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**SYLLABUS**  
**GAM 13362-01**  
**PUZZLE, OBSTACLE, & LEVEL DESIGN**

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Spring 2023

T/Th 9:45 Am – 11:25 Am

Classroom: NQSC 125C (GAM Lab)

Instructor: Brian Heagney

Office: NQSC 341

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Email: bheagney@highpoint.edu

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Professor Heagney's Office Hours				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
12:30 – 2:00 PM	12:30 – 1:30 PM	12:30 – 2:00 PM	12:30 – 1:30 PM	

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Introduces principles and practices involved in creating compelling interactive experiences. Students will craft a series of puzzles and scenarios for non-digital games and design multiple levels for a digital game using commercial game modifying software and scripting language. Prerequisite: COM 2252. Four credits.

## **FLEX-CLAUSE**

Due to the nature of holding University classes during a national pandemic, I am reserving the right for any part of this course to change based on pressures from anything related to COVID-19. This includes any issues faced by students in this course, but also issues faced by myself, the instructor.

I am making it my mission to deliver the content to you, the student, and if we need to be flexible in the face of a pandemic, we will do what it takes to get through any obstacles thrown in our way.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Student Learning Outcomes:	By the end of the course, students should be able to:	Method for Assessing this Learning Outcome
	Apply puzzle design strategies to develop physical and digital puzzles as stand-alone puzzles or as puzzles in video games.  <i>(Become a puzzle-master)</i>	Puzzle
	Apply level design theories to develop original and novel approaches to maps and genres  <i>(Level Design, baby)</i>	2D and 3D Map assignments
	Communicate level design ideas through professionally appropriate methods  <i>(Master the power of the sketch)</i>	2D and 3D Map assignments
	Develop media technology skills  <i>(git gud at makin' stuff fer games)</i>	2D and 3D Map assignments
	Apply programming skills to develop basic gameplay functionality in AAA game engines.  <i>(Make yer games work!)</i>	2D and 3D Map assignments

## TEXTBOOKS AND REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- **TEXTBOOK**— We will be using a free online text called The Level Design Book: <https://book.leveldesignbook.com/>
- A **USB flash drive 16GB** (or higher). Every student's storage space will differ. Some students have used 10 GB, some students have used much more. If you are saving your builds for your game on a weekly basis, you may need a lot of storage space. Bring your data/game/assets to every class to work on and show me.
- **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 GAM 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 classroom when there is not another class going on.

Do NOT leave your school projects on the computers. The data will likely be erased, or inaccessible at some point. Use our class repository (push often) and/or jump drives.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

- **Physical Puzzle (20% of grade)** – Students will begin the semester learning about and designing physical puzzles. Puzzles can take many forms and students will design a puzzle in the style of their choice.
- **2D Level (20% of grade)** – Students will apply level design theories and concepts to develop a 2D level for a game style of their choice.
- **3D Level (Single-Player) (20% of grade)** – Students will apply level design theories and concepts to develop a 3D Level for a single player game style of their choice.
- **3D Level (Multi-Player) (20% of grade)** – Students will apply level design theories and concepts to develop a 3D Level for a multi-player game concept of their choice.
- **Participation (10% of grade)** – In this course, we will have in-class activities and other small assignments that will count toward participation. These activities will be based on the concepts and technology related to the module we are studying, but will not necessarily be part of the assignment.

To clarify, during the module about multi-player level design, your major module assignment might be designing an arena death match, but our in-class activity for participation might be focused on designing a capture the flag map. Alternatively, during the same module, you may be asked to come prepared with a sketch for a couch-cooperative level.

- **Quizzes (10% of grade)** – In this course, there will be quizzes based on readings and videos. These quizzes will be online and accessible from Blackboard.

### 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.

- Readings and Videos – approx. 30 hours out of class throughout the semester
- Physical Puzzle – approx. 18 hrs. out of class
- 2D Level – approx.. 24 hrs. out of class
- 3D Level (single-player) – approx. 21 hrs. out of class
- 3D Level (multi-player) - approx. 21 hrs. out of class

## **GRADING**

### Grading Scale

A (Amazing!) – superior quality (90-100%)	B (Beautiful) – clearly above average (80-89%)	C (Coasting) satisfactory work (70-79%)	D (Deficient) – good enough to credit (60-69%)	F (Flubbed) –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.

### Submissions for assignments:

All students must use blackboard to submit to every assignment (except “participation”). If a student does not submit to blackboard, then the professor will not be able to offer feedback, the student will receive a 0%, and the assignment will be counted as “late”.

Most of the time the assignment will list what you will need to submit. If there is no official submission request from the professor, use best judgement based on knowing that the professor will review all of your work. You will very likely need to submit all files that you worked on which could include word documents, animation files, 3D modeling files, etc.

In the event that you are working on a class repository that everyone has access to and you think that you don't need to "submit" anything, remember that you **MUST** submit something to blackboard in order to receive a grade and feedback. If it is true that you do not "need" to submit an actual file, then you still must submit something to the blackboard assignment, such as a note of where to find your important game level, a short write-up of how your submission responds to the assignment, or at minimum a note saying "Hello, Heagney!"

### Feedback

All students will receive feedback through blackboard rubrics.

### Grade Availability

This class is based on 1000 points. Once assignments are graded and posted, your grade will automatically update and be available on blackboard. This grade will be based on the current number of points you've earned, divided by the number of points that have been available up to that point.

### Grade Appeal

If a student has a complaint or concern about a faculty member regarding a grade, they should first try to resolve it with the instructor in question. If the complaint is not resolved through this interaction, the student should then go to the Department Chair. If the instructor of the course also serves as a Chair, then the student should approach the Dean as the first step in the process. For this course, a student should pursue the following process:

1. Talk with the instructor of the course,
2. Talk with Dr. Stefan Hall who serves as the Chair of the Nido R. Qubein School of Communication's Game Design department.

