

# GAM 550: Incubation Studio

Winter 2022 :: Wednesdays 5:45 - 9:00 PM



## Instructor Info

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Instructor Name: Lien Tran (she/her/hers)

[Lien.Tran@depaul.edu](mailto:Lien.Tran@depaul.edu)

Tel: 312-362-1113

Office Hours: Mon, Wed

(make appointment via [BlueStar](#) to meet at <https://depaul.zoom.us/my/lienbtran> or in-person)

Please book via BlueStar preferably with 24+ hours notice. If the listed times do not work with your schedule, please email me to arrange a meeting at another time. More information on using Zoom at DePaul is [available here](#).



## Course Description

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Students will apply a 'playcentric' iterative process to guide their creative design practice and situate it within historical, aesthetic, and social contexts. Students will first identify goals and potential research areas or creative catalysts and collaboratively engage in 'blue sky thinking'. They will continue using design best practices and collaborating on design research, iterative design, and testing informed by in-class critique. The final set of course deliverables includes a well-defined project concept supported by iterative prototyping and initial pre-production planning documents. These principles and hands-on practice can be applied to the pre-production of any future interactive project design process, including thesis projects.

PREREQUISITE(S): GAM 530 and GAM 540

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be addressed during class and via email/D2L.



## Course Learning Outcomes

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

- Research, brainstorm, and present concepts in support of an interactive design project, such as but not limited to game design and / or thesis project
- Learn what it means to work "playcentrically" and collaboratively in teams of 2, focused on evolving from several rough ideas to a single solid project concept

- Present design research and ideation for [critique](#)
  - Participate in critique of fellow students' research and project concepts by providing constructive feedback
  - Document process and progress also for feedback by maintaining a [devlog](#)
- Create several prototypes as playable questions for in-class playtesting and feedback
- Present a well researched final project concept that aligns with your team's project goals by engaging in an iterative design process
- Learn how to plan and scope an interactive project including creating a game design macro for pre-production planning purposes



## Required Materials

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### Required Book

- A Playful Production Process, Richard LeMarchand (2021)  
<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/playful-production-process>
- Notebook for generating and storing ideas, research, and sketches

*When possible, I will share scanned/digital versions of additional readings that are not from the required book.*

### Recommended Books

*These are recommended additional readings, I may suggest specific ones given your individual interest/needs*

#### Game Design

- *Games, Design, and Play: A Detailed Approach to Iterative Game Design*, Colleen Macklin and John Sharp (2016)
- *Art of Game Design*, 3rd edition, Jesse Schell (2019)
- [Transformational Game Design](#), Sabrina Culyba (2016)

#### General Design / Design Process

- *Ruined by Design*, Mike Monteiro (2019)
- *Just Enough Research*, 2nd edition, Erika Hall (2020)
- *Design is Storytelling*, Ellen Lupton (2017)
- LUMA Institute's *Innovating for People: Handbook of Human-Centered Design* (2012)

#### Software

- Zoom video meeting software for online classes and one-on-one meetings
- Collaboration, productivity, and presentation tools
  - [MURAL.co](#) - you will be provided access for free
  - Google Docs

- Google Slides
- Live collaboration boards - ex. [Google Jamboard](#)
- Software for game prototyping - specifics dependent on student team/concept
- Online [devlog](#) documentation site - more information on D2L
- Video hosting, such as Vimeo or YouTube - both are free
- DePaul provided Perforce version control software

## Hardware

- Personal headphones
- Headphone splitter for hearing audio when playtesting simultaneously in-class (such as [this one](#))
- Additional hardware to design/test your particular game concept (controllers, etc.)



## About our Course Modality

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We will meet synchronously both in-person and virtually for most of the weekly scheduled sessions. The first 2 weeks will be virtual per DePaul policy (announced 12/3/21). The sessions will be recorded and available via D2L for class purposes only, please do not share these videos. Attendance in live sessions are mandatory and count towards your class participation. Please inform me if there is an unavoidable reason for why you cannot attend a live session and we can address it on a case-by-case basis.

