# GAM 540: Game Development Practicum

Winter 2019

Wed, 5:45 PM—9:00 PM

Daley Building, Rm 503

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## Overview

This course introduces the creation of a term-long project in teams. In contrast to studio classes where students can work alone or with others and decide what games they want to create, the practicum requires students to make games about a specific topic or theme proposed by faculty. This can include a requirement of working with a client, involving subject matter experts in the design process, developing a site-specific art game installation, or working with a novel platform such as a wearable device.

## Course Description

You find a mysterious 5" floppy disc with a coded file on it. You swing your greatsword (covered in foam) at a wizard who is preparing to throw a fireball (from a nerfgun). You hop across rocks in a pond to find a transponder hidden among lilypads. These are only some of the expanded ways that people play today in a world that of pervasive, transmedia, and alternate reality games. In this course we will learn how to design experimental forms of play that demand collaboration from large groups of people, take place across time and space, and use new and emerging media technologies to tell a story. We will learn about genres such as Escape Rooms, LARPs, Urban Street Games, Murder Mystery Dinner Parties, Megagames, Geocaching, Netprov, Puzzle boxes, and more. We will play several of these and read work by game designers like as Mary Flanagan, Jane McGonigal, and Tracy Fullerton. As a major component of the course, students will work in small teams to build, promote, and launch their own large-scale social games by the end of the quarter.

## Objectives

By the end of the quarter, you will be able to:

- Plan, coordinate, and fairly distribute game production tasks with teams of different sizes, and regularly update that plan during development.
- Clearly communicate expectations and problems within a team.
- Identify your specialized skills and areas of growth and strategize about how to develop those skills.
- Design pervasive, transmedial, large-scale, and social games.
- Research and translate design considerations from architecture, UX, theatre, and related fields into game design.

## D2L & Materials

There are no textbooks assigned for this course. However, students are responsible for purchasing one game (The Black Watchmen, $9.99 on Steam) and for one ticket to an escape room game (about $30).

We are using D2L (http://d2l.depaul.edu) as a platform for this course. All course materials including readings, weekly lecture slides, and class information (syllabus, lesson plan, assignment descriptions) are available through D2L under 'Contents.' You are expected to take notes, prepare questions for discussion, and bring the readings to class each week.

Assignments are to be submitted to their dedicated folder on D2L.

## Grade Breakdown

Your grade will be based on the following components, a full description of each along with a grading rubric will be available on D2L as the assignments are posted.

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|---|---|
| A | 100-93 |
| A- | 92-90 |
| B+ | 89-87 |
| B | 86-83 |
| B- | 82-80 |
| C+ | 79-77 |
| C | 76-73 |
| C- | 72-70 |
| D | 69-60 |
| F | 59-0 |

Participation............................................10%
Presentations.........................................30%
Pre-production tasks..............................20%
Production tasks.....................................20%
Final game and reflection.......................30%

## Course Policies

**Participation and Attendance**
Participation is a major part of this course, and will be measured across all parts of the course including discussion, in-class production, office hours, online postings, and in-class writing. Only 10% of your grade depends directly on participation, but it is a crucial component in all of the tasks that you take on this quarter as part of a group.

You are expected to attend all classes and attend all activities. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to make up work. Please be aware that being absent on a day where you are presenting a game will result in a zero for the critique assignment. Please arrive to class on time, tardiness is disruptive to the class as a whole and will be factored into your participation grade.

**Laptops**
For this course, I ask that you do not use laptops during the lecture and discussion portion (the first 90 minutes or so). While they are useful for many things, laptops are also a distraction and our course requires everyone's attention. You may use laptops during the production phase of the class, though every group should discuss their own policy on this.

**Attitude & Civil Discourse**
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 of these 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.

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.

**Late Assignments**
I will only accept late assignments if you contact me at least two days before the assignment is due and we come to an agreed upon extension. Assignments submitted late without such an agreement will receive a 10% deduction each day. Please note that due to the grade submission deadline, I may be unable to give an extension on some projects, especially near the end of the term.

## 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.

**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.

**Students with Disabilities**
Students who feel they may need an accommodation bused 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

**Student Rights**
You have rights as a student. 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

**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

**Important Dates**

January 5th, Begin Winter Quarter Classes

January 11th, Last day to add (or swap) classes with no penalty

January 18th, Last day to drop classes with no penalty

January 21st, Martin Luther King Day

February 22nd, Last day to withdraw from fall classes

March 15th, Last day of classes

March 16th, Beginning of exam period

March 22th, End of exam period

March 23rd, Begin Spring break

March 29th, Fall grades due

# Course Outline

Please note: This lesson plan and assignments are not part of the syllabus anymore and liable to change.

