

AET 336 Game History and Theory

Course Sections

Instructor	TA	UID	Meeting Times	Room
David (D.S.) Cohen	Samantha Brown	20944	M/W 12:30 - 2P	DFA 4.106

Abstract

From the catalogue: Introduction to critical and historical approaches to video games and game design, including video game histories and archives, critical media theory in game development and contemporary social issues in gaming.

Objective

Through historical examination, identify how game design and player engagement was innovated through the origins and progression of game technology; where mechanics that continue to be used today began, and how they have changed through decades of iteration and evolution.

Assessment

This course is project and journal based. There will be no exams. Grading is based on successful completion of project, and journal objectives. Assignments are worth 60%, the final project is worth 30%, and the remaining 10% of the final grade is based on professionalism which is earned by attending class during the scheduled meeting times and conducting oneself in a professional manner.

No late work will be accepted. No incompletes will be given. If you feel you will not be able to complete all work on time, you should ask the instructor for a grade of Q or drop before the deadline for doing so passes.

Note: If you catch the flu, get a flat tire, or otherwise cannot attend class, please send an email and attach any class work as needed.

Final grades will be determined on the basis of the following rubric. Please note: to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. Thus a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

Letter grade equivalents:

A = 94-100
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76
C- = 70-73

D+ = 67-69
D = 64-66
D- = 60-63
F = 0-60

File Format:

Presentations, docs, spreadsheets, flowcharts, concept art, etc. File Format: PDF;
 Game Builds – File Format: Executable file (.exe)

File Naming Convention: If submitting as an individual...

Firstname_Lastname_AssignmentName_Numeric DateSubmitted

Example: davidc_conceptpitch_07042018

If submitting as a team...**TeamName_AssignmentName_DateSubmitted**

Example: davidc_conceptpitch_07042018

IMPORTANT: Do not use slashes (/) in the date, as the system will not accept it and it may not read correctly.

Classroom Policy

Devices

- Must be kept in silent mode unless an emergency notification is expected (please discuss this with me prior to class).
- Can be used for research and class note taking, but not for social media (unless related to class activities)

Food/Drink

- Food is not allowed in class.
- Drinks in closed containers are permitted but must be kept on the floor or out of sight when not in use.

Required Equipment

All students **MUST** have access to a portable computer capable of running Unity, GameMaker Pro, or Construct game Engine(s), and Twine. Either Mac or PC is fine.

Calendar

Note – This is outline, assignments, and reading are subject to change by the instructor, without notification in certain cases.

1	8/29 Course Intro What is play? The Player loop Journal 1: Research a pre-video/digital coin-op arcade game. Analyze the game design, and player loop	Journal 1
2	9/3 Labor Day - No Class	
	9/5 Age of Discovery - Electronic Games - First Computer Games	Journal 2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First AI Game - Brown Box Project <p>Journal 2: Research one of the first electronic (non-video) games. Analyze the game design, mechanics, and user interface.</p>	
3	9/10 The First Generation Project 1: Design a game using just the capabilities of this first generation of game technology. Don't recreate an existing game; create new gameplay opportunities.	Project 1
	9/12 The First Generation (Cont.) Continue Project 1	
4	9/17 Adventure Games (Text/Graphical/Point-and-click/Serialized) Project 2 - Part 1: Design a game map, and two puzzles for a text adventure game. Familiarize yourself with Twine. A tool for making text adventure games. http://twinery.org/	Project 2 - Part 1
	9/19 Adventure Games (Cont.) Continue Project 2 - Part 1	
5	9/24 Rom Cartridge Revolution Journal 3: Select an Atari 2600, ColecoVision, Intellivision or pre-1984 arcade game that you feel innovated in some way. Examine the gameplay mechanics and player interaction. Where was it successful? Where did it fail? Project 2 - Part 2: Using Twine, create a text adventure game based on the map and puzzles you created in Part 1	Project 2 - Part 2 Journal 3
	9/26 Rom Cartridge Revolution (Part 2) Project 2 - Part 2 Continued	
6	10/1 Industry Crash (1983) Journal 4: Compare Atari 2600 game to an NES game	Journal 4
	10/3 Industry Rebirth (1884)	
7	10/8 Home Computer Gaming Journal 5: Compare NES game with PC games the period/generation.	Journal 5
	10/10 Computer Gaming (Cont)	
8	10/15 Handheld Gaming Journal 6: Identify and compare a game from the First or Second generation of handheld systems, with a modern mobile (iOS/Android) game in the same genre. Outline and examine the differences between the player loop, and interface.	Journal 6

