

MART342.50 - *The Art & Science of Interactive Games*

Fully Online Course, Spring Semester 2022

Instructor Information

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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.

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

Course Content

This course is broken up into three areas 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 discussions 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.

Required Text

Course 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 \$80-\$100 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.

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.

Course Schedule

The following is a schedule for weekly materials and assignments. *Please note:* This schedule is subject to change.

Topic	Contents	Due
Course Welcome	Weclome Exercise: Introduction Forum	
1. History	Lesson: A Brief History of Games Exercise: Mechanics Pt. 1 (Narrative) Assignment: Ideation	
2. Ludology	Lesson: Games as a Technical Medium Exercise: Mechanics Pt. 2 (Representational) Assignment: Logistics	Mon, 01.31
3. Narratology	Lesson: Games as a Narrative Medium Exercise: Choice and Immersion Forum: Mechanics	Mon, 02.07
4. Character	Lesson: Character Types and Roles Exercise: Design with Purpose Assignment: Character Design	Mon, 02.14
5. Camera	Lesson: Game Camera, Perspective, and Screens Exercise: Illusion and Play Assignment: HUD Design	Mon, 02.21
c. Controls	Lesson: I/O Devices and Control Schemes Exercise: Interactivity and Physicality Forum: The 3 C's	Mon, 02.28
7. Devices	Lesson: Devices and Console Wars Exercise: Rules and "Control" Assignment: Platform and Controls	Mon, 03.07
9. Development	Lesson: How Games are Made and Sold Exercise: Product and the Producer's Journey Forum: <i>Indie Game, the Movie</i>	Mon, 03.14
8. Frameworks	Lesson: Game Engines Exercise: MIDTERM UNITY GAME Assignment: Additional Content	Mon, 03.21
Course Midterm	Midterm Exercise: Unity Game Build	Mon, 03.21
10. Sound Design	Lesson: Music, Voice, and Sound FX Exercise: The Impact of Audio Assignment: Sound Design	Mon, 04.04
11. Level Design	Lesson: Designing the Game Experience Exercise: <i>Mario</i> and the "Perfect Level" Assignment: Level Design	Mon, 04.11
12. Visual Design	Lesson: UI, UX, and Visual Design Exercise: Gaming Fidelities Forum: The Gaming Experience	Mon, 04.18
13. Games and Learning	Lesson: Serious, Educational, and Progressive Games Exercise: Play, Learn, Grow Assignment: Additional Content	Mon, 04.25
14. Games and Culture	Lesson: Games and Zeitgeist Exercise: Representation, Politics, and the Other Assignment: Ratings & Packaging	Mon, 05.02
15. Games and Psychology	Lesson: The Psychology Behind Play Exercise: Games and Empathy Forum: Wrap-Up	Mon, 05.09
Course Final	Final Exercise: The GDD	Fri, 05.13

Grading

There are 100 points possible in this class across 15 Topics. These points are divided into 5 categories:

Activity	Summary	Points
15 Lessons	Lessons contain the learning materials of the course, including readings, galleries, and videos. Doing a lesson entails exploring both content and answering questions, so please spend time on the materials.	30
15 Exercises	Each topic includes 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 1-paragraph prompts to follow.	15
5 Discussions	Every three weeks/topics, you are expected to participate in a forum citing your experience with the previous core games in relation to the discussion topic.	10
10 Assignments	By the end of this course, you will have a basic game proposal completed, called a "10-Page Game Design Document" (GDD) which will be broken-up into assignments during the semester. 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.	20
3 Term Exercises	At the beginning, middle, and end of the semester you will need to complete 3 exercises. While listed under individual topics on the main page, you are expected to complete them alongside normal topic content. The final is the GDD described above.	20
Participation	There are many opportunities throughout the class to earn a participation score. You will only need to accomplish 1 for full points. Examples include completing all lessons, or responding to multiple classmates in forums.	5
		= 100

Grading 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	63 - 66 points	63 - 66 %
D -	60 - 62 points	60 - 62 %
F	59 points and below	59 % and below

Code of Conduct

Student Code of Conduct: 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.

COVID-19 Guidelines: 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 [Coronavirus Updates](#) page often for more information.

UM Guidelines for In-Person Instruction: While we do not meet in the classroom, if you use facilities on campus for this course, please note:

1. Mask use is required within the classroom or laboratory.
2. If you feel sick and/or are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please don't come to class and contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330.
3. If you are required to isolate or quarantine, you will receive support in the class to ensure continued academic progress.
4. UM recommends students get the COVID-19 vaccine. Please direct your questions or concerns about vaccines to Curry Health Center.
5. Where social distancing (maintaining consistent 6 feet between individuals) is not possible, specific seating arrangements will be used to support contact tracing efforts.
6. Class attendance and seating will be recorded to support contact tracing efforts.
7. Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom.
8. This class is not being recorded, but if this changes, all students will be notified sufficiently beforehand.

Resources

Moodle 101 for Students: Please complete the tutorial, [Moodle 101 for Students](#). (When you click on the link, it will ask you to enroll in the course.) This tutorial will go through how to edit your profile, submit assignments, participate in discussion forums and take quizzes within Moodle. Upon completion of the tutorial (approximately 20-30 minutes), you will take a short quiz. When you have passed the quiz, you will receive a certificate indicating that you have successfully completed the tutorial.