The decision of the Chair/Dean is final.

### Grievance Procedure

If a student has a complaint or concern about a faculty member regarding any matter other than a grade, they should first try to resolve it with the instructor in question. If the complaint is not resolved through this interaction, the student should then go to:

1. the Department Chair;
2. the Dean of the School of Communication; then
3. the Senior Vice-President of Academic Affairs, which is the final step in the grievance process.

Bypassing any of these steps—going directly to the president, for example—will not resolve the issue and will only delay resolution. Senior administration will not deal with grievance issue unless it has been discussed at the appropriate level.

For this course, a student should pursue the following process:

1. Talk with the instructor of the course.
2. Talk with Dr. Stefan Hall who serves as the Core Courses Coordinator of the Nido R. Qubein School of Communication.

3. Talk with Dr. McDermott, who serves as the Dean of the Nido R. Qubein School of Communication.
  4. Talk with Dr. Bauer, who serves as the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs of High Point University.
- The decision of the Senior Vice President is final.

## **POLICIES FOR ASSIGNMENTS & EXAMS**

### Late work

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).

### Makeup Exams

If this course has quizzes, then quiz due dates are final. Because the nature of my quizzes are that they are online and readily available, make-up exams will only be allowed due to typical reasons such as hospitalization or major accident or incident. Please discuss this with me in person.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

After two unexcused absences you will receive a Starfish notice (because we care). After a **SIXTH ABSENSE** 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. Three tardies will equal an absence. Students will not be permitted to make up grades for work missed due to an unexcused absence or tardy.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### Email

Most of our out-of-class communication will be through email. Email is appropriate for any questions about assignments or grading. While I do give feedback for assignments through blackboard rubrics, if you're still confused or if you think I'm confused, please reach out through email.

Do NOT email me your assignments. Assignments should only be submitted through the blackboard interface.

My goal is to respond to emails within 24 hours during the weekdays. My other goal is to not work at all on the weekends, so I do not promise that I will respond at all during the weekends. Feel free to email me at any time of the day or night. I purposefully keep my work email OFF of my phone, so I will never be bothered by an email in the middle of the night.

Be informal. If you're writing me an email, just write what you need to write without beating around the bush. 😊

### Text

I always include my cell number in case you ever have a question that needs to be answered right away. I don't promise that I'll be awake or respond, but feel free to text me any time of the day for rare emergencies. My phone sound is off and it won't wake anyone up if I'm asleep. Seriously, if I'm awake up in my office for some reason, and you're experiencing a disaster in the computer lab, it will help if you text me!

## Blackboard

As mentioned throughout this syllabus, all assignments must be submitted through the blackboard interface. Sometimes that means submitting a project file. Sometimes it means submitting a zip folder. Sometimes it means submitting a link to a SHAREABLE google drive.

## **DIVERSITY**

This course relies on students considering the diverse nature of players as they design for differing skills and abilities. This course also encourages students to understand the diversity of map styles and genres.

## **COURSE-SPECIFIC POLICIES**

### **BLACKBOARD BLACKBOARD BLACKBOARD BLACKBOARD 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!

**Syllabus:** This syllabus will also be hosted on Blackboard.

**Blackboard is Master:** 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 ASAP so you can participate in the course.

## **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

*The School of Communication Emphasizes Analytical Thinking, Communication Skills, Interpretation of Converging Information, Technological Development, and Integration of Theory and Practice*

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.

## **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	Topic / Module	To Do	Estimated Hours
<b>1</b>	Tuesday	1/10	Physical Puzzle		Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	1/12			Puzzle Design: 6 hours
<b>2</b>	Tuesday	1/17			Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	1/19			Puzzle Design: 6 hours
<b>3</b>	Tuesday	1/24			Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	1/26		Physical Puzzle Due	Puzzle Design: 6 hours
<b>4</b>	Tuesday	1/31	2D Level		Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	2/2			2D Level: 6 hours
<b>5</b>	Tuesday	2/7			Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	2/9			2D Level: 6 hours
<b>6</b>	Tuesday	2/14			Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	2/16			2D Level: 6 hours
<b>7</b>	Tuesday	2/21			Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	2/23			2D Level: 6 hours



<b>8</b>	Tuesday	2/28			Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	3/2		2D Level Due	2D Level: 6 hours
<b>break</b>	Tuesday	3/7			
	Thursday	3/9			
<b>9</b>	Tuesday	3/14	3D Single-Player		Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	3/16			3D Level (single): 6 hours
<b>10</b>	Tuesday	3/21			Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	3/23			3D Level (single): 6 hours
<b>11</b>	Tuesday	3/28			Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	3/30			3D Level (single): 6 hours
<b>12</b>	Tuesday	4/4		Single Player Map Due (play in class)	Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	4/6			3D Level (single): 3 hours 3D Level (multi): 3 hours
<b>13</b>	Tuesday	4/11			Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	4/13			3D Level (multi): 6 hours
<b>14</b>	Tuesday	4/18	3D Multi-Player		Readings / Videos: 2 hours
	Thursday	4/20			3D Level (multi): 6 hours

<b>15</b>	Tuesday	4/25			Readings / Videos: 2 hours 3D Level (multi): 6 hours
	Thursday	4/27/2023 Reading Day		3D Multi-Player Map Due	
<b>EXAM BLOCK</b>	Monday	5/1/2023 8 - 11 AM			

## **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](http://www.highpoint.edu/communication/files/nqsc_syllabus_policies.pdf)) unless alternate standards are specifically outlined elsewhere in this syllabus.