	10/17 Handheld Gaming (Cont.)	
9	10/22 16-bit gaming The Console Wars Begin Project 3 - Team Based Project - Design and build a game for a first through third generation game platform - 10/24 64-bit - Games Move to Disc (Except Nintendo) Journal 7: Examine and explain how the transition from 2D to 3D games impacted game mechanics and experience.	Project 3 (Team Based Final Project) Journal 7
10	10/29 3D Games - 10/31 Experimental Games Journal 8: Identify and research a pre-2000 experimental art game. Break down the user experience and why it was a significant artistic statement.	Project 3 (Cont.) Journal 8
11	11/5 Online Gaming - 11/7 Online Gaming (Cont.)	Project 3 (Cont.)
12	11/12 History of Game Development - 11/14 History of Game Development	
13	11/19 History of Game Audio - 11/21 Thanksgiving - No Class	
14	11/26 VR/AR Gaming Journal 9 - Compare VR/AR user experience to that of the early first-person games. Examine design considerations that need to be made between these different experiences. - 11/28 VR/AR Gaming	
15	12/3 Looking at the Future though the Past Journal 10 - Select a currently used game mechanic and research its origins. Examine how the mechanic has evolved. - 12/5 LAB/Check-In	Project 3 (Cont.) Journal 10
16	12/10 (Last day before finals)	

	FINAL DUE	
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Units of Study

1. Game Design Evolution

- Using research and exploration to identify how game design and development has evolved through the progression of technology.

2. Innovation through limitations

- Readings and discussion of how early game design had to innovate through the tools that were available.
- Designing and building games within the confines of these limitations.

3. Understanding through the past how we play today

- Understanding the gameplay loop (Compulsion loop, core loop, experience loop) and how it changes based on platform.

Process

Students will maintain a journal as a record of their research on platform specific game design and comparing games, technology, and mechanics.

Individually and in teams, students will design, and build games using the mechanics and limitations of platforms from specific time periods.

Journals 1-3 - Due 10/1

- **Journal 1:** Research a pre-video/digital coin-op arcade game. Analyze the game design, and player loop
- **Journal 2:** Research one of the first electronic (non-video) games. Analyze the game design, mechanics, and user interface.
- **Journal 3:** Select an Atari 2600, ColecoVision, Intellivision or pre-1984 arcade game that you feel innovated in some way. Examine the gameplay mechanics and player interaction. Where was it successful? Where did it fail?

Journals 4-6 - Due 10/26

- **Journal 4:** Compare Atari 2600 game to an NES game
- **Journal 5:** Compare NES game with PC games the period/generation.
- **Journal 6:** Identify and compare a game from the First or Second generation of handheld systems, with a modern mobile (iOS/Android) game in the same genre. Outline and examine the differences between the player loop, and interface.

Journals 7-8 - Due 11/26

- **Journal 7:** Examine and explain how the transition from 2D to 3D games impacted game mechanics and experience.
- **Journal 8:** Identify and research a pre-2000 experimental art game. Break down the user experience and why it was a significant artistic statement.

Journals 9-10 - Due 12/10

- **Journal 9:** Compare VR/AR user experience to that of the early first-person games. Examine design considerations that need to be made between these different experiences.
- **Journal 10** Select a currently used game mechanic and research its origins. Examine how the mechanic has evolved.

Projects

Project 1 Individual Project - Due 9/17

Building within design limitations of the first generation. Design a game using just the capabilities of this first generation of game technology. Don't recreate an existing game; create new gameplay opportunities.

Project 2 Individual Project - Part 1 Due 9/21 , Part 2 Due 10/8

Exploring how environmental navigation, puzzle mechanics, and decision trees can be experienced through text-only gameplay.

Part 1: Design a game map, and two puzzles for a text adventure game.

Part 2: Using Twine, create a text adventure game based on the map and puzzles you created in Part 1

Project 3 Team Based - Weekly Progress Reports Due Each Tuesday - Final Project Due 12/10

Identifying and building gameplay opportunities within the confines of graphical, mechanical, and interfaces of early game technology.

As a team, select a platform from the first through third generation of video game consoles. Design and build a game that would be able to operate on that platform using Unity, Construct GameMake Pro. Games must exhibit a core loop/experience loop that is indicative of the period, and include at least one new concept in mechanics. Games can be Single or multi-screen. Single screen games can have multiple stages, however multi-screen (3 or more) games should be limited to a single level.

While the final project will be due on 12/10, weekly reports from the team need to be submitted every Tuesday starting 10/29. Weekly reports must include progress updates, learnings, and a breakdown of the work accomplished by each team member.

Class Attendance Policy

As detailed above, attending class during the scheduled meeting times earns professionalism credit. Credit is NOT earned for arriving late, leaving early, or failing to attend class meetings. If attending a scheduled class meeting is not possible, students are expected to promptly notify the instructor of extenuating circumstances.

Q Drop Policy

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231: "Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including

any course a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education, unless the student shows good cause for dropping more than that number.”

University Attendance Policy: Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Documented Disability Statement

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD. academic honesty University of Texas Honor Code The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.