

GAME 3700.20866 Rapid Idea Prototyping Games

SEC-03 FALL 2023 [BOS-1-TR]

COURSE CODE: GAME3700.20866.202410



Instructor of Record:

(Please note that I am not a "Professor" and so not a good academia letter of recc.)

Email: ch.deleon@nyu.edu

Class Time: Mondays, 18.00-21.30 ET

Classroom: Ryder 207

WeChat: cstutorcs

Credit Hours: 4 ([course credit guidelines](#))

Assignment Project Exam Help

**Certain dates and components of the syllabus maybe subject to change in the future*

Email: tutorcs@163.com

Overview

Course Description

QQ: 749389476

<https://tutorcs.com>

Provides students with the experience of building small proof-of-concept prototypes of games. Teaches digital and non-digital prototyping techniques through weekly activities in which students build and critique prototypes around a variety of game design themes. Offers the students an opportunity to build a portfolio of small game prototypes over the course of the semester. Additionally, teaches students how to iterate on a single prototype through a semester-long project in which students work individually on a larger game design.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the benefits and drawbacks of a variety of prototyping techniques, including paper prototyping (e.g. board game, card game, and tile-based games), Wizard of Oz prototyping, and digital prototypes
- Identify appropriate prototyping strategies for a particular game design
- Analyze current digital games to identify and prototype different components

- Quickly build simple, non-digital and digital prototypes using off-the-shelf tools
- Rapidly design prototype games within the constraints of a theme and/or mechanic
- Record and iterate from play test sessions into a prototype design
- Build confidence in giving and accepting critique on design work



Prerequisites

GAME 1110 or instructor permission

Textbook & Course Materials

Readings

This course has two textbooks. Readings are available as PDFs or links on Canvas.

- Game Design Workshop: A playcentric approach to creating innovative Games by Tracy Fullerton.

(Available through Northeastern's library:

https://onesearch.library.northeastern.edu/permalink/f/365rt0/NEU_ALMA51283162090001401)

- Game Feel: A game designer's guide to virtual sensation by Steve Swink

(Available through Northeastern's library:

https://onesearch.library.northeastern.edu/permalink/01NEU_INST/i2ggis/alma9951604611701401)

Other Materials

This course will involve some physical prototyping. I am unable to provide materials. Basic school/office supplies can suffice, but if you have or can reasonably obtain existing board game pieces (chess, checkers, easily moved 8x8 board), physical toys (jacks, bouncy ball, marbles, nerf ball – though please no toy guns), or digital controllers you're able to use or even (100% optional) take apart, those can be used.

At minimum, you will need:

- An unlined sketchpad or journal to sketch out and work through ideas.

- Mechanical pencil with eraser
- Assorted pens, markers colored pencils or colored markers
- Index Cards (plain, assorted), post-Its in multiple colors
- Scissors, although cutting by hand could be sufficient
- Depending on what you take on, and how, you may use other materials



Course Components

Lecture & In-Class Prototyping Activities

This class will be largely about making things, a good part of which can happen in-class, as group or solo activities prototyping game ideas. These prototypes may be digital or non-digital. Prototyping materials will not be supplied for the in-class exercises, though you can bring your own and it's possible to do much of what we're doing with only paper. Homework assignments may also use your own materials. You are encouraged to build your own prototyping kits over the course of the semester.

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Reflection Assignments

Although our focus is on thinking by doing and building to test out our ideas, we'll also be reading or watching material that can affect the way we do and talk about that. You will be asked to submit written reflections on a topic we read about, watched an online video about, and/or discussed in class. Select one of the required readings, online videos, or listed course topics for the week and write a 200-300 word reflection – it must be more than a summary of the reading or topic. Analyze the material, and think about how it connects with other course material (e.g., other readings, things we've discussed in class, its relation to your capstone project or career, etc.). Pose questions, try out new ideas, and think creatively. It is not enough to simply say you "like" the reading or that something was "boring."

While you have freedom of structure and content in your reflections, as a framework for guidance, you can focus around three primary pillars of discussion- 1.) What you learned that was new or different from what you've seen before, 2.) How this changes or adds to what you already knew, the way you discuss or do things, 3.) How you (literally you, not a hypothetical other) can use/apply this to design your games.

