

# Syllabus Experimental Games

BA Digital Games 4th Semester, ST 2020

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The theme of this Experimental Games Project is „Metamorphosis“ (Coming from meta (« after») and from morph (« form »), Transformation, change from one form to another). This term, which originates from biology, describes the process of an organism's development after birth or hatching and the sometimes dramatic morphological changes caused by cell growth. While the scientific interpretation of the term is precise, in other disciplines it is softened and redefined from their perspectives. Most metamorphoses hide an allegorical meaning.

So what is an experiment in the context of digital games? While the traditional connotation of an (academic) experiment relates to a procedure carried out to verify, refute, or validate a hypothesis, the artistic experiment (and we consider this project more or less related to this field) aims for innovation and refuses reproducibility by intention. We are striving for processes with open outcomes! Encourage you to search for new expressions, new ways of interaction, unseen aesthetics and (re)discovery of technology. Artistic experiments can be seen as fundamental research that expand the boundaries of „digital games“ by interrogating and provoking our common understanding of them. Whether you happen to fall short by your own standards or by those of the audience, failure is a natural part of experimentation and should not be seen as entirely negative -- through experimental failure we gain experience.

## PROCEDURE

Students will develop their projects in groups of 3 to 5 people. Each group will nominate a project manager at the start of the project. She or he is the central contact person for the

above-mentioned instructors, but not necessarily the spokesperson when it comes to the presentation of the project (or the recording of presentations). The project will be kicked off on April 1st, 2020 and conclude with a final presentation to the CGL community on May 20th, 2020. As a result, we expect a traceable development process that leads to an (experimental) prototype.

Against the background of the current Corona crisis and the associated necessity to avoid physical meetings of all participants, this project will be realized completely in virtual co-operation - also the supervision by the teachers will take place by means of digital tools.

## **DISTANCE LEARNING TOOLS & PROJECT ORGANIZATION**

CGL Spaces >> <https://spaces.colognegamelab.de/> is the central platform for the project organization on the top level. You will find all important informations on BA4 - ST20 - Experimental Games - this is the space operated by the professors. Each project team has to create a CGL space named "BA4 – ST20 – Experimental Games – Project Name". Please organize your Space into sub-categories and make sure that you embed your documents (clips, PDF's, Pictures etc). Used for sharing files, presentations, and finalized documents.

Discord >> CGL-Bachelor2018 <https://discord.gg/fUNGfb3> can be used for instant communication and visible coordination between the students. Use the official project channels and create your own channels for side conversations related to the project. If you're looking to get someone's attention, please use Discord as a first port of call. This lets the person know you need them for something quickly and they can choose to pick up there and then or get back shortly after. Keep any personal and non-project related communications on other channels. Example: posting materials for review, asking a project direction question, updating your team with quick progress, getting feedback, and resolving problems.

Zoom >> <https://zoom.us/> used for voice and video conferencing, as well as screen sharing and recording presentations. Always use headphones, it improves the voice quality and avoids feedback loops. Switch off video if you're on a bad connection to save bandwidth. Example: Kickoffs, milestone presentations, mentoring sessions, morning standups, team meetings.

E-Mail >> The project coordinators will use email to contact you in regards of top-level communication (like postponement of dates or general organizational questions). The mails will also be published on BA4 - ST20 - Experimental Games in Spaces.

## COURSE STRUCTURE

### **April 01, 2020**

Syllabus and a Kick Off Video will be released via CGL Spaces. During the first week the project participants are asked to develop first ideas and form teams. Please contact the professors for feedback or if you have any questions regarding your current situation.

### **April 08, 2020**

The first pitch will be a recorded video (max. 5 min) of your game concept

- A working title and names of all team members
- The description of the general idea
- The art and sound direction
- The technical choices
- A project plan

Please provide the video until April 08, 12 am on your project space. (please embed links to youtube or vimeo) The professors (and students) will provide their comments in the context of your project space. You will be invited to schedule additional mentorings via Zoom.