There will be a few sessions where instead of meeting as an entire class, you will meet with me and your individual team to give a status update and to get more targeted feedback. These may be held during the weekly class session or scheduled during a mutually agreed upon time.

Student presentations will be required in this course. If preferred, we can discuss the option to record them and watch them before sharing feedback, which may be done either asynchronously via a discussion board or synchronously during class time.

### Zoom Participation Expectations and Recommendations

Please do your best to meet the following expectations and recommendations. If you foresee any issues or concerns, please let me know and we can discuss.

- Display the name you would like to go by, including your last name for attendance purposes, and please include your pronouns for all attendees to learn and refer to
- Treat video conferences as you would a regular class session on campus. Be prepared to be attentive and engaged during meetings.
- Be on time or notify me if you will be late or unable to attend.
- Minimize distractions, such as televisions and cell phones, when possible.
- Don't engage in other activities during sessions (driving, cooking, cleaning, etc.)
- Try to put your device at eye level on a solid surface and with decent lighting so we can see your face. Holding your device or placing it in your lap can add movement to your video, which can be distracting.

- If you think you might have trouble actively participating in meetings, please let me know in advance when possible.

### **Camera Use During Zoom Meetings**

It's much easier for us to feel connected as a class and build a sense of community if we can see and hear each other. While I don't require students to have their cameras on at all times, having your camera on during class meetings is strongly encouraged and especially when it's your turn to present. During our meetings, I'll do my best to indicate if there are times when you don't need to have your camera on. I'll also provide a heads up if there will be times when it's particularly important that all participants have their cameras and microphones on (during a small-group discussion activity, for instance).

### **Camera-Related Concerns**

For some students, having cameras on during class meetings may be a source of stress, for them or for others with whom they share their space. Internet bandwidth limitations can also make it difficult for some students to fully participate in meetings at times. If you have experienced these issues, please review the tips below. If you're still concerned about camera use or participation expectations in general after reviewing these guidelines, please contact me so we can identify potential solutions.



### **COVID-19 Updates**

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For the latest news and resources regarding DePaul's response to COVID-19, please visit <https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx>



### **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.



### **Tutoring | Writing Center**

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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) to learn more about the online appointment options the UCWbL is offering.



## Library Resources

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The DePaul University Library (<https://library.depaul.edu>) provides access to authoritative information sources and online research tools which you can access using your Campus Connect login. Research help is available daily via text, chat, phone, email or video. You may also make an appointment with a librarian to discuss your research projects. For the latest information about library access and services in Winter Quarter 2021, see <https://libguides.depaul.edu/covid19>.



## Grading Breakdown

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5%	<b>Attendance</b> <i>Regular attendance is expected. More than 2 absences may result in a lower grade. More than 4 absences may result in a failing grade.</i>
22%	<b>In-class participation and engagement</b> <i>Listening to student presentations and providing constructive feedback during critique; contributing to lively discussions; attending and being prepared for your individual team meetings with your instructor; being prepared for your game's playtest and being engaged and providing feedback when playtesting other teams' games.</i>
11%	<b>Devlog documentation</b> <i>Completed by your team each week</i>
14%	<b>Major game design planning documents</b> <i>Identifying and articulating project goals clearly and iterating on a game design macro for your project</i>
31%	<b>Iterative design</b> <i>Includes initial brainstorming and at least 3 distinct playable prototypes that clearly demonstrate progress towards project concept and/or answering design questions</i>
17%	<b>Final concept</b> <i>Quality of final project concept informed by research, iterative design, and critique; final game design document, final presentation with guest critics, and project review essay (post mortem report)</i>



## Assignment Info

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All assignment submissions must be submitted through D2L and no email submission is accepted. I will enter credit for in-class presentations and class participation into D2L.

You will complete multiple phases in order to research and incubate a design concept. You will go through the pre-production planning process using industry best practices, design

thinking and research, ideation, and iteration. Your final concept must be for an interactive experience, which can be but is not limited to a game concept. You will complete a set of useful prototypes and design documents to help plan the production for your project implementation. This concept may be the launching point for your MFA thesis \* but is not required to be. You can apply the process used in this class towards a different thesis project concept.