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You are also asked to reply and respond to someone else's reflection within the following week. Responses should be at least 100 words. Again, engage with the substance of the reflection, not enough to simply say "I agree" or "I disagree."

Responses are graded as follows:

- | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 2pt | Reflects on the material |
| 2pt | Approaches the material |
| 1pt | Responds to another person's post |



Prototyping Assignments

Almost every week you will create light design documentation and a playable prototype for use and discussion, whether during class or between classes. Unless otherwise noted, prototyping assignments must be brought to class on the day that they are due. Every prototype should include (a) a clearly documented idea in words and/or pictures about what you're testing, and what you're making to test that (b) a playable form of it, even if it's approximate, ugly, buggy, or only sort of works, and (c) documentation of the result (photos, screenshots, videos, contemporaneous notes).

Your prototypes can ideally be played with relatively minimal explanation, though it's understood that full instructions or a proper tutorial are not expected. The design notes you make to describe why you're making it, as well as documentation of the artifact or experience itself are as important as the prototype itself. When testing, we'll strive to lead with the playable experience, not wanting to overly prime a peer or tester with what we're hoping to find from it.

Your prototypes should not be polished, pretty, or reflect too deep of a dive into the idea. The main reason we prototype is to use as little of our effort and time as we can to meaningfully inform what will be worth spending more effort and time to do more thoroughly. For digital prototypes especially, picking an isolated part (ex. type of character movement, upgrade or alchemy system, unusual input or puzzle mechanic) will be essential to manage scope, and usually more appropriate than a complete, full-featured "alpha" game. The majority of prototypes will not be worth taking forward

and will ultimately wind up in the trash, remembered only by their documentation and captured photos/screenshots/video. Our purpose for prototyping is to be smart about how little of our time can be spent on this work that will be a dead end, while still serving its intended purpose of showing where our next time can be better spent.

Semester-Long

There will be a semester-long final project. There are a few checkpoints spread evenly over the semester. You will play with each other's prototypes and provide design feedback. For each of the smaller prototyping assignments it's up to you whether it will somehow be in relation to helping you further develop the possible direction for your larger project, or if it's a more unrelated experiment to inform whether you'd like to pivot what you're doing for your main project going forward. The final project is not expected to change more than a few times, but an important reason why we prototype is to avoid us committing too early and for too long to a sunk-cost scenario where, by building to improve our understanding or probe alternative paths, we can judge won't be the best way forward. Player feedback can be incorporated back into your main design, or factored into whether you choose to pivot to another idea you've prototyped. Each checkpoint has a report deadline associated with it.

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Grades and Coursework

<https://tutorcs.com>

Course Evaluation Structure

- Class Participation (20%)
- Reflections and Weekly Assignments (10%)
- Prototyping Assignments and Projects (20%)
- Midterm Mini-Project (20%)
- Semester-Long Final Project (30%)

Grade-point Framework for Deliverables

- Weekly Discussions - 5 pts
- Weekly Reflections - 5 pts
- Prototyping Assignments, Playable + Documentation - 10 pts

- Mid-term Assignment - 50 pts
- Final Project 4 Milestones - 300 pts (75 pt per milestone)

Expected Week

- 1 Prototyping weeks (can be done with teammates)
- 1 Individual assignment
- 1 Individual assignment



Course Policies

Class Participation and Attendance

I strongly advise you to attend class, but I will not formally take attendance. Nearly all classes will have interactive exercises, discussions and/or critiques, which I will aim to ensure provide a real benefit by being present. I will keep track of participation.

Students who must miss class should notify me in advance. As the semester progresses contingencies may arise that cause you to miss class with little to no notice (e.g., family care responsibilities, serious illness, interviews, etc.). In these situations, make sure you let me know as soon as possible and we can work together to make sure your performance is not negatively impacted. This will, however, require you to put in additional effort to make up for lost time in the form of extra assignments or individual projects.

Hybrid and Zoom Etiquette

I am a strong believer in online learning for formats and material where it's a good fit. In the case of this class, the real-time nature of small group interaction, hands-on building and peer testing, makes it so that unfortunately a hybrid approach would be able to capture such as a small fraction of the in-person benefit that we are not able to fully support Hybrid for this particular course.

