
COM 3432-01
CHARACTER DESIGN
MWF 10:40 AM – 11:50 AM
FALL 2021 SYLLABUS AND COURSE CALENDAR

Classroom: NQSC 125
Instructor: Brian Heagney
Office: NQSC 307

Office Hours				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2:15 PM – 3:15 PM	10 AM – 11:30 AM	2:15 PM – 3:15 PM	10 AM – 11:30 AM	

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will gain knowledge of the representational and interactive implications of character design, as well as learn technical skills to develop 2D or 3D game-ready characters. The relationship between character, story, and gameplay are examined. Students will design compelling characters for a variety of game types. *Four credit hours.*

COURSE OBJECTIVES

UPON COMPLETION OF THE COURSE, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO:	ASSESSMENT
Understand representational and interactive implications of character design	Reading responses (blog posts); Character Sheet; AC / BF Character
Produce conceptual drawings and renderings of characters for a variety of game types	Reading responses (forum posts)
Develop a game character as it relates to story and gameplay	Reading responses (Blog posts); Character Sheet; Digital Game Character

Identify complex ethical issues pertaining to under-representation and misrepresentation of gender, race, sexual orientation, and physical abilities in games; entertain different perspectives on them, and evaluate one's own position.	Reading responses (blog posts);
Understand and use the general process of designing meaningful and original characters for interactive and game purposes	Reading responses (blog posts); Character Board; AC / BF Character
Use professional video game development tools to design and develop a playable game character.	Digital Game Character

SAVING AND DELETING CLASSWORK

- All students are required to use an external drive for saving class work
- All students are required to delete ALL WORK from arena computers after every class.

TEXTBOOKS AND REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- **NO TEXTBOOK**—all required reading will be available by either blackboard PDF or link to online website.
- **(Small) sketchbook and pens** – Students will be required to keep a sketchbook for blog and major assignment purposes. Students will not be graded on artistic proficiency, but will be required to use sketching as a method of research, planning, and discovery.

It is highly recommended to purchase a small sketchbook, which can be purchased at many locations, including Walmart, CVS, Walgreens, and even the dollar store on Main St. near the High Point Public Library.

- A **USB flash drive 16GB** (or higher). The drive must be dedicated to this course and must be brought to each class session. You should be able to find these at local retailers (e.g. Target, Wal-Mart) or online.
- **Software/Computer Labs** – There will be some use of digital software for this class, all of which are installed on the computers in NQSC 125c (The Game Lab). It is expected that you will have to organize your time accordingly to use this software, ensuring that you schedule time to work in the Game Lab when there is not another class going on.
- **Unreal Engine 4 (UE4)** – it is recommended that you download and install the free Epic Games Launcher and install UE4 (whichever version is installed on the computers in the Game Lab).

EXPECTATIONS

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. After **TWO** unexcused absences, you will be flagged on Starfish. (Two tardies equals one absence.) After a **FIFTH** absence, you will be dropped from the course. Exceptions will only be granted for university sanctioned events (with prior notice) or hospitalization (with verification of medical treatment). HPU Health Services does not supply notes for treatment. However, you can request a payment receipt from them to verify your visit.

It is the responsibility of the student (not the instructor) to secure class notes, handouts, assignments, and other information from missed classes. The instructor does not post class notes on Blackboard.

Diversity

An appreciation for diversity is an important value in an academic environment and critical to relationships in the professional world. In this course our research will draw from a diverse set of cultural, geographic and artistic influences. We will understand issues with representation and misrepresentation of race, gender, and other stereotypes in media production, especially concerning character design and development.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

- **Blog Posts (40% of grade)** – Students will have weekly blog assignment which will be completed using Blogger. These assignments will allow students to practice the skills relevant to the course. Blog assignments will be specified on Blackboard and will show up in your assignment calendar.
- **Character Sheet (20% of grade)** – Students will use character design methods to design an original game character. Students will work in any medium they wish (digital painting, clay, sculpture, etc) to develop the original character, but all students will engage in research, silhouette studies, and color theory studies and then produce a character board using Photoshop and/or InDesign.
- **Animal Crossing / Best Fiends Character (20% of grade)** – Students will design and develop an original character for an existing IP (such as Animal Crossing or Best Fiends). Students will engage in the same process as the Character Sheet assignment, but will also explore creating spreadsheets in excel for character abilities, writing dialogue, and more. More details for the assignment are described on blackboard.
- **Digital Game Character (20% of grade)** – Students will work with their character created in the Character Board assignment, and digitize the character to be used in a game engine. In the course, we will review creating a 2D spritesheet to import into UE4, 3D content and/or other game engines may be considered if the student wishes.

