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## GAM 420 – 397: Creative Computation

Autumn 2023-24

Course Modality: Course meets W 5:45PM - 9:00PM  
Sections 701T, 703 in 14EAS 00505 at Loop Campus  
Section 730 Online: Sync-Classroom link

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### Instructor Info

Instructor: Richard Wetzel (he/him)

Office: Daley 205D

Phone: 312-362-6955

Email: [richard.wetzel@depaul.edu](mailto:richard.wetzel@depaul.edu)

Office Hours: W 10.30am-12pm (in person or <https://depaul.zoom.us/my/richardwetzel>)

Communication: If you have a question that might be relevant for your classmates (and most questions will be), please ask in the discussion board on D2L. For other requests, email is the best way to reach me, and I will respond within 48 hours. I also aim to give you feedback on assignments within a week, and if that changes, I will let you know.

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### Course Description

Students are introduced to the affordances of computers and digital technology as a medium using foundational texts from the discipline of digital media while being introduced to programming. The course teaches students to discover how to effectively and creatively communicate their ideas using accessible coding environments and engines and challenges them to build playful, interactive applications.

Note: This course is offered as GAM 420 as well as GAM 397.

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### Recommended Materials

McCarthy, Lauren, Casey Reas, and Ben Fry. Getting Started with P5.js: Making Interactive Graphics in JavaScript and Processing. 1st edition. San Francisco, CA: Make Community, LLC, 2015.

Start learning here! – YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRqwX-V7Uu6Zy51Q-x9tMWlv9cueOFTFA>

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## Learning Outcomes

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

- Program simple playful applications
  - Analyze, debug, and refactor your own and third party code
  - Apply core programming concepts to solve algorithmic problems
  - Examine, critique, and contextualize digital media texts
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## Class Policies

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### Course Requirements

The course has no formal requirements. You are expected to come with an open mind and interest in the course topic. There is no assumption that you already have pre-existing experience in programming; we will start from zero.

The course is shared between undergraduate and graduate students. The latter will need to do additional assessments and/or produce higher quality work.

We will regularly have a meta discussion about the course. These discussions will e.g., relate to specific topics that should be covered, pace of the course, content of assignments and their grading, and other course modalities. In short, you as individuals and cohort will be able to shape the course so that it matches your needs and interests. However, this requires that you actively participate in these discussions and reflect on your own learning and learning requirements.

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### Changes to the Syllabus

This class will be shaped based on your participation, input, and interests. This means that not only the lesson plan but also this syllabus will be adapted during the term. We will discuss any changes during class, and the new syllabus will be uploaded to D2L, and announced via email.

This is syllabus version 0.9.

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### Use of AI

Generative AI tools are trained on existing texts, algorithms, and models to generate content like writing, images, and videos based on prompts from users. ChatGPT, Midjourney, Google Bard, and DALL-E are examples of generative AI tools. Please refrain from using generative AI in this course for any purpose. We will be developing skills that are important to practice on your own and using generative AI may inhibit development, practice, or understanding of those skills. During class, we will discuss how and why generative AI may disrupt your learning.

If you're unsure if a specific tool makes use of AI, or if a specific tool is permitted for use on assignments in this course, please contact me. Attempting to pass off AI-generated work as your own will violate [DePaul's Academic Integrity Policy](#).

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### Attendance & Participation

It is highly recommended to attend every class. However, things do come up. If you cannot attend a class, email the instructor before class starts. You do not need to provide personal

details about your reasons. It is however your responsibility to make up for anything that you missed.

If you are sick, please do not attend class.

If you repeatedly think your time would be spend better by not showing up to class, please contact me. Feedback on how class could be improved are always welcome!

During class, please be respectful towards your classmates and myself. Please refrain from doing non-class related things on your computer or mobile phone, excessively chatting while others are talking, making derogatory jokes, etc. Overall, be nice and use common sense.

The course will have people participating in person and others via Zoom. This puts an extra strain on all involved, so take extra care considering this modality. If you are on Zoom, you are encouraged to activate your camera.

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## Late Work

It is recommended that you submit your assignments on time as they build on each other, and otherwise you might fall further behind. However, sometimes missing a deadline is unavoidable. In such a case, email me as soon as you realize you will not be able to submit on time. You do not need to provide personal details about your reasons. You usually will be allowed to submit your work up to one week late. However, no guarantee for timely marking and/or feedback can be given.

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## Revision

You can resubmit each of your programming assignments once (except for the final one) in order to improve your grade. Contact me beforehand to negotiate conditions and deadlines. No revisions will be accepted after week 8.

## Assignments

There are two broad types of assignments in this class:

- A. Programming assignments
  1. 4 weekly exercises to get you in the habit of solving programming problems with a very constrained scope.
  2. A self-chosen project due in week 6 (small scope).
  3. A self-chosen project due in finals week (medium scope).
- B. Text assignments
  1. A group-based topic workshop with staggered due dates for each group
  2. Topic essay due two weeks after topic workshop (only for GAM 420)

The programming assignments consist of a code submission via D2L and accompanying “developer diaries” outlining your process, issues you encountered, and a personal reflection.

The topic workshop will see groups organizing a discussion with their classmates around a selected topic. The essay will further elaborate on the topic and reflect on the workshop.

Details of all assignments will be discussed in class, and you will find instructions on D2L.