In the rare event that you are unable to make it to class- you are strongly advised to go out of your way to set up an equal amount of time to simulate coworking and peer discussion with one or more other peers from this class. The peer could be someone

else who also wasn't able to attend, or someone who did if they're willing to set aside the time as additional work period for their prototypes and documentation. So long as the same prototypes and documentation are generated, and you do this peer online group coworking with someone who was able to attend in-person (which should be only as an exception when not approved as a full or frequent replacement strategy), that will be equivalent. Please note in the documentation for any affected project that you resorted to this strategy, and which peers you coworked online with. Reason you were absent should not be in your documentation or recorded to classmates who join your online collab time. Please do not record any zoom meeting collab make up times with your classmates, either by using Zoom's built-in recording features or by any local alternative.



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If circumstances arise which require the class to pivot fully online for any part of the semester details will be communicated clearly at that time. In those situations you will not have permission to record, stream, or invite outside guests to the Zoom meetings.

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Classroom Conduct Email: tutorcs@163.com

All students are expected to arrive on time for class in person, unless otherwise permitted by the instructor. A grace period of 5 minutes will be allowed and exceptions can be made for emergencies, however, repeated delays will negatively impact your grades. For the duration of the class, you are expected to switch off your cell phones and avoid attending to personal errands unless otherwise urgent. The use of laptops and tablets is permitted for note taking purposes, however, students are expected to actively participate in class discussions voluntarily. Inadequate participation may lead to deductions from your class participation grade component.

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https://tutorcs.com

Absenteeism and Deductions

**Being more than 30 minutes late to any class session will lead to no attendance being awarded for the session.*

**Acquiring 3 absents will lead to point deductions from your participation grade. Acquiring further absents will lead to increasing deductions in participation points.*

**Reaching 6 absents before the semester is over will lead to an 'I' or Incomplete grade being awarded for the course. This will result in no credits being earned and will require you to re-register for the course.*

Final Grade Criteria

The following canvas scores will be used as cutoffs for the respective grades

- 95+ = A
- 90 – 94 = A-
- 85 – 89 = B+
- 80 – 84 = B
- 75 - 79 = B-
- 75 - 70 = C+
- 70 - 65 = C
- below C = F



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An 'F' grade will result in no credits being earned and will require you to retake the course in another semester.

Note While the final grade will primarily be determined based on the scores on Canvas, there will be opportunities to earn extra credit and a component of cumulative effort put into the course, which will be at the instructor's discretion. This evaluates multiple critical performance factors that will be observed throughout the course of the semester, including but not limited to showing initiative and sincerity in group work and class activities, regularly completing tasks and attending class on time, consistently submitting quality work, going above and beyond assignment requirements or showing a dedication to make-up or improve on past performance.*

Deadlines and Penalties

Delays- All assignments will have fixed deadlines which not be extended unless specified by the instructor. Assignments submitted after the deadline will lead to a 1-point deduction for each day the assignment is late. All assignments will close permanently after a maximum of 5 days after the deadline.

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Extensions- In case of students struggling with performance and timeline issues due to unmanageable constraints, they will be provided with an option to request an extension or a re-attempt for assignments based on the instructor's discretion. This will be limited to a maximum of two assignment extensions / re-attempts per student. There will be no re-attempt for an assignment that has already been extended once. There will also be no re-attempt for the Mid-term Project, the Final-Project and any of the Final-Project assignments provided for any student or group of students.



*Note** In case of extenuating circumstances, exemptions may be made for the rules stated above at the Instructor's discretion. It is essential to clearly communicate any issues that may impact performance and ability to deliver, at the earliest time possible

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Names and Pronouns¹

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If you go by a different name or set of pronouns than the one(s) under which you are officially enrolled, please inform me if you are comfortable doing so. Likewise, if a classmate or the instructor mispronounces your name, please let them know so they can correct it. Students are expected to respectfully refer to each other by correctly pronounced names and correct pronouns during class discussions, project meetings, and any other course-relevant spaces. To facilitate clarity, it is advisable that you update your preferred names (you may add these as middle names) and pronouns on your personal profiles on Canvas, and if relevant, Zoom.