### **April 14, 10.00-12.00h am + 2.00-4.00h pm CET**

Mandatory Mentoring Scession (15-20 min per group) via Zoom with Cécile le Prado and Björn Bartholdy. The order and time slots will be announced after the submission of the first pitches.

### **April 29, 2020, 10.00h am CET**

The intermediate Presentation will be a Zoom conference with all students and professors. Please provide your pitch as a video of max. 5 min. until April 28, 10 pm CET on your project space (links to youtube or vimeo).

- A Short recap of the game idea
- An overview of the progress in term of art, programming, design and sound
- A demo of the current prototype
- Project plan for the remaining time

The clip will be shown in the context of the presentation, followed by a live commenting and feedback round with your fellow students and professors.

### **May 05, 10.00-12.00h am + 2.00-4.00h pm CET**

Mandatory Mentoring Scession (15-20 min per group) via Zoom with Cécile le Prado and Björn Bartholdy. The order and time slots will be announced after the submission of the

first pitches.

**May 19, 9.45-13.00h am CET**

The Final Presentation will again be a Zoom conference with all students and professors. Please provide your pitch as a video of max. 5 min. until April 18, 10 pm CET on your project space (links to youtube or vimeo).

- A short recap of the game concept
- Breakdown of the development process
- The final version of your demo
- Final version of the evaluation protocol
- Your learnings going through this project

The clip will be shown in the context of the presentation, followed by a final critique and feedback round with your fellow students and professors.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

On successful completion of the the „Experimental Games“ project enables students to:

- Expand their knowledge of the game development process – from conception (pitching and design to production, post-production and presentation
- Adapt the design, art, sound and programming method to the constraint of experimental game
- Use an experimental approach during the game design and development process as well as generate artwork and practice programming at an advanced level
- Upgrade basic aspects of project management and apply those to the development process
- Generate project documentation
- Furthermore, through collaboration , students will develop their team skills and learn how to find their specific position within a team.

## GRADING

The collaborative project will be graded. The final project grade for each participant consists of the following subgrades for group work and individual contributions:

—> Group Grades: 70%

—> Intermediate Presentation: 10%

Formal Criteria: design, structure, time management of presentation; Content Criteria: game design, game arts, game programming, consideration of target audience, originality and relevance with regard to the theme, project plan.

—> Final Presentation: 10%

Formal Criteria: design, structure, time management of presentation; Content Criteria: game design, game arts, game programming, consideration of target audience, originality and relevance with regard to the theme, reflection on development process including a detailed project plan.

—> Game: 50% - Criteria: game design, game arts, game programming; originality and relevance to the theme "Experimental Games."

—> Group Documentation: Pass/No Pass

Documentation must be submitted by June 09, 2020. It has to include the following elements that will be published on the CGL project archive/website: project type; production year; platform; genre; tagline; team members; "About" (a descriptive text of max 1000 characters); thumbnail image for menu; 5-10 images (from concept art to final game); game-play video (youtube/vimeo); optional link to prototype. Please send the documentation to: judith (jule) Abend - ja@colognegamelab.de

—> Individual Grade: 30%

Each student has to write a short documentation on the development process, reflecting her or his work and contribution to the team project (text, artwork, video, code, prototypes). This has to be posted in the group project space - deadline is June 09, 2020.

—> Game Design Criteria: Conceptual originality of the approach, design and application of the core game mechanics, conceptual design of character, objects and game-levels.

—> Game Arts & Sound Design Criteria: Transparent and traceable design process. Design Quality: Does the result show a consistent and discrete design concept? Convincing use of aesthetic approach in regard to the given task? Technical Quality: Appropriate use of tools (analog +

digital), details and over all finish.

--> Game Programming Criteria: Conceptual approach to technical realization of the game, quality of the written code (documentation!), functionality of the game prototype.

--> Game Studies: Unity of artistic vision as expressed in the game prototype; quality of analytic and artistic self-reflection with regard to the position of the game project / prototype within game history and contemporary culture as expressed in the group presentations and the individual blog entries.

Please note that in order to pass the module you have to pass each individual part, i.e., you have to achieve at least a sufficient grade (4) in all graded parts and you must pass the documentation portion.