## Part 1: Into the Weirdness

| Jan 9th | At the Intersection: Pervasive, Transmedial, Social, and Immersive | |
|---|---|---|
| **Readings** | Montola et al. *Pervasive Play*, "Chapter 1" <br> Kirk Hamilton, "Ready, Set" | |
| **Games** | *The Black Watchmen* | ($9.99, online) |
| **Events** | *Puzzled Pint* | (free, Jan 8th, location puzzle posted on Jan 4th) |
| **Exercises** | Presentation signup, form teams, set game tone, signpost tropes. | |
| **Due Mon** | Mood board | |

| Jan 16th | Transmedia Games | |
|---|---|---|
| **Readings** | Henry Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling 101" and "202" <br> Claus Pias, "Barcode Battler" | |
| **Games** | *The Curse of Peg Leg Sullivan* | (free, Chicago-wide) |
| | *Grey Matter Soldality* | (free, physical object) |
| | Mysterious Package Company | (free, physical object) |
| | Achaea MUD | (free, online) |
| **Exercises** | Team skill list, Media affordances, Speculative media probe | |
| **Due Mon** | Media Presence (front & back-stage) | |

## Jan 23rd — Networked Games

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| **Readings** | Montola et al. *Pervasive Play*, "Chapter 6"<br>Lev Manovich, "The Poetics of Augmented Space" |
| **Games** | Nova to Lodestar — (price/dates tba, Wicker Park)<br>iCombat Laser Tag — ($30, near O'Hare)<br>The Railcar — ($33, min 3ppl, Wicker Park)<br>The Isle of Sugar — ($10, Jan 18th or 20th, Edgewater) |
| **Exercises** | Play Styles, Audience Study |
| **Due Mon** | Mechanic chart + playtest plan |

## Jan 30th — Pervasive Games

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| **Readings** | Mary Flanagan, "Locational Artist's Games"<br>Benford et al. "Uncle Roy All Around You: Implicating the City in a Location-Based Performance" |
| **Games** | Ingress Prime — (free, mobile)<br>Geocaching — (freemium, Chicago-wide)<br>Southern Gothic — ($40-50, Windy City Playhouse)<br>Chicago Funhouse Maze — ($10, Navy Pier) |
| **Events** | |
| **Exercises** | Character generation, Roleplay, Mechanic playtest |
| **Due Mon** | Logic of the World |

## Feb 6th — Immersive Games

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| **Readings** | Sean Stewart, "Collaborating with the Audience: Alternate Reality Games"<br>Christy Dena, "Creating Alternate Realities"<br>Mary Flanagan, "The Puppet Master Problem" |
| **Games** | Ask Again Later — (LARP, Feb 2nd, Hyde Park) |
| **Exercises** | Narrative roleplay, decide team jobs |
| **Due Mon** | Game Pitch Document |

## Part 2: Building Your Game

| Feb 13th – Mar 20th |
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As part of your Game Pitch Document, you will identify the roles each person on your team will take on for the remainder of the course. Once you pick a role, you will receive a syllabus packet tailored to your choice.

You may choose from:
- Challenges & Puzzles
- Play & Experience
- Media & Technology
- Writing & World-building
- Acting & Directing
- Documentation & Research

Additionally, we will be choosing an ARG to play as a group based on what games are currently active at the beginning of February. You may want to take a look and advocate for a game. Some starting points include:

ARGNET: https://www.argn.com/
Game Detectives: https://wiki.gamedetectives.net/
ARG Reddit: https://www.reddit.com/r/ARG/
ARGworld Forum: http://arg.world/

We will be playing this game, and discussing it during weeks 6-10.

# Assignments

## Weekly Assignments

Each week, your group will receive a packet of in-class and take-home assignments. You will be responsible for fulfilling these tasks and developing a larger plan for integrating them into your complete game.

## Presentations

In week 2-4, you will be responsible for playing one of the four games listed in the outline and giving a 15 minute group presentation on that game along with the other people who participated in the game. Your main goal is to explain what the experience was like to the students who did not attend, and teach them something about design. Each member of the group should talk for at least 2 minutes during the presentation, and collectively you should discuss each of the following points:

- What was the game like phenomenologically: what were the most important sights, sounds, smells, and feels? How did the surrounding context shape your experience? What kinds of emotions did it create? What was fun and what was boring? What did it mean to you?
- How can the experience be considered in game terms? What kinds of rules were there? What were you allowed to do? What kinds of interacting systems were operating behind the scenes?
- Two design principles that you can extrapolate from the experience to other kinds of game design. These can be ideas about constructing spaces, feelings, systems, interfaces or anything else that you learned about while playing.

I will be listening for your insight into the process of researching-through-play. You should be paying attention to your surroundings while you're playing with the eye of a game designer. I am also looking for an organized and coordinated presentation between group members. You don't have to agree about the experience, but your presentation should help us understand why people might have different take-aways.