Email: tutormcs@163.com

QQ: 749389476

<https://tutorcs.com>

Canvas

Canvas is the central hub for the course. All course-related files and information can be found there and all coursework will be submitted on the Canvas course page. Any major announcements will also be made on Canvas, as it will be the primary platform for course communication. Please make sure you check the Canvas page throughout the semester, as it will be essential to staying up-to-date with all course-related updates.

¹ Adapted from Adrienne Keene's Critical Race Theory 2020 syllabus at Brown and Kendra Albert's Transgender Rights and the Law 2020 syllabus at Harvard

Academic Honesty

You are expected to demonstrate academic integrity: present work that is actually yours, and do not plagiarize². You will be held to the NU Code of Student Conduct (<http://www.northeastern.edu/student-conduct/>) and Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academic-integrity-policy/>). Acts of academic dishonesty are referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).



Throughout the course, it is expected and encouraged that you discuss topics raised by the course with other students. In write-ups and submitted work, you must document ideas incorporated from outside sources as well as other students. If you ever have questions about what is acceptable or unacceptable collaboration on assignments, please ask me for clarification.

Regarding the use of artificial intelligence like ChatGPT I must defer to Northeastern University's standards, any statements or policies from the CAMD AI Faculty group, and your own ethics or values with regard to what is acceptable or appropriate. My own standard, relevant if and only if this is within the bounds of what the institution and qualified school faculty have stated is OK for students, is that AI should not be used to generate anything turned in, but that if it has any role at all in the process it should be as a tool to generate or suggest refinements to what you already created and input, ex. "please help brainstorm 15 more examples that are variations on these 5 titles I came up with... [include your brainstormed titles]" or "please recommend what changes I might make to these instructions to make them easier to understand: [your instructions that you wrote]," either way in which the work remains on your side to pick among the brainstorming what to use, or which of those outside suggestions you might make to your own text in much the same way as a friend might offer a second set of eyes. But to reiterate a critical point: if Northeastern University or the CAMD AI Faculty group policies do not even allow that use of the technology, then it cannot be used in that way, as I am unable as an instructor to make any exception to their

² Plagiarizing includes: representing someone else's work as your own, insufficient acknowledgement, and receiving or giving unauthorized help on analyzing data or drawing conclusions. Using the same paper or portions of a paper for two courses without explicit permission from professors of both courses is also unacceptable.

policies. This is a rapidly changing space and it is up to students to remain aware of the latest campus policies.

By my own standard and CAMD AI policy would allow it, I strongly advise against using AI imagery in your prototypes, even if the data set it's trained on does not include copyrighted works. While some people may see it as a good use-case to create a more visually appealing image, its benefit to that process is producing a more final-looking image that is not as productive to our goals and techniques. For prototyping a very rough, hand-drawn sketch that can be identified as "that's a truck" is far better for our purposes than a painterly or photorealistic generated image.

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Group Work Policy

All group members are expected to contribute equally to all group assignments and projects. While tasks may be assigned to individual group members, it is essential that responsibilities are delegated evenly throughout the group to ensure all members get adequate opportunities to participate. In instances of individuals not contributing to group projects sufficiently, students may privately reach out to the instructor to seek a resolution or start an official enquiry into the issue. While the resolution will be focused on facilitating dialogue and communication, the enquiry will be focused on establishing evidence regarding the absence or inadequacy of contribution by concerned members and may result in a reduction in grade or disciplinary action.

https://tutorcs.com

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property created in this course will be subject to the same rules as for any other course. More information on IP rights and regulations at Northeastern can be found here: <http://www.northeastern.edu/general-counsel/ip/index.html>

Resources

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Basic Needs and Childcare³

Any student who fears that their financial situation is affecting their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please reach out to me if you need assistance in managing classroom participation expectations. This will enable the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. resources that they may possess.



If you are unable to find alternate child care accommodations, children and/or other family members are permitted in class. Please attempt to minimize distractions for other students and reach out to me if you need assistance in managing classroom participation expectations.

WeChat: estutores

Wellness

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As participants in the academic community, we do our best to maintain a healthy, balanced life. As a student, however, you may experience a range of challenges including significant stress, difficult life events, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping. This may all be amplified by the current national and global environment. These can diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. If you or anyone you know is struggling, please seek support. Northeastern University provides several services and resources to support the overall wellness of students: [University Health and Counseling Services](#), [Find at Northeastern](#), and [We Care](#).

