

## **SYLLABUS: GAM 229: Game Design Writing & Presentation, WQ 2016/17**

### **Class Meeting Time & Location**

M & Wed. 10:10am – 11:40am

CDM 214

### **Instructor**

Mischa Hiessboeck

Office: CDM 430

Office hours: M/W: 8:45am-10:00am

2:10pm-3:10pm

[mhiessbo@depaul.edu](mailto:mhiessbo@depaul.edu)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

GAM 229 focuses on effective written and oral communication throughout the game development process and beyond. This includes writing game design documents, playtesting reports, post mortems and other, relevant documents. A further emphasis is put on the preparation and delivery of engaging presentations in various formats, including game pitches.

PREREQUISITE(S): GAM 226 and WRD 104

### **LEARNING GOALS:**

In this course, students learn to

- Break down and communicate game design ideas via written documents, including GDDs
- Prepare and give compelling oral presentations, incl. game pitches
- Develop an identity as a presenter / game developer

### **REQUIRED MATERIALS:**

No required textbook.

Useful books and other resources will be suggested throughout the course. Complementary reading and other supportive materials will also be posted on D2L under contents.

### **D2L**

We are using D2L (<http://d2l.depaul.edu>) as the supporting learning platform for this course. All course materials including weekly lecture slides and class info (i.e. syllabus, lesson plan, assignment descriptions etc.) are available through D2L under “contents”.

Assignments are submitted to its dedicated folder on Dropbox on D2L. This is also where you will get written feedback to your assignments from me.

### **POLICIES**

- **Participation and Attendance:** You are expected to attend all classes and participate in class activities as scheduled. Do not underestimate the importance of attendance and participation in this class. Showing up, after all, is a core ingredient of communicating and presenting effectively. Further, presentations are a community endeavor. No audience, no presentation – you are only talking to yourself. Do your colleagues the courtesy of being a supportive audience. Your contribution is crucial not only to your performance as an individual, but also to the outcome of the class as a whole. As stated below, 20% of your grade depends on participation and attendance. You should not assume that these points are “a given”. On the contrary, participation must be earned by showing up on time to every class, displaying full

engagement in all discussions and activities, completing all assignments, and listening actively and attentively to the instructor and your peers.

Regarding attendance, 1/3 of a letter grade will be docked from your final grade in the course for each absence beyond two (2). For example, if you end the class with an A-, but have missed 4 classes in total. Your final grade would be a B. Think of the two “free” absences as sick days or emergency days. If you use them for other reasons early in the term, you may find yourself in a bind if you get sick later on, or need to miss class for a family emergency. Because it is impossible for me to determine fairly what constitutes a compelling reason to miss class, there are no excused absences beyond these two. In all cases, please make every effort to contact me and explain the circumstances of your absence before you miss class. Always check with me about any work or assignments you may have missed.

Please be aware that being absent on a day you are assigned to present will result in a grade of zero for that presentation assignment. You will know your presentation date for each assignment at least one week before the presentations begin. Since you will be aware of your schedule well in advance, no unforeseen conflicts should arise and thus no make-up presentations will be permitted. Should dire circumstances render you physically unable to present on the agreed-upon day, you must make every effort to contact me and explain your circumstances prior to the class. Examples of circumstances that would make you physically unable to present include a highly contagious illness, accidents, or deaths in the family. Of you have a cold or other minor illness, you will still be expected to present. The presentation grade will account for the fact that you were not at your physical best.

Tardiness: please arrive to class on time! Tardiness under any circumstances is disruptive to the class as a whole. Habitual lateness, however, is a sure sign of disrespect to your classmates. As such, it will be factored into your participation grade as the instructor sees fit. If for some reason you have a class schedule that makes it physically impossible for you to arrive by 10:10am, please let me know by the end of the first week of classes so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Otherwise, all students are expected to be ready to begin class at 10:10am.

- Late assignments: very few assignments can actually be turned in late in this class (see next point). For those that could theoretically be turned in late, I will accept them ONLY if you (1) contact me at least 18 hours before the due date and (2) turn in the assignment within three days of the due date. Each day the assignment is late will decrease the possible point value by 10%.
- Please note that some of the main assignments for this class require your presence in class on the due date or provide the basis for in-class exercises. Extensions on these assignments cannot be granted. If you do not manage to deliver these assignments on time, you receive 0 points for them.
- All documents delivered in this class 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 mhiessbo@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 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 Computing and Digital Media. 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) 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](http://www.studentaffairs.depaul.edu/csd)  
[csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu)

### **Important Dates WQ 2016/17**

Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>: Last day to drop classes with no penalty  
 Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>: Last day to withdraw from WQ classes  
 Mar. 24<sup>th</sup>: WQ 2016/17 Grades are due