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## Grading

Assignments of type A.1 are graded as pass/fail. Each pass will be worth 5 points for 20 points in total.

Assignment A.2 will be worth 25 points. The sole grading criteria is the developer diary.

Assignment A.3 will be worth 55 points. Grading criteria are creativity and complexity of the result (10 points), appropriate use of coding paradigms and code quality (15 points), and the developer diary (30 points).

Assignment B.1 will be worth 40 points. Grading criteria are preparation of workshop (10 points), and execution of workshop (30 points).

Assignment B.2 will be worth 30 points. Grading criteria are clarity of writing (10 points), depth of content (10 points), and workshop reflection (10 points).

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## Grading Scale

Students taking GAM 397 will be able to gain a total of 140 points.

Students taking GAM 420 can gain a maximum 170 points.

Achieved points will be normalized to 100 and the following grading scale will be applied:

A	93-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-92	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	66-69
B-	80-82	F	0-65

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## Course Schedule

The course schedule can be divided roughly into two parts for the programming aspects. In the first 6 weeks of class we will cover the basics of programming by using p5.js (<https://p5js.org/>). The remaining 4 weeks we will focus on your final projects and dive into some deeper programming topics.

Throughout the term we will also be discussing various digital media texts. Starting with week 6 student groups will organize topic workshops each week.

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## University Policies & Resources

### COVID-19 Updates

For the latest news and resources, please visit [DePaul's response to COVID-19 page](#).

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### 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.

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## Library Resources

The DePaul University Library (<https://library.depaul.edu>) provides access to authoritative information sources, such as scholarly articles, journals, and books, primary sources, and research databases. Research help is available daily in-person and via chat, email, phone, or text. You may also make an appointment (in-person, phone, or Zoom) with a librarian to discuss your research projects.

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## Center for Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success. There are two office locations:

Loop Campus - Lewis Center #1420 - (312) 362-8002

Lincoln Park Campus - Student Center #370 - (773) 325-1677

Students can also email the office at [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu)

Students who are registered with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact me privately to discuss how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use in this course. This is best done early in the term. Our conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

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## University Counseling & Psychological Services

[University Counseling & Psychological Services](#) (UCAPS) helps remove barriers to learning and support academic success by providing free, goal-focused, collaborative, short-term, confidential, individual, and group counseling services for DePaul's students. UCAPS has a diverse multi-disciplinary staff that includes licensed mental health professionals in psychology, counseling, and social work.

Students\* can talk to a therapist or schedule a brief screening and consultation appointment in the following ways:

- To speak directly to a therapist 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, students should call 773-325-CARE (2273) and Press "1" when prompted.
- To schedule a brief screening and consultation (BSC) appointment, students should call 773-325-CARE (2273) during regular business hours and Press "2" when prompted.
- Students can visit [go.depaul.edu/ucaps](http://go.depaul.edu/ucaps) and click the '[Schedule a Consultation](#)' button to use online scheduling for a Brief Screening & Consultation (BSC) appointment. Online scheduling is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. *All BSCs scheduled online are for phone appointments. To schedule an in-person or telehealth BSC, please call 773-325-CARE (2273) and Press "2" when prompted.*

\*Services are provided based on student eligibility. For full eligibility details please visit [go.depaul.edu/ucaps](http://go.depaul.edu/ucaps).

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## The 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.

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## Name & Pronouns

I will gladly address you by the name and pronouns that you indicate. Please advise me of your name and/or your pronouns early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate notes in my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a first name that differs from their legal name, and they may also update their gender and gender pronouns. If a new name is identified, it will display as a “preferred name” in University-related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal necessity. For more information and instructions on how to make these updates, please see the LGBTQIA Resource Center’s [Personal Information Change](#) resources and the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at [policies.depaul.edu](http://policies.depaul.edu).

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## Dean of Students

The [Dean of Students Office \(DOS\)](#) promotes student learning and ethical decision making in an inclusive and validating 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.

The Dean of Students Office is primarily responsible for administering and adjudicating violations of the Code of Student Responsibility at DePaul University. Additionally, the office provides the administrative withdrawal and absence notification process, and can help students identify campus and community resources in times of personal and/or family crises and medical emergencies.

You can contact the Dean of Students Office by calling (773) 325-7290 or emailing [deanofstudents@depaul.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@depaul.edu). In cases of emergency, please call the Department of Public Safety at (773) 325-7777.

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## Sexual & 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 may 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) and/or the Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 312-362-8970 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 <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.

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## **Basic Needs**

Access to nutritious food and reliable housing are factors that influence many students' ability to succeed in the classroom and beyond. However, students facing food or housing insecurities may be hesitant to call attention to their ongoing struggles. DePaul University is committed to and cares about all students. To help you manage personal challenges and basic needs security, the university offers several resources. Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office for support: by calling (773) 325-7290 or emailing [deanofstudents@depaul.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@depaul.edu). You can also contact [Elizabeth Ann Seton Food Pantry and Sandwich Kitchen](#) and the [Dax Program](#) (Chicago - Depaul; email: [emily.edwards@depaulusa.org](mailto:emily.edwards@depaulusa.org); phone: (312) 362-7931 for support. The Center for Access and Attainment has also created [a guide for Food and Housing Resources](#) that you can review.

If you are comfortable doing so, please also let me know about these challenges, so that I can help you access resources.