



GAM 312-602: Playtesting

SQ 2020 :: online, with sporadic remote-synchronous meetings M: 1:30 - 4:45 PM



Instructor Info

Dr. Michael A. DeAnda
Email: mdeanda@depaul.edu
Tel: 312.362.1244

Office Hours: W 1:30-5 PM or by
appointment
Location: Zoom

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

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

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

- 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
 - A standard deck of cards (52 or 54 with jokers)
- Readings will be posted on D2L in the “Content” section.



Course Structure

Due to COVID-19, DePaul University has moved Spring Quarter classes online.

Self-guided learning

Most of this class will be *self-guided*, running remote-asynchronously with scheduled readings, videos, and links to games posted online. The timeline and major deadlines for this course are outlined on the schedule posted on the course website (<http://deandacourses.weebly.com/playtesting.html>) that includes weekly readings, games, and assignments. All discussion posts and submissions should be submitted on D2L.

Consultations

Sporadic web meetings are scheduled throughout the course as remote-synchronous meetings with the instructor. These meetings will occur during the allotted course time (M 1:30-4:45 PM) via [Zoom](#) (which you should have access to using your DePaul credentials). This time will be divided among teams to allow each team to discuss their project with the instructor.



Grading Breakdown

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.

Weekly Discussion	10%
Game Prototypes (3)	15%
Playtesting Methodologies (3)	30%
Peer Review (3)	15%
Playtesting Reports (2)	20%
Final Submission	10%

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

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.

Rapid Prototyping, Playtesting, and Analyzing Cycles

Over the quarter, you will be rapidly developing games based on predetermined prompts. These are not expected to be polished games. From these games you will be developing methodologies for playtesting the game, playtesting, and writing playtesting reports.

IRB Training

You will complete the “Faculty/Staff/Outside Collaborators/Students” training program of the CITI program. You have access to this training through DePaul. The training will require you to complete 17 modules, which is about 6 hours. For more information, visit: <https://offices.depaul.edu/research-services/research-protections/irb/training/Pages/default.aspx>

Weekly Participation

In place of class discussions, participation grades will be awarded based on your contributions to *Weekly Discussions* and *Course Terminology*.

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.



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

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.

Makeup Work: Students are allowed to resubmit work based on feedback for regrading. Resubmissions are allowed only if a student submitted an assignment by the due date. The student will submit a brief document addressing how they incorporated feedback from the initial assignment along with the iterated assignment. All work considered for regrading must be submitted by Week 10.

Extra credit will be given at the instructor’s discretion, this usually involves attending a design or games related lecture and writing a reflection.



Academic Integrity

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

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 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

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

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

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 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.

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).

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). 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). 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.