

## **CLASS MEETING TIME & LOCATION**

M/W: 10:10am – 11:40pm

Location: CDM 214

### **Instructor**

Doris C. Rusch

Office: CDM building, room 513

Office hours: Mon: 5:00-5:45pm; Wed. 2:00pm - 4:15pm

[drusch1@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:drusch1@cdm.depaul.edu)

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course approaches the study of computer games from three angles: first, as examples of media that can be analyzed and critiqued for their thematic elements, formal structure, plot and interactive appreciation; second, as complex software artifacts subject to technological constraints and the product of a labor-intensive design and implementation process; and three as a cultural artifact with behaviors and associations comparable in import to other popular art forms. Student will study the principles of game design and use them both to analyze existing games and to develop their own original game ideas. Students will also learn about the process of game development, starting from the game's narrative concept and moving to consideration of a game's components: the representation of the player, of artifacts, the virtual world that contains them and the interaction between them and the player.

**PREREQUISITES:** none

### **Learning Domain Description**

GAM 224, Intro to Videogame Design, is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts by developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning and through critical and/or creative activity to come to experience art with greater openness, insight, and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of literature, art, theatre, or music as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Students who take course in this domain choose three courses from such choices as literature, the visual arts, media arts, music, and theater. No more than two courses can be chosen from one department or program.

### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will be able to explain, in well-written prose, what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced.
2. Students will be able to comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
3. Students will be able to assess the formal aspects of their subject and put those qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings.
4. Students will be able to contextualize a work of art. They will be able to do so with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre. They will also

be able to contextualize a work of art in terms of contemporaneous aesthetic, social, or political concerns, discussing how these might shape the work's reception and how that reception might differ amongst various peoples and historical periods.

## **Writing Expectations**

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of 5-7 pages of writing for this course.

## **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.

## **REQUIRED MATERIALS**

- Salen, K. and Zimmerman, E. *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. MIT Press. 2004.
- Other relevant readings will be made available on D2L under "contents" throughout the term.

**RESOURCES:** As a student in the class, you have access to the CDM Gaming labs (see <http://defrag.depaul.edu> for details). If you're working on an assignment, you have priority for the use of the lab hardware and software. Student ID is required to use the labs.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

- Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes and participate in class activities as scheduled. Class will start promptly. I will take attendance. Arrival more than 10 minutes late for class will constitute an absence. Students are individually responsible for material they may have missed due to absence or tardiness.
- This class has a "no-screens" policy. While class is in session, your attention should not be divided between classroom activities and electronic devices, including laptops, smart phones, iPads, etc.
- Most assignments will be submitted to Dropbox on D2L. Do not submit assignments by email. All assignments including analysis papers are due before class on the due date. Analysis papers should be submitted in hard-copy form as well as electronically. Late analysis papers except for the last one will be accepted up to two days after the due date with a ½ grade point penalty per day. Other assignments will not be accepted late.

The design presentations must be made on the presentation date unless other arrangements are made in advance. 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). Papers must conform to the course guidelines on references and documentation. Use of

sources without attribution constitutes plagiarism, a serious violation of academic integrity. Consult the assignment handouts or the instructor if you have questions about how or what to document.

- Email: Email is the preferred means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. My email is drusch1@cdm.depaul.edu

## **CHANGES TO SYLLABUS**

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L or COLWeb and sent via email.

## **ORGANIZATION AND ASSESSMENT**

GAM 224 will meet twice a week. Generally, our 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, do the assigned reading and homework before class time.

Student progress will be assessed through a combination of 3 quizzes, 2 game analysis papers on a game of student's choice, 1 group game design project, and participation in the class.

- Game Analysis (2 papers) – 30%
- Design Project (1) – 30%
- Quizzes (2) – 20%
- Participation (including in-class activities) – 20%

## **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

## **GAME ANALYSIS PAPERS**

Each student will perform an in-depth analysis of a single video game title of his or her choice. The following will be required:

- Substantial play-time with the title, sufficient to master basic game play and to encounter most of the game's components. (Playing the game all the way through would be ideal but not practical for many titles.)
- Researching the game's community presence through FAQ files, walk-throughs, fan sites and other documents.
- Writing 2 game analysis papers. The first paper needs to be 3-4 pages long (, the second paper needs to be 4-5 pages long and have a different analysis focus than the first paper. Papers have to be turned in on the due date before class to dropbox on D2L. For details on Game Analysis assignment, see Game Analysis handout on D2L under "contents".

## DESIGN PROJECT

Students will work in teams on a game design project. Each team will present its project work to the class on designated days. Contribution to the project will be assessed via a peer-assessment protocol. For details on Design Project Assignments see Design Project handout on D2L under "contents".

## COLLEGE POLICIES

- 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](#).
- 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>
- 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: [cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment](http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment).
- 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 CDM, 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 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) at: [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

DePaul University  
Center for Students with Disabilities - Lewis Center 1420  
25 East Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, IL 60604-2287  
312.362.8002 main phone  
312.362.6544 fax  
312.724.6577 video relay

### TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Please note that the lesson plan is not part of the syllabus anymore and that some of these sessions and readings may change during the course. Please check the schedule on D2L for updates.