A large part of the course's content will be focused on in-class discussion, group critique and problem solving for an interactive project. It is very important that you treat the development of your design projects professionally. You will be expected to participate actively in the discussions and critique sessions that take place in class, giving and receiving feedback that honors your fellow students with its depth of analysis and respect for their work.

In this class, we will look at some techniques that you can use to bring your process under better control, and to take away some of the needless risk that can prevent a project from reaching its full potential. You will become more assured of making high-quality work with the limited time and resources that you have available to you, while continuing to find new patterns of interaction, new modes of self-expression, and new types of audience experience.

In some important regards, game design and interaction design are fundamentally different from other processes of media design and creation. The dynamically systemic nature of what you make, coupled with the real-time interaction between your games and your players, introduces vast numbers of unknowns, variables, challenges, and problems into the creative process; these are challenges that painters, filmmakers, novelists, musicians, and poets usually do not have to deal with.

Additionally, game design and interaction design are quite dissimilar from other kinds of engineering processes. They require us sometimes to diverge from any kind of scientific method or wholly rigorous system of progression, and to use our intuition, instincts, and guesswork to realize the products of our imagination. Keep this in mind along with an open, creative mind over the course of this quarter.

*\* For students embarking on thesis year: this is a reminder that before Spring Break, you must confirm an MFA thesis advisor who will be helpful in advising your particular thesis. This faculty member must have a terminal degree and once you have confirmed them as your advisor, they must set up a section of GAM 600 Thesis Studio and register you. You may and are encouraged to use many of the techniques used in GAM 550 during Thesis Studio for your thesis proposal.*



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

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In-person (live, on camera/microphone, and chat) attendance is required on days scheduled for synchronous class sessions. Missing classes, arriving late, departing early, unnecessary phone/computer use in class, or not being actively engaged during these sessions will result in a deduction to the student's in-class engagement grade. If a student will need to step away

for reasons such as health care then they should communicate this to the instructor. In-person attendance is required for every class.

In the professional world, meeting deadlines is crucial and as such I try to emulate this expectation and penalize for late work. That said, these are unusual times, so please reach out to me at [Lien.Tran@depaul.edu](mailto:Lien.Tran@depaul.edu) anytime and let me know if you are unable to meet a deadline or would like to set up a video call to discuss the circumstances.

If you are sick, stay home. You need to be healthy to learn, and so do your classmates (and instructor). We do not distinguish between mental health and physical health. If you cannot complete an assignment on time or come to class because of mental health issues, you must contact us promptly, just as with physical health problems.

For longer term health impacts, please let me know and we may be able to work out a reasonable contingency plan. You may also reach out to Lucia Dettori, Associate Dean (CDM) at [ldettori@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:ldettori@cdm.depaul.edu) with any confidential academic or personal concerns.



## Course Schedule

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This is a general outline for the course and is subject to change. Completing assignments, including readings, by the due date is critical to your ability to participate and therefore earn full credit for participation. If you foresee not being able to meet a deadline, please let me know as soon.

- Week 1-4: Phase 1 Ideation
- Week 5-10: Phase 2A preproduction and prototyping
- Week 11: Final presentation with guest critics on Wednesday, March 16 at 5:45pm (final exam period aligns with the regularly scheduled class time)

Please see announcements in D2L for the proposed modality schedule for the entire quarter. This is subject to change based on factors within and beyond our control though I do hope we can adhere to this plan. I will give as much advance notice as possible regarding any changes.



## 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.



## DePaul and College-Specific Policies

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### PREFERRED NAME & GENDER PRONOUNS

I value each student's right to be referenced by their gender pronoun and their preferred name. If your name and pronoun in Campus Connect don't reflect what you'd like me to use, please let me know.

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](http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332)

### RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who feel they may need 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.

