learn what it takes to develop games for a specific purpose.*** It is undoubtedly hard to make “a fun game”, but creating an engaging experience that needs to achieve a goal beyond entertainment requires a whole new level of design, communication and collaboration skills.
- 2) ***Learn transmedia production:*** more and more games are part of bigger “narrative universes” including comics, books and movies. Screenplays are developed with games in mind and games are made with movies in mind. This project requires students to consider how game and film can leverage and inform each other. Thereby they learn invaluable skills for an increasingly converging media culture.
- 3) ***Utilize and push your own skills*** in programming / level design / concept art / 2D art creation / animation and sound design for games, while also learning to work collaboratively as a game development team for a purpose and strong artistic vision.
- 4) ***Engage different roles and responsibilities in an exceptionally transdisciplinary studio environment*** by following design direction, creative problem-solving and meeting regular milestones.

- 5) *Learn about getting your games “out there”:*** a big part of this project is to advertise, distribute and promote the transmedia project. People need to know about the project for it to achieve its mental health activist goal. Thus, it will be submitted extensively to various festivals and conferences and distribution channels will be sought beyond that. Students learn how to produce submission materials and promote their work.

Documentary Webisode Description:

The documentary webisodes showcase the lives of characters from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds as they provide first person accounts of the issues they face. Depending on preferences, the films may or may not identify characters' on screen. Instead, abstract images and visual metaphors rooted in the subject's own experiences will contrast with the surface 'normalcy' of their lives, showcased through more conventional documentary footage ('day in the life', events and interactions, etc.)

The documentary webisodes may include portraits of people who have experienced ADD, OCD, Anxiety, Stress, Eating disorders, or others; profiles of groups and organizations engaged in widening the knowledge base and challenging cultural stereotypes. The webisodes are designed to be watched according to the viewer's preference. They can be watched sequentially as a film with many chapters, individually, or in random order. Each piece will be complete unto itself and will stand alone. We plan to complete three webisodes as part of this project.

The filmed portraits are meant to provide context to the games, which will then allow viewers to experience firsthand the disorientation that an episode of psychosis may trigger.

The game and documentary episodes are meant to support and complement each other, providing a true transmedia experience. This requires strong collaboration between the film and game teams. On top of that, both film and game need to be scientifically sound and manage to capture salient aspects of psychosis.

Learning Goals:

This project provides unique and relevant learning opportunities the next generation of game developers should not miss out on:

- 1) *Learn how to make short documentary webisodes for a specific purpose.***
It is challenging enough to complete a short documentary within a limited amount of time, but to also achieve a goal beyond entertainment requires collaboration, communication and a vision for bringing different elements together. The extra challenge here lies in making short episodes that can be watched independently, or together as a complete film.
- 2) *Utilize and push your own skills*** in directing / producing / cinematography / location sound recording / editing and writing for documentary film, while also

learning to work collaboratively as one of three documentary units with an overall cohesive and creative vision.

3) Engage different roles and responsibilities in an exceptionally transdisciplinary studio environment by working as a production unit within a larger creative team, creative problem-solving and meeting regular milestones.

4) Learn transmedia production: Increasingly, documentaries are paving the way for new avenues of distributing, and consuming, media. Films are made in conjunction with games and interactive websites, contributing to a larger sphere of media narratives and collaborative storytelling. This project requires students to consider how game and film can leverage and inform each other. Thereby they learn invaluable skills for an increasingly converging media culture.

Participation Requirements:

Students applying for the transmedia project must be able to fill particular roles such as directing, producing, cinematography, location sound recording, or editing. All students, but particularly directors and cinematographers, are required to have experience working on a documentary film.

Everybody on the team needs to have prior production experience. Space is limited on this documentary webisode project and just like in any professional production, an application with evidence of previous work and commitment is required.

Grading:

Showing up on time, attending meetings, adhering to a project management plan & meeting your milestones with a super positive attitude and in collegial

spirit:..... 85%

Creativity, problem-solving and going beyond the call of duty:.....10%

A 1-2 page self-evaluation uploaded to D2L by the end of the term:5%

Grading Scale:

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

Class Policies:

This class replicates the professional model and you are expected to adhere to professional standards. Team members who do not carry their weight, repeatedly cause distractions or generally exhibit an attitude that erodes team morale may be “fired” from the project and accordingly fail the class.

- Faculty interaction: The class meets during class times for regular check ins. However, you will be required to meet beyond that and work on the game on your own time. Faculty might also set up meeting times to check in with the various disciplines as needed. We will be using project management tools such as basecamp, wiki and Perforce /SVN to manage the project and keep everyone on track. Nothing, however, beats face-to-face interaction. Both instructors (for the film and game blue light) will be very involved in the process.
- A detailed development plan that specifies milestones and deadlines will be defined by the beginning of the project. Development will be organized in bi-weekly sprints and follows a scrum (agile development) production method, which allows for a lot of flexibility while keeping everyone on the team on the same page.
- 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 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 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 with disabilities: If you feel you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted either:

- PLuS Program (for students with LD or AD/HD) at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/plus/>
- The office of Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at <http://www.studentaffairs.depaul.edu/studentswithdisabilities/>