GAM 440: Games with a Purpose Bootcamp

Spring 2019
Thurs, 1:30 PM—4:45 PM
Daley Building, Rm 207

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Office Hours: Mon/Wed, 1:30-3:00

Overview

This game design bootcamp focuses on the rapid yet deliberate creation of short games with a purpose beyond entertainment. Every two weeks, students are expected to deliver a completed game project that addresses a real-life issue, has a clear statement of intent and uses the specific properties of games as a medium to achieve its declared purpose.

Course Description

Games can do a lot more than entertain, they can educate people, present arguments, simulate real situations, change behaviors, subliminally influence, and much else besides. This course is an introduction to the world of serious and meaningful play, where we will look at the history of games in education and the military, common design strategies, and many examples that implement these ideas in both spectacular and spectacularly bad ways. Over the quarter, students will work in small teams to develop a serious game with one of our partnering NGOs (non-governmental organization), such as the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (https://www.caarpr.org/), Dream On Education (https://www.dreamoneducation.org/), South Suburban Community Wellness Program, and P.R.E.T.T.Y. (http://realprettygirls.org/).

Objectives

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

- Describe the field, potential, and limits of Games with a Purpose
- Brainstorm original visions for games that are in scope with available resources
- Leverage the affordances of games to intentionally evoke specific emotions and experiences, purposefully communicate ideas, and design games that have a social impact
- Demonstrate effective communication with stakeholders, including developing a vision for the game, gathering the necessary research and background materials, and finding creative and impactful solutions to the problem statements posed by stakeholders
- Conceptualize, prototype, playtest, and evaluate GWAPs and their potential impact in regard to their stated purposes.

D2L & Materials

There are no textbooks assigned for this course, but there are several readings and games involved.

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.

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.

Participation..10%
Game Analysis #1 & #2............................10%
In-class Presentations..............................10%
Initial Prototype..10%
Alpha Prototype...25%
Beta Prototype...25%
Conference Proposal.................................10%

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

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, and online postings.

In addition to general participation, this course involves working a community partner to develop a game that meets their specific needs. In addition to regular class time, you will need to find time to check in weekly with the liaison from your organization.

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

Much of the material for this course is primarily available online for this course, and the use of laptops is permitted in this course. However, laptops are also an inevitable distraction for even the most well intentioned person. When you don't need a laptop for a specific purpose, such as taking notes or reading a pdf, I ask that you close them down. If you are using your laptop for other purposes, I will ask that you put it away for the remainder of the class.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

Students are encouraged to follow the official calendar at:
https://academics.depaul.edu/calendar/Pages/default.aspx

March 30th, Begin Spring Quarter Classes
April 5th, Last day to add (or swap) classes
April 12th, Last day to drop classes with no penalty
April 19th-21st, Easter Holiday – University officially closed
May 17th, Last day to withdraw from Spring classes
May 27th, Memorial Day, University officially closed
June 7th, End of Spring Quarter Classes
June 8th, Spring quarter exams
June 14th, End of Spring quarter 2019
June 21st, Spring grades due

Course Outline

Please note: This lesson plan and assignments are liable to change.

Week 1: Get into the mindset...   April 4ᵗʰ

Games with a purpose collects a complex group of perspectives on game design that all aim at something other than fun. For our first session we're going to explore some of the big ideas and questions surrounding this approach.

Watch:

> Eric Zimmerman, Games 4 Change Keynote
> John Hunter, "Teaching with the World Peace Game,"
> Ian Bogost, "Serious Games"
> Miguel Sicart, "Play Ethics"

Read:

> Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum, "Uncovering Values at Play"
> Doris Rusch, "Designing with Purpose and Meaning"

Due: Survey of community partner teams

Week 2: Play some games...   April 11ᵗʰ

You may have played a couple of serious games before, but it is important to get a sense of the broad range of techniques that are already being used. In this class we're going to talk about what works and what doesn't in several examples, how we analyze their effectiveness, and how we might design games in a better way.

