The Art & Science of Interactive Games

FULLY ONLINE COURSE

Overview

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to critically thinking about 3 components of the video game experience: the art (or design elements), the science (the technical and production processes involved in creating a game), and the interactive (what differentiates video and computer games from other forms of visual media). We will look at 60 years of video game production, as well as explore the early elements which contributed to the medium's inception.

On the broader scope, this course should help you look past the surface properties of the games you enjoy, and delve deeper into the design and mechanics behind what makes a "successful" and engaging product. This class should help you expand your ability to:

Think critically.

Develop ideas and interact with you fellow students.

Articulate meaning and concepts behind your own likes and dislikes towards interactive gaming.

Understand the place that video and computer gaming has within social, ethical, and contextual spheres.

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This class is for all students, including beginners and non-majors.

Content

This course is broken up into three ares of academic exploration, and you will be assessed accordingly:

Game Design (50%) - Methods, aesthetics, processes of production, concepts, builds, art styles. Your assignments will be pulled from this area of study.

Theory (25%) - Psychological interpretation, sociological reference, and the role of the player. Your forum posts will mostly deal with these topics.

History and Trends (25%) - The past, present, and future of this industry. You'll reference this material throughout all of your lessons, forums, and assignments.

Materials

Reading: There is no required textbook from this class.

Course Games: We will be playing games which you will need to purchase. You can expect to spend between $50-$70 on these materials, and all are available on Steam. If you are unfamiliar with Steam, it is a free-to-download platform where you can purchase and play games instantly across multiple devices.

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You may play any required course game on any technology you chose. You are free to purchase discs or digital copies for your consoles or other available devices.

Course Films and Series: In this class you will be required to watch 1 or 2 films or series' episodes. These titles will be watched outside of class so it will be your responsibility to procure them and watch them when they are assigned. You may need to have access to a NetFlix account.

Grading

There are 100 points possible in this class across 15 Topics. These points are divided into 4 categories:

Activity Summary

15 Lessons

30 POINTS

Lessons contain the learning materials of the course, including readings, galleries, and videos. They contain both content and questions, so please spend time on the materials.

11 Course Games

22 POINTS Most topics will include a core game. Some games are free and provided, others you will need to purchase. These games will take between 15 minutes to 3 hours to complete, with easy 10-minute quizzes and open discussion forums to follow.

4 Special Assignments

16 POINTS There are a handful unique assignments over the semester, most notably midterm and final papers. You will be playing a longer title for each, between 6-15 hours per game, it is your responsibility to get these games played in a timely manner during that period. You will be provided with two set of games to choose from, and papers will contain 6 short essay questions.

1 Semester Project

22 POINTS INITIAL

10 POINTS FOR FINAL

By the end of this course, you will also have a basic game proposal completed, called a "10-Page Game Design Document" (GDD) which will be broken up into portions during the semester and then combined for a final turn-in and overall grade. Assignments will be graded and given feedback, which you can choose to take into account to raise your grade for that portion in the final turn-in.

Extra Credit

5 POINTS TBD

Grades Breakdown is as Follows:

Grade Points Percent

A 93 - 100 points 93 % and above

A- 90 - 92 points 90 - 92 %

B+ 87 - 89 points 87 - 89 %

B 83 - 86 points 83 - 86 %

B- 80 - 82 points 80 - 82 %

C+ 77 - 79 points 77 - 79 %

C 73 - 76 points 73 - 76 %

C- 70 - 72 points 70 - 72 %

D+ 67 - 69 points 67 - 69 %

D 60 - 66 points 60 - 66 %

F 59 points and below 59 % and below

COVID-19 & Student Conduct

The University of Montana is committed to the safety and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Please contact your instructor if you feel like COVID-19 has impacted your ability to participate in the course, and visit UM's Coronovirus Updates page often for more information.

The Student Conduct Code at the University of Montana embodies and promotes honesty, integrity, accountability, rights, and responsibilities associated with constructive citizenship in our academic community. This Code describes expected standards of behavior for all students, including academic conduct and general conduct, and it outlines students' rights, responsibilities, and the campus processes for adjudicating alleged violations. The updated version of the Code takes effect on August 1, 2020.