



# GAM 341: Introduction to Level Design

W 2020 :: M 5:45-9 PM, online synchronous



## Instructor Info

Dr. Michael A. DeAnda

Call me: "Dr. DeAnda"

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

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

Office Hours: MW 2:30- 4 PM or by appointment

Location: Zoom

**Regarding email communication:** I will usually respond to emails within a few hours between 9 AM and 5 PM Monday through Friday. I do not check emails on weekends.



## Course Description

Level design is the art of creating believable environments, stages and missions for video games. This course explores topics including architecture, flow, pacing and puzzles. Using a 3D level editor, students will investigate technical design issues including the construction, texturing, lighting and scripting of modern game levels. The roles, duties and challenges of the level designer will also be discussed. PREREQUISITE(S): GAM 245



## Course Learning Outcomes

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

- layout a map with notation of play flow, interactions, and art needs.
- design meaningful interactions in gameplay.
- create a landscape and landscape materials.
- create a complete playable level including bsp, static meshes, materials, lighting, and interactions.



## 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
- Unity v 2019.4.17f1
- Photoshop or Image manipulator
- Additional readings will be posted on D2L in the “Content” section. Students are expected to apply these to weekly discussions.



## Course Structure

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### Self-guided learning

Most of this class will be *self-guided*, several pre-recorded lectures covering the technical aspects of Unity will be posted on D2L. Synchronous meetings will cover principles of level design through lectures and group discussion. Students are expected to have watched lectures and prepared questions for synchronous meetings, participate weekly critiques on discussion boards and Discord, and submit all work through D2L.

### Synchronous Meetings

Students will have access to the Zoom meetings using their DePaul University credentials to login. Scheduled meetings will be recorded and posted to D2L.

I am not requiring you to have or use a webcam for this class, but if you do have one, I would greatly appreciate it if you turned it on during our course meetings. Talking to a screen of black boxes with names is alienating and more exhausting.



## 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, homework, and gameplay 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.

Syllabus Quiz	*
Participation & feedback	30%
Level 1 analysis	10%
Game level blueprint	10%
Checkpoints	40%
Final level design submission	10%

\*Students must earn a 100% on the *Syllabus Quiz* on D2L before they are eligible to start earning points for the course. This quiz may be taken as many times as necessary.

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 on the indicated date at the beginning of class.** Below is a brief summary of each assignment. More detailed instructions will be provided on assignment sheets on D2L.

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.

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

### **Participation & Feedback**

Goodwill and participation in class. This means focus, critiquing, posting resources you find, engaging on the forums and discord, and helping others find solutions. Help to build a good learning ecology and you too will learn better. Make sure you are on the class Discord. Critiques will be held weekly via D2L discussion boards. You will be expected to post your weekly project and provide feedback to others. This is a great opportunity to ask questions and seek help from others on parts of your level.

### **Level Analysis**

Students will analyze the first level of a sample of games to dissect the components of gameplay that contribute to the design of the level.

### **Major Project**

GAM 341 focuses on learning to build levels using the Unity game engine tools. Students begin making basic spaces, move on into interaction design, and end with the development of a polished space with an experiential flow to it.

We will be focusing on one level project which will be composed of multiple smaller steps (checkpoints) marked by particular tasks in the level design pipeline. The “blueprint” is the first of these tasks in which students will outline their level. The class is project based with weekly deliverables and a focus on learning and building skill with the toolset. Levels we create will be rough block-outs as we’re not focusing on highly polished art/environment pieces.



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

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**Late work** will receive a 10% penalty for every course meeting following the due date/time. *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 for regrading. 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 the beginning of Week 10. If the original submission was late, the resubmission will only be eligible for the number of total points possible minus any late penalties (if an assignment was submitted 2 course meetings late, a resubmission may receive up to 80%).

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



## Course Schedule

Additionally, you should complete your weekly discussion assignments and watch any lecture videos posted on D2L.

Week	Topic	Submit/Complete
Week 1 1/4	What is level design?	Syllabus quiz  Level Analysis <b>due 1/11</b>
Week 2 1/11	Planning level design & "legibility"	Major project overview Post for feedback 1/19 Iteration <b>due 1/25</b>
Week 3 1/18	<b>No meeting, MLK Day</b>	Install: Unity, Maya, & Photoshop
Week 4 1/25	Intro to Unity & Level modeling	Level blockouts
Week 5 2/1	Scripting, boundaries: triggers, proximity interactions, kill boxes	core mechanic, movement, obstacles, kill boxes, goals
Week 6 2/8	Simple AI	Enemy movement and moving platforms.
Week 7 2/15	Sequences	Triggered brief cut scenes. Post video to D2L.
Week 8 2/22	UI & feedback	Player UI/feedback, end game conditions.
Week 9 3/1	Polishing	Build game for in-class playtesting (3/8)
Week 10 3/8	Playtesting week in class	Polish and implement feedback
Finals 3/15		Submit your recorded level design & postmortem.



## 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.

### Idea Realization Lab (IRL)

The Idea Realization Lab is a resource available to the entire DePaul University community, from students to alumni, faculty, and staff. They provide machines, tools, and materials at no cost, and offer workshops to teach visitors how to use the equipment safely. Their goal is to foster a spirit of collaboration and to promote creativity across the campus and throughout the city of Chicago.

I encourage you to make use of the IRL, including prototyping your design and getting a consultation from the staff there. This space is a great resource for all levels of the design and development process. Visit <http://irl.depaul.edu/> for more information.

Contact Info:

Email: [idearealizationlabdpu@gmail.com](mailto:idearealizationlabdpu@gmail.com)

Phone: (312) 362-1451

Location:

Room 310

14 E Jackson Blvd

### 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)  
Or visit their [Website](#)

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

#### Lincoln Park Campus

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



fax: (312) 362-6544  
tty: (773) 325-7296

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.



## **Resources for Students in Need of Support**

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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.

## **DEPAUL STUDENT COUNSELING**

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.**

## **OFFICE OF HEALTH PROMOTION AND WELLNESS**

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 run by trans people for trans people.

Phone: 877-565-8860