Read:

> Konstantin Mitgutsch and Narda Alvarado, "Purposeful by Design"

Play:

> Against All Odds (Flash)
> *Quandry* (HTML5 / Mobile)
> The Cat and the Coup (Windows / Mac)
> *I-Civics* (HTML5)
> *Peacemaker* (Mobile / Mac)
> McDonalds Game (Flash)
> Re-Mission (Flash)
> *Spent* (HTML5)
> Slicing Fractions 2 ($3.99, Mobile)
> *FoldIt* (Windows/Mac)

Due: Game Analysis Post #1

Week 3: Decide on an approach...   April 18th

This week you'll be meeting with the NGO group that you'll be partnering with for the rest of the quarter. You'll be listening to their goals, needs, and the audience they want to reach, while you will be helping them to understand how games might be a good way to achieve those needs. You should come prepared by looking at the organization's website and the site-grid description of the projects. Generate a couple of specific ideas with your group beforehand. The readings this week will hone in on specific design techniques that you can draw from.

Read:
> Jonathan Belman and Mary Flanagan, "Designing Games to Foster Empathy"
> Granic et al. "The Benefits of Playing Video Games"
> James Paul Gee and Elizabeth Hayes, "Nurturing Affinity Spaces and Game-Based Learning"

Watch:
> Jesse Schell, "Design Outside the Box"

Week 4: Pitch an Idea...   April 25th

For this class you'll use the material and plan from your community partner to develop a round of pitches and that we'll evaluate. It is important to have a lot of diversity at this stage, so be inventive and brainstorm a wide range of approaches. Think of various genres, scales, perspectives, and platforms that you might use. In the second half of class we'll meet with a research librarian who will show you some of the skills you'll need to take your games to the next step.

Read:
> Material provided by your community partner

Due: In-class Pitches

Week 5: Do Some Research...   May 2nd

Designing a serious game depends on your knowledge and understanding of the subject matter you're working on. Based on your work with the research librarian you'll pick a few specific articles to deepen your project. We'll discuss these articles in class, and each team will share a prototype based on one of their pitches from last week that the class will discuss and help refine.

Read:
> Two academic articles on your subject matter

Due: **Initial prototype**
Research presentation

Week 6: Present your prototype...   May 9th

Your research partners will be visiting class this week to see the progress that you've made on your prototypes so far and to offer feedback on the direction. Come ready with a version of the game you want to show them, a presentation that shows what you've designed and why, and questions that you plan to ask.

     No readings

Due: **Alpha prototype**

Week 7: Update your design...   May 16th

At this point your approach to design should be locked in, and you can now look at and borrow from other designers who are using the same methods. There are thousands of serious games out there to learn from, and this week you will begin learning how to find those games yourself and extrapolate lessons from them.

Play: Explore the Serious Play Conference awards between 2014-19, choose 3 that are similar to your project. Write another post that highlights the effective elements of those game that you want to borrow, and the ineffective parts you want to avoid.

Due: Game Analysis Post #2

Week 8: Update your research...   May 23th

As you hone in on your game, it is important to keep your research and communicative goals clearly in mind. As part of practicing your ability to reflect on your process, I want you to take a look at the conference proceedings of the meaningful play conference. In class we'll reflect on the kind of lessons that have come out of the design process that might help other scholars and designers. We will also look at scientific ways to measure the effectiveness of games.

Read: Three articles from the 2016 Meaningful play conference proceedings (your choice)

Week 9: Playtest your prototype…   June 30th

During this class session we will have outside playtesters come in to explore your game. You are encouraged to work with your community group to organize a playtest with their intended audience at either DePaul or elsewhere.

Due: **Complete CITI training**
         Playtest plan

Week 10: Decide on next steps…   June 6th

This week you will be handing off the finished prototype to your community partner, getting feedback from them on the process, and deciding on the next steps you would like to take. You should outline further design steps you would take to improve the game, as well as decide on any conferences you would like to submit the game to.

Due: Beta Build

Week 11:   June 13th
Due: Conference Proposal