Jan 6 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Course intro; syllabus, lesson plan, assignments;</li> <li>- introductions: favorite games? background?</li> <li>- Interest in class – what do you expect?</li> </ul>	Jan 8 <sup>th</sup>	<p>The basics: What are games?</p> <p>Assigned: Game Analysis project</p> <p>Reading: Rules of Play, CH 7-10</p>

Jan 13 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Games as rule systems. Concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules and procedures</li> <li>- Emergence</li> <li>- Complexity</li> <li>- Meaningful play</li> </ul> <p>in-class: FLUXX alt.: in-class: dots and boxes</p> <p>Reading: Rules of Play, CH 11, 14, 15</p> <p>Watch: Frank Lantz on Games as Aesthetic Form: <a href="http://cmsw.mit.edu/video-frank-lantz-the-aesthetics-of-games/">http://cmsw.mit.edu/video-frank-lantz-the-aesthetics-of-games/</a></p>	Jan 15 <sup>th</sup>	<p>- in-class design activity: „Up the River“</p> <p>Concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Variables,</li> <li>- Simulation,</li> <li>- Iteration</li> </ul> <p>Due: Game Analysis Project, Milestone #1: submit game selection and preliminary thesis statement</p>
Jan 20 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Discussion of game selections and preliminary thesis statements in class</p> <p>Intro to game analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lecture on writing a game analysis</li> </ul> <p>Writing about games:</p> <p>Read assigned articles on D2L under “contents”.</p> <p>Reading: assigned texts (TBA) see D2L: “contents”</p>	Jan 22 <sup>nd</sup>	<p>Games as systems of conflict; Play and analyze Centipede;</p> <p>Game Design project kick off: team formation and game selection</p> <p>Due: Final Project, Milestone #1</p> <p>Reading: Rules of Play, CH 20, 21</p>
Jan 27 <sup>th</sup>	“Us vs. It” – balancing conflict for maximum drama	Jan 29 <sup>th</sup>	Chance and strategic skill, decisions, game theory

	<p>Due: Final Project, Milestone #2</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Soren Johnson: Theme ≠ Meaning</li> <li>- Challenges for Game Designers, pp.6-9; 28 - 35.</li> </ul>		<p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules of Play, CH 19</li> <li>- Challenges for game designers (pp. 83-92)</li> </ul>
Feb 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<p>How rules generate meaning: Games as simulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- abstraction</li> <li>- representation (MDA)</li> </ul> <p>in-class exercise: Sissyfight re-design Sissyfight</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules of Play, CH 27;</li> <li>- MDA framework (D2L, "Contents")</li> <li>- Frasca: simulation vs. narrative (D2L, "contents")</li> <li>- Juul: a certain level of abstraction (on D2L, "contents")</li> <li>- Bogost: Persuasive Games; CH on "procedural rhetoric" (on D2L, "contents")</li> </ul>	Feb 5 <sup>th</sup>	<p>In-class: group work on identifying core mechanics of source game for game design project; instructor feedback</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules of Play, CH 23</li> </ul>

Feb 10 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Games as Experiences for Players</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Play personalities and player types.</li> <li>- Caillois: play categories</li> <li>- Quiz #1</li> </ul> <p>Due: Game analysis #1 Due: Final Project Milestone #3</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules of Play, CH 22</li> <li>- Caillois: Man, Play, Games</li> <li>- Brown: play personalities (on D2L under "contents")</li> <li>- Bartle: players who suit Muds</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hcdfs.htm">http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hcdfs.htm</a></p>	Feb 12 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Experiential concepts in games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3 kinds of Immersion</li> <li>- Flow</li> <li>- (realism, spectacle, sensation)</li> </ul> <p>Assigned: Game analysis #2</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules of Play, CH 24</li> <li>- Hocking: Immersive Fidelity in Videogames</li> <li>- Murray: Immersion</li> <li>- Ernest Adams: Postmodernism and the 3 types of immersion</li> <li>- Csikszentmihalyi: Flow</li> <li>- King &amp; Krzywinska: spectacle, realism, sensation (D2L, "contents") (optional)</li> </ul>



Feb 17 <sup>th</sup>	In-class work on Final Project redesign; instructor feedback	Feb 19 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Games and narrative experiences; (ludology vs. narratology) Embedded and emergent narrative; New trends in narrative game design.</p> <p>Games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Zork</li> <li>- Myst</li> <li>- Gone Home</li> <li>- Dear Esther</li> <li>- Depression Quest</li> <li>- Heavy Rain</li> </ul> <p>Due: Game analysis #2, thesis statement</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jenkins: narrative architecture</li> </ul>

Feb 24 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Role playing / enacting characters;</p> <p>in-class exercise: 100 Zombies</p> <p>Due: Game analysis #1, rewrite (only for papers which received C- or lower)</p> <p>Due: Final Project Milestone #4</p> <p>- Rules of Play, CH 26</p> <p>- Rusch / König: Barthes revisited (on D2L, "contents")</p>	Feb 26 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Game culture: Gender in games; Imagery, Symbolism and Media</p> <p>Games for change</p> <p>Play "Buffalo" from Tiltfactor laboratory</p>
Mar 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<p>Values @ Play card game exercise</p>	Mar 5 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Personal Games Movement</p> <p>Quiz #2</p>
Mar 10 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Philosophical Games</p> <p>Reading: Rules of Play, CH 29 &amp; 30</p> <p>Due: Game analysis #2</p> <p>Reading: Rules of Play, CH 31 &amp; 33</p>	Mar 12 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Game Development Culture: "Indie Game: the Movie"</p>

<p>Mar 17<sup>th</sup> 11:45 AM- 02:00 PM</p> <p>March 16th submit ppt to D2L</p>	<p>Presentations for Game Design project,</p> <p>Due: Final Project #5: concept doc &amp; presentation; peer evaluation form</p>		