EXPECTATIONS FOR OUT-OF-CLASS WORK

Out-of-Class Work:	In addition to attending class and completing all course requirements, students are expected to spend at least 2 hours each week engaged in out-of class work (i.e., reading, studying, doing homework, working on projects, etc.) for every hour of credit earned in this course.
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According to HPU's accreditation guidelines, for every 1 hour of credit earned in a course, students are expected to spend at least 2 hours each week engaged in out-of-class work (i.e., reading, studying, doing homework, working on projects, etc.).

Therefore, in a 4-credit course, students are expected to commit an average of at least eight hours per week outside of class. (In a 2-credit course that meets for half of the semester, you are still expected to commit to an average of eight hours per week.) The estimates listed below reflect the out-of-class time expectations for a typical student – some students might need more or less time on these assignments.

- Assigned readings and videos (approx. 39 hours throughout the semester)
- Blog posts – (approx. 39 hrs. outside of class throughout the semester)
- Character Sheet – approx. 14 hrs out of class
- AC / BF Character – approx. 12 hrs out of class
- Digital Character – approx. 16 hrs out of class

DEADLINES

See School of Communication policy at end of this document (short version = late work loses one letter grade per day; no late work is accepted after three days).

GRADING

Grades are assigned as follows (there is no “rounding” of grades):

A (superior) – superior quality (90-100%)	B (excellent) – clearly above average (80-89%)	C (average) satisfactory work (70-79%)	D (inferior) – good enough to credit (60-69%)	F (failure) –work fails to meet the minimum expectations (0-59.9%)
A+ (97 - 100)	B+ (87 - 89.9)	C+ (77 - 79.9)	D+ (67 - 69.9)	F (0-59.9%)
A (93 - 96.9)	B (83 - 86.9)	C (73 - 76.9)	D (63 - 66.9)	
A-(90 - 92.9)	B-(80 - 82.9)	C-(70 - 72.9)	D-(60 - 62.9)	

Please note that simply completing all required elements of an assignment does not entitle you to an A. Acceptable work of average quality earns a C. You must go above average expectations to receive an above average grade. This mimics the professional world of communication, where basic proficiency might get you in the door at the entry level, but creative thinking and a willingness to go beyond the minimum expectations are necessary to get noticed and advance.

The following rubric will be used to grade all major assignments (slight modifications will be made depending on the nature of the assignment):

	SUPERLATIVE (90-100%)	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS (80-89.9%)	MEETS EXPECTATIONS (70-79.9%)	BELOW EXPECTATIONS (60-69.9%)	UNACCEPTABLE (0-59.9%)
Project Management (25%)	Meets all requirements and shows both exceptionally thorough planning AND exceptional organization on the part of the student.	Meets all requirements and shows either exceptionally thorough planning OR exceptional organization on the part of the student	Required elements are present and submitted correctly, technical specs are correct, and project files show organization	Not altogether satisfactory, but good enough to receive credit for the assignment.	Does not meet minimum expectations of the assignment.
Research (25%)	Student has presented supporting evidence that they engaged in superlative amount of research and investigation prior to developing character.	Student has presented above average amount of supporting evidence that they engaged research and investigation prior to developing character.	Student has presented evidence that they engaged research and investigation prior to developing character.	Not altogether satisfactory, but good enough to receive credit for the assignment.	Does not meet minimum expectations of the assignment.
Technical Proficiency (25%)	Project employs advanced tools and techniques to effectively improve the project AND makes exceptionally creative use of required software and equipment.	Project either employs advanced tools and techniques to effectively improve the project OR makes exceptionally creative use of required software and equipment.	Project effectively utilizes required software and equipment.	Not altogether satisfactory, but good enough to receive credit for the assignment.	Does not meet minimum expectations of the assignment.
Message / Story Development based on class readings (25%)	Reserved for the MOST creative and compelling concepts and approaches in the class AND executes the concept exceptionally well.	Concept and/or approach is exceptionally creative or compelling OR executes a concept exceptionally well.	Project effectively communicates a required message and/or story.	Not altogether satisfactory, but good enough to receive credit for the assignment.	Does not meet minimum expectations of the assignment.

DIGITAL PORTFOLIO

All students in the school of Communication are required to develop a digital portfolio on their LinkedIn page. The digital portfolio is an online collection of the work you've done during your time at High Point University.

In this class, you will produce projects that could be suitable for your digital portfolio. If you are proud of your work, then consider posting it to your LinkedIn page to show a potential employer and colleagues what you are capable of.