#### COVID-19 Virtual Office

During the temporary closure of our physical offices due to Covid-19, Center for Students with Disabilities is accessible for live questions, referrals, and assistance via a virtual office using Zoom. The virtual office will be staffed Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. (CST). Virtual Office: [www.tinyurl.com/CSDVirtualOffices](http://www.tinyurl.com/CSDVirtualOffices)

### 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).

## **SEXUAL AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE**

Academic relationships are based on communication, trust and respect, and as a DePaul community, we share a commitment to take care of one another. Sometimes, material raised in class may bring up issues for students related to sexual and relationship violence or other trauma. In other instances, students may reach out to faculty as a potential 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, in itself, constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response.

Those seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul should:

- (a) use the attached link to do so [here](#)  
([https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?DePaulUniv&layout\\_id=4](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?DePaulUniv&layout_id=4))
- (b) contact the Title IX Coordinator (312-362-8066 or [titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu)) or
- (c) contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400)

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 <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/hpw/shvp.html>. 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.

### **UNIVERSITY RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS IN NEED OF SUPPORT**

Safety and Mental health safety are important. If you find yourself in a state of distress, depression, or unsafe circumstances, please make use of any of the following resources should you seek counseling.

- [Office of Health Promotion and Awareness](#) staff can provide wellness coaching and a number of other supports. Appointments can be requested by calling 773-325-7129 or completing [this online intake form](#).
- [University Counseling Services](#) are operating remotely but still accessible during COVID-19.
  - Full-time and part-time DePaul students may schedule appointments with the University Counseling Service. Info here: <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/counseling/Pages/default.aspx>
  - The front desk staff is working remotely and will answer your call directly. If they are taking another call, please leave a message and your call will be returned within a business day. If you would like to be contacted by a counselor please call (773) 325-7779 or (312) 362-6923.
- [Dean of Students Office](#) provides critical support in times of need including administrative support, student advocacy, and identifying campus and community resources.
- The Office of Health Promotion and Wellness (HPW) provides holistic education, support and resources for individuals to establish and sustain long-term, healthy behaviors.

- In light of the COVID-19 impact on the University, the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness programs and services remain open and can be accessible to students remotely. Students can meet with a staff member via Zoom. Appointments can be requested by calling 773-325-7129 or [completing this online intake form](#).

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES EXTERNAL TO DEPAUL**

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  - Phone: 1-800-273-8255
  - Online chat feature: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
- National Domestic Violence Hotline
  - Available 24/7. Offers help in more than 200 languages. All calls are free and confidential.
  - Phone: 1-800-799-7233
  - Chat online with someone: <https://www.thehotline.org/>
- The Trevor Project
  - For young LGBTQ persons in crisis or in need of someone to talk to:
  - Phone: 1-866-488-7386
  - Text START to 678678
  - Chat online by visiting: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/>
- Trans Lifeline
  - A peer support hotline runned by trans people for trans people.
  - Phone: 877-565-8860

#### **Land Acknowledgement**

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At DePaul University, we acknowledge that we live and work on traditional Native lands that are home to well over one hundred different tribal nations. We extend our respect to all of them, including the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa nations, who signed the Treaty of Chicago in 1821 and 1833. We also recognize the Ho-Chunk, Myaamia, Menominee, Illinois Confederacy, and Peoria people who also maintained relationships with this land. We acknowledge that these sacred homelands were ruptured by the European invasion of the Americas. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI promulgated the Doctrine of Discovery, which seized Native lands and resources with impunity. This doctrine has been used by countries throughout the Americas, including the U.S., to legitimize colonial policies of displacement and genocide toward Native peoples and to justify colonial legacies of white superiority and global capitalism.

We appreciate that today Chicago is home to the sixth-largest urban Native population in the United States. We further recognize and support the enduring presence of Native peoples among our faculty, staff, and student body. And in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, we reaffirm our commitment, both as an institution and as individuals, to help make our community and our society a more equitable, welcoming, and just place for all. Statement from the DePaul Office of Institutional Diversity & Equity.