



# GAM 312-501: Playtesting

WQ 2020 :: T: 1:30 - 4:45 PM :: CDM 200



## Instructor Info

Dr. Michael A. DeAnda

Email: [mdeanda@depaul.edu](mailto:mdeanda@depaul.edu)

Tel: 312.362.1244

Pronouns: any human-related pronouns are acceptable (i.e. not "it")

Office Hours: MW 1:40-3:10 PM or by appointment

Location: Daley 205B

I will usually respond to emails within a few hours between 9AM and 5 PM Monday through Friday. It is rare that I will check and respond to emails on weekends.



## Course Description

Playtesting or Games User Research is one of the key skills every game designer needs. Feedback from playtesting is a critical part of the development process. In this course, students will learn how to identify design goals, articulate good research and interview questions, plan and conduct playtests, and evaluate playtest data to inform design decisions and make better games.

**Prerequisite:** GAM 226 - Fundamentals of Game Design



## Course Learning Outcomes

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By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Clearly identify design goals,
- Effectively plan a playtest,
- Identify research and survey questions to gather relevant data for design iterations,
- Demonstrate effective ways to present evaluation findings,
- Make informed choices between usability and playtesting methods to reach design goals.



## Required Materials

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- A rapid prototyping kit that includes:
  - A box or pack to keep materials together
  - Scissors
  - 1 d6 (six-sided die)
  - index cards
  - tape
  - loose-leaf paper
  - markers/colored pencils
  - a pen or pencil
- Readings will be posted on D2L in the “Content” section. Students are expected to come to class having read these by Monday of the indicated week.



## Computer Labs & Internet-Enabled Devices

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If you need access to a computer, you can view the list of [computer labs on campus](#) for more information. Don't forget to bring your DePaul ID or you may not be able to access the lab. [Intelliprint](#) systems are available in computer labs and at other locations on campus for printing.

While in the classroom, internet-enabled devices such as laptops, tablets, smartphones, and smartwatches can ONLY be used for the purpose of learning as required by the instructor. No texting, emailing, or web browsing is allowed in the classroom. Violation will result in losing all of your 10% class participation grade.



## Grading Breakdown

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Class sessions will combine lectures on game design topics, with analysis of particular games and in-class activities designing and playing games. Students are expected to attend all classes and do the assigned reading and homework before class time.

Student progress will be assessed through a combination of homework assignments, game

analysis papers on a game of student's choice, a group game design project, and class participation.

Major Playtesting Projects (2)	60%
In-class assignments	30%
Participation	10%

You must pass each listed component (D- or better) to pass the class.

Students wishing to contest a grade may do so during office hours or by appointment a minimum of 24 hours and a maximum of a week after assignments have been returned.

A	93-100
A-	92-90
B+	89
B	88-81
B-	80
C+	79
C	78-71
C-	70
D+	69
D	69-61
D-	60
F	59-



## Assignment Info

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**All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the indicated date.** Below is a brief summary of each assignment. More detailed instructions will be provided on D2L under "Content."

Unless there are unforeseen circumstances, assignments will usually be graded and returned within one week of the due date.

### Major Playtesting Projects

Over the quarter, groups of students will run playtests on games. The first round, students will develop games from a prompt, rapidly prototype these games, playtest, and iterate (due as midterm). For the final project, students will work with a client to playtest a game in-development.

### In-class assignments

Throughout the quarter, we will have different activities that will require you to use readings (done as homework) to inform your methods for different stages of playtesting.

## Participation

Participation will be graded based on your engagement with other students during class discussion and during in-class activities. To earn full points for participation, you are expected to show up to class having read the assigned articles and contribute to class discussion about the articles, and engage in in-class activities.

**NOTE: One of the most difficult things about playtesting is to recruit enough (and suitable) playtesters. Start your recruitment process early! I recommend setting up a Google Spreadsheet, an Eventbrite or other online tool to invite testers and allow them to sign up for playtesting timeslots.**

To facilitate playtesting, you also have access to a participant pool from which you can recruit playtesters, but I do not recommend relying on this as your sole source for testers because responses can be very hit or miss. Go to this website and follow the instructions:

<http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/academics/research/Pages/Instructions-for-Researchers.aspx>

Detailed description of assignments and grading rubric is available on D2L under “contents”, “course info”.



## Late Work, Absences, Make-Ups, and Extra Credit

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**Late work** of any kind is not accepted. Assignments are to be turned in on their due dates. If an assignment is not turned in by the due date, it will not be accepted and is given a zero. *Exception:* Students with extreme circumstances should contact the Dean of Students Office who will then contact your instructors (including me) and we will work out an alternative approach.

**Attendance:** Since participation is integral to your grade, you are expected to attend and actively participate in class activities. Tardiness is disruptive to the class, and I may speak with you, your advisor, or the Dean of Students Office if you are consistently late. Students will be individually responsible for any material they may have missed due to absence or tardiness. Participation activities done in class cannot be made up. Students who miss the return of assignments may pick them up during office hours or by appointment.

Student-led class discussions and presentations must be made on scheduled date. If a student needs to switch presentation dates, it is up to them to make arrangements with another willing student and notify the instructor of this change.

Assignments (except for designated group assignments) must represent a student's individual effort. While students are permitted to discuss assignments at the conceptual level, under no circumstances should students share specific answers (electronically or otherwise). You must credit/cite anything content, image, writing, or idea that is not your own.

