

**SYLLABUS
GAM 4492-01
COLLABORATIVE GAME DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT**

Spring 2025

T/Th 1:35 Pm – 3:15 Pm

Classroom: NQSC 125C

Instructor: Brian Heagney

Office: NQSC 341

Cell phone: 336-456-2672

Email: bheagney@highpoint.edu

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/brianheagney/

Professor Heagney's Office Hours				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1 - 2 PM	12:30 - 1:30 PM	1 - 2 PM	12:30 - 1:30 PM	9:40 - 10:40 AM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Capstone experience in the Game and Interactive Media Design sequence. In teams, students will work across and outside of typical production roles in order to design, prototype, and iterate a digital game. Prerequisites: Senior standing and GAM 3352. Four credits.

FLEX-CLAUSE

Due to the nature of holding University classes during possibilities of 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 or any other pandemic. 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
	Plan actions and develop solutions for designing and developing digital video games <i>(Iterating video game design and development)</i>	Prototype / Pitch, Sprints
	Link data to decision making and/or advocacy <i>(Be strategic about designing your games)</i>	Prototype / Pitch, Sprints
	Develop media technology skills (Learn more UE, image editing, audio editing, animation, modeling, etc)	Prototype / Pitch, Sprints
	Create professional quality visual and/or audio materials <i>(Git gud)</i>	Portfolio, Sprints
	Work well in groups with the ability to communicate efficiently with different roles on the team. <i>(Collaborate on game without breaking game (or group))</i>	Prototype / Pitch, Sprints
	Prepare and present game content to general and diverse audiences. <i>(Communicate, Advocate)</i>	Portfolios, Presentation

TEXTBOOKS AND REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- **NO TEXTBOOK**—There is no required reading for this course. Students in this course are expected to design and develop a playable video game, which is a monumental task. While students are expected to use skills and knowledge gained over the course of their time at HPU, students will also likely spend many hours this semester on independent research on game development related to the student's game development role.
- 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 125 (The Esports Arena). 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.

Every student team will decide to produce its digital video game using the software of their choice, it is up to the student team to ensure that the professor will have access to the files and have a way to examine and play its game.

ASSESSMENT/ ASSIGNMENTS

- **Prototype & Pitch (10%)** – Students will spend the first two weeks of the semester developing prototypes and a group pitch for a game they will create this semester. All students will work as a group to develop a slideshow for a pitch, yet each student will individually develop a prototype to present.

The prototype will vary for each student. Some students may work in UE5 to show that a mechanic is achievable. Some may use 3D modeling or animation to show examples. Some may develop concept art or storyboards to show the vision of the game.

- **Sprints (75%)** – There are 5 2-week sprints planned for this semester, each worth 15% of the overall grade. Students will be assessed on their planning for the sprint, their accomplishments, and whether their work made it into the increment. Students are also required to submit self- and peer- assessments for each sprint.

- **Sprint 1 (15%):** Core Gameplay Loop. The first sprint goal is for any and all group to create a playable gameplay loop, even if it's not perfect.

- **Sprint 2 (Alpha) (15%):** Feature-Complete (Alpha). The second sprint goal is for any and all groups to create a playable increment that includes an enhanced core gameplay loop(s) as well as integrate all main features that will appear in the game.

at this stage, a panel of faculty will choose a game (or designers) to represent HPU at a game design conference. Students who developed chosen game will have a chance to attend this conference. (Subject to change)

- **Sprint 3 (15%):** Enhanced Gameplay Experience. During this sprint, all group members will focus on refining and expanding the gameplay experience for their game. This phase emphasizes improving mechanics, player engagement, and overall polish to create a more immersive and enjoyable experience.

- **Sprint 4 (15%):** Enhanced Gameplay Experience II. During this sprint, all group members will focus on refining and expanding the gameplay experience for their game. This phase emphasizes improving mechanics, player engagement, and overall polish to create a more immersive and enjoyable experience.

- **Sprint 5 (Gold Master) (15%):** Final Debugging and Enhancing (Gold Master). In this sprint, all group members will focus on finalizing their game by addressing bugs, refining gameplay elements, or both. The goal is to ensure a polished, stable, and engaging experience for the final version.

- **LinkedIn (5% of grade)** - All students are required to have an updated (current) LinkedIn profile that is strategically designed to showcase themselves for potential employment in the field of their choice.***

- **Game Design Portfolio (5% of grade)** – All students are required to have an updated (current) game design portfolio that shows their best work in an easy-to-navigate online platform such as Wix. This is the student's choice but there will be specific guidelines that students must follow.***

***All students should devote at least one hour each week to updating and enhancing their LinkedIn profile and/or Game Design profile. Each student can begin creating a game design portfolio page for their capstone game right away; one does not need to finish a game to begin documenting their work for a portfolio page.

- **Public Presentation (5% of grade)** - All students must showcase their video games at HPU's Undergraduate Research Symposium (High-PURCS) on Honor's Day. Each group will be provided with a table at the event and must bring both a poster and a computer for attendees to play their game. Extra credit will be awarded to students who also deliver an oral presentation.
- **Oral Presentation (5% extra credit)** – Students who deliver a 10-minute oral presentation at High-PURCS can earn up to 5% extra credit. To be eligible, students must consult with the professor before submitting their presentation proposal. The presentation should focus on the student's role and experience in the capstone game.

Previous presentation topics have included "Level Design," "The Process of Animating Characters for Games," "Weapon Design," and similar subjects showcasing individual contributions and creative processes.

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.

- Pitch / Prototype – approx. 18 hrs out of class
- Sprints – approx. 14 hrs out of class for each sprint (70 hrs total)
- LinkedIn / Portfolio – approx. 32 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. 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. Eltantawy, who serves as the Interim Dean of the Nido R. Qubein School of Communication.
4. Talk with Dr. Erb, who serves as the Provost of High Point University.