WRITING STYLES

Professional work should be written in the latest revisions of the Associated Press (AP) Style Manuals for print and broadcast. (Yes, AP also has a style manual for broadcast.) The School requires academic papers to be written in the latest revision of the American Psychological Association (APA) style. If you're unfamiliar with this style, please see the Chair or the Dean. Other academic styles are not accepted unless the student work is written for a publication or event that requires a different format. Having students learn multiple writing styles only confuses them.

ABSENCES AND TARDIES

After two unexcused absences you will receive a Probation Notice. After a fifth absence you will be dropped from the class. Exceptions will only be granted for university-sanctioned events (with prior notice) or hospitalization (with a doctor's note). Tardies are also unacceptable. Be on time. Better yet, be early. Two tardies will equal an absence. Students will not be permitted to make up grades for work missed due to an unexcused absence or tardy.

COPYRIGHT, PLAGIARISM, AND CHEATING

Each of you signed the HPU Honor Code and it is your responsibility to abide by it. Cheating or plagiarism can result in failure for the course. Theft of intellectual property (such as images, audio, or video) is equivalent to plagiarism. See the School of Communication policies on plagiarism and copyright at the end of this document.

On occasion, the professor will provide media/materials for use in class. These materials may include photos, video/audio files, scripts, and design templates. These items are copyrighted (by the professor and others) and may only be used in classroom exercises as specified by the professor. Consequently, students may not use media supplied by the professor in their projects unless they have been given permission to do so. Student projects containing unauthorized material provided by the professor may be penalized or disqualified. Students also may not share, distribute, or post online any media that contains media elements provided by the professor.

In addition, the professor holds the copyright on all course materials including lectures, PowerPoint presentations, handouts, video/audio media, etc. Consequently, course sessions and materials cannot be recorded, copied, or distributed in any form without the written permission of the professor.

Plagiarism involves copying the work of others and/or representing it as your own without attribution. Students should not use any media created by another student or outside entity (e.g. downloaded online) in their assignments without prior permission

from the professor. In addition, students should not copy edited sequences, documents, sessions, or projects and represent them as their own. Incidents of copyright infringement and plagiarism will be treated as University Honor Code violations.

STARFISH SYLLABUS STATEMENT

High Point University cares about your success!

This course is part of a HPU initiative that utilizes Starfish Connect, a communication tool for students and faculty. Through Starfish, instructors, coaches, and advisors provide feedback to you about course progress by emailing you about your academic performance. The emails are designed to be helpful by identifying strategies that increase your success in courses. Be sure to open any emails you receive and follow the recommendations.

Your instructor, coach, or advisor may also recommend that you contact a specific campus resource, such as the Learning Lab or Counseling Center. If an instructor makes a referral, you may also be contacted directly by this campus service as a follow-up.

Starfish also allows you to schedule appointments with various offices and individuals across campus and request help on a variety of topics.

QUARANTINE + SOFTWARE (GAM COURSES)

If students must be quarantined due to COVID-related policies and procedures, it is up to the student to choose one of the two options detailed below:

1) Attend class virtually using the blackboard link, 2) use a laptop with all of the required software necessary to follow along in class, and 3) submit assignments on time.

OR

1) Attend class virtually using the blackboard link, 2) submit any missed assignments within a 2-week grace period.

BLACKBOARD

I am a self-avowed blackboard nut and evangelist. I use blackboard for all of my class administration, and therefore you MUST use blackboard as well. If you have never used Blackboard before, it will become your friend. If Blackboard is already your friend, you will become BFFs. If you dislike Blackboard, then please come see me and I will evangelize to you appropriately. The following is how I use Blackboard:

Assignments: All assignments will be hosted and explained in Blackboard. Every major assignment will have a rubric attached to it in Blackboard, which will help you understand how I will grade your submissions.

For every assignment, you MUST submit something through Blackboard. If you complete an assignment and do not submit it to Blackboard, it is as if you have not completed it and it will be counted as late.

Assignment Calendar: Blackboard has an amazing assignment calendar associated with it. When you go to the Blackboard assignment calendar, you will be able to see EVERY assignment and quiz that is assigned so you won't ever forget!

Blog posts: All blog assignments must be completed using Blogger. The student will then post the url of their blog to the blackboard forum for their peers to potentially review.

Syllabus: This syllabus will also be hosted on Blackboard.

Blackboard takes precedence: Blackboard assignment dates and descriptions take precedence over all dates/descriptions on this syllabus.

Problems with Blackboard: Please contact **IT IMMEDIATELY** if you do not have access to our class blackboard page. I cannot help you, only IT can help you. It is your responsibility to remedy the problem on your own.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

This is a tentative schedule that is subject to change. Details for each week's assignments will be posted on Blackboard.