**Extra credit** will be given to students for attending CDM design talks. To receive 3 points of extra credit, students must write a 250 word reflection that: summarizes the the design talk;

highlights the main argument and support; and links it back to course materials, that is how does the panel relate to any readings, assignments, or activities we have done in class? Students may earn up to 15 points of extra credit.



## Class Requirements

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**IMPORTANT NOTE:** In order to stay in this course, you need to obtain IRB certification by Tuesday, April 23rd 2019 before 11:59pm. These are the instructions you need to follow:

A. Go here and follow the instructions:

<https://offices.depaul.edu/research-services/research-protections/irb/Documents/Instructions%20for%20CITI%20Training%201-29-18.pdf>

B. Your learner group is "a) Students-class projects"

This means that you will have to complete the following modules:

1. DePaul University
2. Students in Research-SBR
3. History & Ethical Principles-SBR
4. Defining Research with Human Subjects-SBR
5. The Regulations and the Social and Behavioral Sciences-SBR
6. Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences-SBR
6. Informed Consent-SBR
7. Privacy and Confidentiality-SBR

(if you're curious, I had to do 18 modules!)

C. Once you've completed the course successfully, you need to save your certificate as a pdf (I recommend printing it to pdf). **You need to upload this pdf to D2L as an assignment called "IRB training".** This will prove to me that you have completed the course. The IRB will also receive notification of your completion.

If you have recently completed IRB training for another course, you can upload notification of completion from that course.

**If I have not received your certificate by Feb 2, 2020 at 11:59pm, I will ask that you drop the course.**

If you have any problems with the CITI site or other questions, please let me know!



## Academic Integrity

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DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>) for further details.



## Resources for Students

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### Writing Center

I strongly recommend you make use of the Writing Center throughout your time at DePaul. The Writing Center provides free peer writing tutoring for DePaul students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Writing Center tutors work with writers at all stages of the writing process, from invention to revision, and they are trained to identify recurring issues in your writing as well as address any specific questions or areas that you want to talk about. Visit [www.depaul.edu/writing](http://www.depaul.edu/writing) for more information.

### The Dean of Students Office

The Dean of Students Office (DOS) is primarily responsible for meeting the urgent needs of students by providing clear and critical support structures in times of need. Additionally, the department helps develop and maintain community standards in order to facilitate a safe and healthy campus environment for our students. The Dean of Students Office provides the administrative withdrawal and absence notification processes, and can help students identify campus and community resources in times of personal and/or family crises and medical emergencies.

The Dean of Students Office at DePaul University promotes student learning and ethical decision making in an inclusive and student-centered environment. Utilizing a comprehensive approach to student advocacy that is informed by DePaul's Catholic, Vincentian, and urban mission, the office collaborates with students, staff, faculty, parents and community partners to support students in reaching their academic and personal success.

Contact Info:

Phone: 773-325-7290

Email: [deanofstudents@depaul.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@depaul.edu)

Website: <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/dos.aspx>

Location:  
Lincoln Park Campus  
Student Center, Suite 307  
2250 N. Sheffield Ave.



## DePaul and College-Specific Policies

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### NAME & GENDER PRONOUNS

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at [policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332](https://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332)

### RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) by emailing [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu) and/or visiting one of the locations below.

#### Loop Campus

Lewis Center Suite 1420  
25 East Jackson Blvd  
phone: (312) 362-8002  
fax: (312) 362-6544  
tty: (773) 325-7296

#### Lincoln Park Campus

Student Center, Suite #370  
2250 N Sheffield Ave  
phone: (773) 325-1677  
fax: (773) 325-3720  
tty: (773) 325-7296

### 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.depaul.edu](https://campusconnect.depaul.edu).

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & PLAGIARISM**

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found on DePaul's [academic integrity website](#). If you have any questions, be sure to consult with your professor.

### **SEXUAL AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE**

As a DePaul community, we share a commitment to take care of one another. Classroom relationships are based on trust and communication. Sometimes, material raised in class may bring up issues for students related to sexual and relationship violence. In other instances, students may reach out to faculty as a source of help and support. It is important for students to know that faculty are required to report information reported to them about experiences with sexual or relationship violence to DePaul's Title IX Coordinator. Students should also know that disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence in course assignments or discussion does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response.

Students seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul should contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400) or the Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7290; Loop: 312-362-8066 or [titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu)).

Students seeking to speak confidentially about issues related to sexual and relationship violence should contact a Survivor Support Advocate in the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness for information and resources (773-325-7129 or [hpw@depaul.edu](mailto:hpw@depaul.edu)). More information is available at the [Office of Health Promotion and Wellness website](#). Students are encouraged to take advantage of these services and to seek help around sexual and relationship violence for themselves as well as their peers who may be in need of support.

### **ENROLLMENT/WITHDRAWAL AND OTHER 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 registration policies can be found at [DePaul Central](#).

### **WITHDRAWAL**

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system ([campusconnect.depaul.edu](https://campusconnect.depaul.edu)). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day



on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE WITHDRAWAL**

Administrative Withdrawal Appeals are submitted to and processed by the Dean of Students Office, and allow students to be retroactively withdrawn from classes for medical, mental health or personal crises even after the term has ended. More information is available on the [Division of Student Affairs](#) website.

### **EXCUSED ABSENCE**

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the [Absence Notification form](#) through the [Dean of Students office](#). Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

### **SYLLABUS CHANGES AND ERRORS**

The instructor may make changes and updates to the course syllabus and schedule as needed. Students will be notified of any changes. If you find any broken links, outdated information, or other content that just seems “off” somehow, please let me know so I can fix it. I really do appreciate students helping me find and fix mistakes or confusing wording in my materials.