The decision of the Provost 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).

The nature of this course demands that no late work is acceptable. In a collaborative production environment, there is no way to make up for being late meeting a deadline.

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). 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

In this capstone course, students will collaborate in teams where they are encouraged to explore and contribute across diverse production roles, including design, programming, art, audio, and project management. By working both within and beyond their primary areas of expertise, students will develop a deeper understanding of the interconnected nature of game development. This experience fosters adaptability, creative problem-solving, and mutual respect for the contributions of all team members. Exposure to diverse roles prepares students for professional environments where cross-disciplinary collaboration drives innovation and success.

OARS ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

High Point University welcomes students with disabilities into our educational programs. HPU promotes efforts to provide equal access and a culture of inclusion without altering the essential elements of coursework. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers that may

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

be due to disability, including but not limited to, chronic medical conditions, Deaf or hard of hearing, learning disability, mental health, or vision impairment, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services at 336-841-9026 or OARS@highpoint.edu. The OARS office is located on the 4th floor of Smith Library

If you have an OARS accommodation letter, you are required to do the following:

(A) Meet with me privately during office hours or a scheduled appointment as early in the semester as possible to discuss implementing your accommodations. I am here to help you, and I want to make sure we discuss how best to integrate your OARS approved accommodations in a way that helps make you successful. Your accommodations will be implemented only after we meet to discuss the best path for your success.

(B) Give me reasonable notice (at least three business days) to implement your accommodations.

(C) If you have testing accommodations and we determine together that it would be best for you to take exams in the OARS testing center, you must arrange through OARS with sufficient notice (3 business days for exams/quizzes and 6 business days for midterms and final). If you do not arrange your exam with OARS, I will not be able to provide extended time, assistive technology, or a distraction free environment, but you will be able to take the exam with the class.

(D) If you experience any access barriers in this course that are part of your OARS accommodations, such as with printed content, graphics, online materials, or any communication barriers; reach out to me or OARS right away.

COURSE-SPECIFIC POLICIES

Forming Groups

Typically I forbid any student group from having more than six members. However, since this is the smallest capstone I have ever taught, consisting of only 8 students total, I reserve the right to decide if there will be one group of 8 students or two groups of 4 students.

Students may self-select their own groups, but the instructor of the course reserves all rights to REMOVE or ADD students to any group the instructor wishes.

So You've Been Fired...

The instructor of the course reserves all rights to REMOVE any student from any group for any reason. The instructor may do this with or without the majority of the group's wishes.

Any student removed in this way can either choose to join a new group (if there is a group that needs or wants help) OR the instructor may match this student up with any other student(s) who have also been removed from their group(s).

Capstone Competition

All student groups are enrolled in the "Capstone Competition". In general, each team is competing to publicly present their capstone game in a public conference setting. Winning teams will have a chance for hotel rooms and admission to a game conference, paid through a grant from URCW. However, there are caveats:

1. Grant Dependent: This competition is only available if grant funding is awarded from the URCW. I am doing my best to secure this funding but it is not guaranteed.
2. Number of groups: It is possible that more than one group wins the competition. It is also possible that NO groups win the competition.
3. Individual Basis: It is not guaranteed that every student from a winning group will be awarded the opportunity to attend ECGC. Sometimes there are non-contributing students who are only nominally part of the group and I reserve the right to make final decisions as to which students get the reward.
4. Been fired: students who may have joined a winning team AFTER midterms do not get to qualify for the competition reward.

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 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
1	Tuesday	1/7	Brainstorming		Prototype / Pitch: 6 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 2 hrs
	Thursday	1/9			
2	Tuesday	1/14		Groups and Game Concepts Must Be Formed by Start of Class	Prototype / Pitch: 6 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 2 hrs
	Thursday	1/16			
3	Tuesday	1/21	Prototype / Pitch		Prototype / Pitch: 6 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 2 hrs
	Thursday	1/23		Prototype / Pitch Due @ BEGINNING OF CLASS	
4	Tuesday	1/28	Sprint 1 (Gameplay Loop)		Sprint 1: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	1/30			
5	Tuesday	2/4			Sprint 1: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	2/6		Sprint 1 Due	
6	Tuesday	2/11			Sprint 2: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	2/13			
7	Tuesday	2/18	Sprint 2 (Alpha)		Sprint 2: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	2/20		LinkedIn Due Portfolio Due Sprint 2 Due	

break	Tuesday	2/25			
	Thursday	2/27			
8	Tuesday	3/4	Sprint 3		Sprint 3: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	3/6			
9	Tuesday	3/11			Sprint 3: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	3/13		Sprint 3 Due	
10	Tuesday	3/18	Possible GDC		LinkedIn / Portfolio: 8 hrs
	Thursday	3/20			
11	Tuesday	3/25	Sprint 4		Sprint 4: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	3/27			
12	Tuesday	4/1			Sprint 4: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	4/3		Sprint 4 Due	
13	Tuesday	4/8	Sprint 5		Sprint 5: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	4/10			
14	Tuesday	4/15/2025 NO CLASS HONORS DAY		High-PURCS	Sprint 5: 7 hrs LinkedIn / Portfolio: 1 hrs
	Thursday	4/17			

15	Tuesday	4/22		Sprint 5 Due	LinkedIn / Portfolio: 8 hrs
	Thursday	4/24/2025 READING DAY			
EXAM BLOCK	Tuesday	12/10 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) unless alternate standards are specifically outlined elsewhere in this syllabus.

HEAGNEY POLICIES

Students are also expected to read, understand, and abide by the following policies:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/142Bg51BWzqot571f3BnPudUjcxNvrq2YJWRcw0I-IQ/edit?usp=sharing>