Week	Day	Date	Main Topic	Topic	Readings (To read by first day of week)	Assignments Due	Estimated Hours
1	Monday	8/23/2021	Character Sheet	Sketching Bootcamp: Gesture		Activity: Design a Character from Prompt	Readings / Videos: 4 Blog Post: 4
	Wednesday	8/25/2021					
	Friday	8/28/2021			Readings / Videos for Week 1	Blog post 1: Gesture + Scribble	
2	Monday	8/30/2021		Sketching Bootcamp: Sketching Research and Thumbnails	Readings / Videos for Week 2		Readings / Videos: 4 Blog Post: 4
	Wednesday	9/1/2021					
	Friday	9/4/2021				Blog post 2: mind map, mood board, Sketch Research	
3	Monday	9/6/2021		Scale, Shape, Color	Readings / Videos for Week 3		Readings / Videos: 3 Blog Post: 3 Character Sheet: 2
	Wednesday	9/8/2021					
	Friday	9/11/2021				Blog post 3: Investigate colors	
4	Monday	9/13/2021		Stereotypes and tropes	Readings / Videos for Week 4		Readings / Videos: 2 Blog Post: 2 Character Sheet: 4
	Wednesday	9/15/2021					
	Friday	9/18/2021				Blog post 4: redesign scale and proportion of a game character	

5	Monday	9/20/2021		Multiplayer cooperative Characters			Character Sheet: 8
	Wednesday	9/22/2021				Bring to class a sketch of original cooperative multi-player duo	
	Friday	9/25/2021				Due: Character Sheet	
6	Monday	9/27/2021	Best Fiends / Animal Crossing New Character	Intro to the games	Readings / Videos for Week 6		Readings / Videos: 4 Blog Post: 4
	Wednesday	9/29/2021					
	Friday	10/2/2021				Blog Post 5: write about some of the systems and how character traits affect them.	
7	Monday	10/4/2021		Game Balancing with Excel	Readings / Videos for Week 7		Readings / Videos: 3 Blog Post: 3 AC / BF Character: 2
	Wednesday	10/6/2021					
	Friday	10/9/2021				Blog post 6: Excel Fun	
FALL BREAK							
8	Monday	10/18/2021		Dialogue / Monologue	Readings / Videos for Week 8		Readings / Videos: 3 Blog Post: 3 AC / BF Character: 2
	Wednesday	10/20/2021					
	Friday	10/23/2021				Blog Post 7: Monologue/Dialogue	

9	Monday	10/25/2021		Work week	Readings / Videos for Week 9	AC / BF Character: 8
	Wednesday	10/27/2021				
	Friday	10/30/2021			AC/BF Character Due Quickposes Certificate Due (for extra credit)	
10	Monday	11/1/2021	Digital Playable Character	Intro to 2D UE4	Readings / Videos for Week 10	Readings / Videos: 4 Blog Post: 4
	Wednesday	11/3/2021				
	Friday	11/6/2021			Blog Post 8: Original frame-to-frame Sprite Import	
11	Monday	11/8/2021		Animating in Animate	Readings / Videos for Week 11	Readings / Videos: 4 Blog Post: 4
	Wednesday	11/10/2021				
	Friday	11/13/2021			Blog Post 9: Sprite Import	

12	Monday	11/15/2021		MudBox I	Readings / Videos for Week 12		Readings / Videos: 3 Blog Post: 3 Digital Character: 2	
	Wednesday	11/17/2021						
	Friday	11/20/2021			Blog post 10: simple digital sculpting assignment with Mudbox			
13	Monday	11/22/2021			Mudbox II	Readings / Videos for Week 13		Readings / Videos: 3 Blog Post: 3 Digital Character: 2
THANKSGIVING BREAK				THANKSGIVING BREAK				
14	Monday	11/29/2021			MudBox II	Readings / Videos for Week 14		Readings / Videos: 2 Blog Post: 2 Digital Character: 4
	Wednesday	12/1/2021						
	Friday	12/4/2021				Blog Post 11: Digital Sculpting II (hard edge sculpting)		
15	Monday	12/6/2021			Finishing Up	Readings / Videos for Week 15		Digital Character: 8
	Wednesday	12/8/2021						
EXAM BLOCK	Saturday	12/11/2021 8 AM - 11 AM	EXAM BLOCK ACTIVITY: TBA (in-class blog post 12) Major Assignment: Digital Game Character Implementation Due					

School of Communication Policies, Practices and Expectations

Students are expected to adhere to all standards outlined in the School of Communication's Policies, Practices, and Expectations (located at http://www.highpoint.edu/communication/files/nqsc_syllabus_policies.pdf) unless alternate standards are specifically outlined elsewhere in this syllabus.