### **ORGANIZATION and ASSESSMENT**

GAM 229 meets twice a week. Class sessions combine lectures on game design writing and presentation, analysis of documents and presentations, as well as hands-on exercises and several individual student and team presentations. This course pursues a twofold goal: a) to create a safe environment in which students can get comfortable and practice expressing their ideas in front of an audience of their peers and b) to get a taste for what it means to communicate game design “in the real world” for various purposes. All exercises and assignments are meant to help students develop and communicate ideas, but beyond that to also develop a strong identity as game designers and a point of view. The class will strongly emulate “real life” scenarios, so be prepared for some surprises. Development of an original game idea for the purpose of practicing documentation and pitching is part of this class. The design process and prototyping themselves, however, go beyond the scope of GAM 229. Hence, creativity and originality of design work themselves are not emphasized in student assessment, but documentation and presentation of design work is.

All original IP for the game designs belong to the students of the class. Passing off existing IPs as your own, even in the context of this class, counts as plagiarism. Declare openly where you are using somebody else’s ideas.

## **GRADING:**

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

### **Individual assignments:**

Participation (including in-class activities) and attendance – 20%

3 High concepts – 6%  
One pager vision statement – 5%  
2-3min Identity speech – 8%  
Self-observation blurb – 4%  
Pecha Kucha on inspirational game design – 10%  
Pecha Kucha on game company / start up – 10%  
Peer Evaluation – 1%

### **Team assignments:**

Design documentation & prototyping materials – 5%  
Revised documentation – 11%  
10 pager concept document – 10%  
Game Pitch – 10%

Detailed descriptions of assignments incl. their grading rubrics are posted under “contents” on D2L, “course info”. Assignment descriptions will also be handed out in class throughout the term, at least one week before assignments are due.

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

Jan 2 Session 1	Introductions and course overview (syllabus, lesson plan)	Jan 4 Session 2	Where to present: Festival overview;  Finding the “high concept”
Jan 9 Session 3	Dealing with jitters & presentation as conversation	Jan 11 Session 4	High concept presentations  Identify winning ideas & team formation <i>Home Assignment 1: 3 high concepts for an original game idea.</i>  <i>Home Assignment 2: 1 paragraph self-observation blurb.</i>
Jan 16	<b>NO CLASS</b>  Martin Luther King Day	Jan 18 Session 5	Game design documentation (GDDs)  Example: CURERunners  One page design docs Game design logs
Jan 23 Session 6	Critique of selected (exemplary) one-pager vision statements  In-class team-work on vision statement: create unified version.  <i>Home Assignment 3: write a one-page vision statement for your original game idea.</i>	Jan 25 Session 7	Lecture on presentation: authenticity, point of view and being a person;  (Example speeches)
Jan 30 Session 8	Using language, body language, delivery and visual aids (The Art of Public Speaking: pp 222- 264)  Introduction to Pecha Kucha presentation format	Feb 1 Session 9	2 min (Game Developer) Identity speeches, part 1  <i>Home Assignment 4: 2min identity speech</i>
Feb 6 Session 10	2 min (Game Developer) Identity speeches, part 2	Feb 8 Session 11	In-class prototyping based on GDD; listening.  <i>Home Assignment 5: create game design documentation (rule sheet; flowchart etc.) of your game design to prototype the core gameplay. Bring documentation plus prototyping materials to class.</i>

Feb 13 Session 12	<p>The low-down on game pitching: what to prepare, and how to contact publishers; Overview of 10 pager concept doc</p> <p><i>Home Assignment 6: revision and reflection on game design documentation</i></p>	Feb 15 Session 13	How to organize a game pitch presentation
Feb 20 Session 14	<p>Pecha Kucha presentations on inspirational (game) design, part 1</p> <p><i>Home Assignment 7: Pecha Kucha presentation on inspirational game design</i></p> <p><i>Home Assignment 8: 10 pager concept doc</i></p>	Feb 22 Session 15	Pecha Kucha presentations on inspirational (game) design, part 2
Feb 27 Session 16	10 pagers critique session, part 1	Mar 1 Session 17	10 pagers critique session, part 2
Mar 6 Session 18	<p>Team pitch presentations</p> <p><i>Home Assignment 9: team pitch presentation</i></p> <p><i>Home assignment 10: Peer evaluations</i></p>	Mar 8 Session 19	<p>Pecha Kucha presentations on game company, part 1</p> <p><i>Home Assignment 11: Pecha Kucha presentation on game company</i></p>
	<b>NO CLASS</b>	Mar 15 Session 20	<p><b>CHANGED CLASS TIME:</b> 8:30-10:45AM</p> <p>Pecha Kucha presentations on game company, part 2 Debriefing</p> <p><i>10 pager concept doc rewrites due</i></p>

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