Email: tutores@163.com

QQ: 749389476

https://tutores.com

Discrimination, Harassment, and Title IX

The Office for University Equity and Compliance (OUEC), leads efforts to maintain the University's compliance with all federal, state, and local laws pertaining to anti-discrimination, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Title IX. They are also responsible for investigating and resolving all complaints of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation at Northeastern. If you or someone you know has been

³ Adapted from Sara Goldrick-Rab's Basic Needs Security and the Syllabus article <https://medium.com/@saragoldrickrab/basic-needs-security-and-the-syllabus-d24cc7afe8c9>

harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here:

<https://www.northeastern.edu/ouac/>

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Faculty at Northeastern University report to a Title IX coordinator.



Syllabus Schedule

**NOTE: Schedule is tentative, students will be informed of important alterations ASAP.*

PP = Prototype Project, S=Start, D=Done, FP = Final Project. See Canvas for readings

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QQ: 749389476

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Week	Date	Topics	Project Milestones
1	Mon 9/4 Second Half	NO CLASS [LABOR DAY]	
2	Mon 9/11 Second Half	Introduction, Why Do We Prototype? Experimental Series, Trello for Prototypes	PP1.S
3	Mon 9/18 Second Half	Analog UI/WoZ, Board & Dice Games Art Games and Serious Games Prototyping (Optional) Boston GameDev Meetup MIT 19 th	PP1.D, PP2.S
4	Mon 9/25 Second Half	Social/Verbal/Parlor, Improv, Sports Multiplayer, Local or Analog, Card	PP2.D, PP3&4.S Hand-in either 1 or 2
5	Mon 10/2 Second Half	Real-Time Spatial Reflex, Arcade Gameplay Digital vs. Non-Digital Prototyping	PP3&4.D for testing, but hand in next week
6	Mon 10/9 Second Half	NO CLASS [INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY] Extra week for digital prototyping. Instructor available by zoom for support calls this week	Hand-in <u>1 PP</u> on 10/10, won't be due on the holiday

7	Mon 10/16 Second Half	Midterm capstone reflection presentation / showcase / discussion What to Take Forward (Decision Matrix)	Mid-Term Presentations PP5.S
8	Mon 10/16 Second Half	Midterm capstone reflection presentation / showcase / discussion ARG, LARP =	PP5.D, PP6.S
9	Mon 10/16 Second Half	Midterm capstone reflection presentation / showcase / discussion Custom Hardware, VR or "VR" Modding or Rules Layer, Branching Iteration	PP6.D, Hand-in <u>1</u> PP PP7.S
10	Mon 11/6 Second Half	Prototyping for Levels/Tuning Polish In-Class Playtesting for Levels/Tuning	PP7.D, PP8.S
11	Mon 11/13 Second Half	Look and Sound Experiments In-Class Testing for Look and Sound	PP8.D, Hand-in <u>1</u> PP Art/Audio Experiments
12	Mon 11/20 Second Half	Preparing for Public, Playtesting Playtesting with Formal Form Process	Playtesting Form FP Part 1
13	Mon 11/27 Second Half	Marketing/Business/Audience Prototyping In-Class Work and Testing on Final Project	FP Part 2
14	Mon 12/4 Second Half	In-Class Presentations for Final Projects	FP Part 3
15	Wed, Dec 6 Fri, Dec 15	Last day of fall classes is Wed, Dec 6 Final Project Documentation Submission	FP Final Part 4: End

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QQ: 749389476

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Module Progression

*All course modules will be completed in the order reflected in the syllabus schedule.
(except the Makerspace modules which are scheduled based on availability)

*If a Course Module is not completed in the designated class, it will be rolled over to the next session. For students who need to be accommodated in the following sessions to stay on schedule with the course, please contact the tutor.



***The Final Project** starts with a discussion of proposed ideas, to be prepared over the weekend and presented in class in **FP Round 1**, after which the idea will be finalized.

*Following this, students will be expected to make progress on their Final Project every week and all subsequent weeks will involve **FP Check-ins** every week, which will serve as a review of updates to the status of the final project.

*While **Final Project Milestones** do not denote a definitive deliverable, they will involve an in-class playtest and presentation of all the updates and changes made to the project over the last weekend.

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