

AET 339 NARRATIVE DESIGN

Course Sections

Instructor	UID	Meeting Times	Room
David (D.S.) Cohen	20993	T/R 3:30 - 5P	ECJ 1.304

Abstract

An cross-disciplinary design course where students explore establishing, communicating, and assimilating a cohesive and immersive narrative into all aspects of digital games experiences. Students will focus on both design theory and practice as they develop methods for seamless narrative integration into the game design, systems, mechanics, environments, characters, mood, and aesthetics.

Objective

Learn the process of integrating narrative into all elements of a digital game.

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).
- Cell phones can be used to audio record lectures, and take photos of work written on the board of lecture slides, but should not be used for note taking or research.
- Larger devices 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 the Unity game engine, Maya, audio recording and editing, and video editing software of your choice. 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	8/30 Course Intro Role of the a Narrative Designer Journal - Select a game and break down the narrative components. Show all of the ways the narrative is communicated, not just the primary story (A-Story) but the story of each character, the world, situation, etc.	Journal 1
2	9/4 Narrative Theory in games - Narratology Vs. Ludology	
	9/6	Journal 2

	<p>Direct, Implied, and Projected Narrative</p> <p>Do players have an impact on narrative?</p> <p>Journal - Projected Narrative: Write a narrative for a 1980 arcade game that does not contain a direct narrative. Include the visuals, environment, and mechanics as part of this narrative.</p>	
3	<p>9/11</p> <p>Gameplay/Mechanics or Story - When Narrative Begins?</p> <p>Journal - Select a game and write a breakdown of how the mechanics were used to help communicate the story.</p> <p>Project 1 - Write game concept focusing on mechanics and player interactions. Do not include the story.</p> <p>-</p> <p>9/13</p> <p>LAB</p>	<p>Journal 3</p> <p>Project 1</p>
4	<p>9/18</p> <p>Storytelling in games. Word Narrative, Player Narrative.</p> <p>How the story works within the mechanics.</p> <p>Journal - Examine a game that contains both a world narrative and a separate player narrative. Identify their differences and how they come together.</p> <p>Project 2 - Write a story pitch that works within your previously approved game mechanics</p> <p>-</p> <p>9/20</p> <p>LAB</p>	<p>Journal 4</p> <p>Project 2</p>
5	<p>9/25</p> <p>Developing an emotional connection for players</p> <p>Developing Characters</p> <p>Journal - Examine two characters (player character and NPC) in a game and how they create an emotional connection for the player. Identify how this is achieved through story and gameplay.</p> <p>Project 3: Character Q&A, Character sheets, and character moodboard</p> <p>-</p> <p>9/27</p> <p>LAB</p>	<p>Journal 5</p> <p>Project 3</p>
6	<p>10/2</p> <p>Creating emotional tone with sound</p> <p>Project 4 - Develop a tone video with sound and visuals</p> <p>-</p> <p>10/4</p> <p>LAB</p>	<p>Project 4</p>
7	<p>10/9</p> <p>The Hero's Journey - Creating it for your character and players</p> <p>Project 5 - Outline your narrative to develop a character arc. Show how this arc connects to the phases of the The Hero's Journey</p> <p>-</p>	<p>Project 5</p>

	10/11 LAB	
8	10/16 The multi-act structure in games Rising and falling action with narrative (peaks and valleys) Episodic Games and Worlds Without Ends. Journal - Examine the level to act structure of an existing narrative focused game. Identify how the overarching narrative was split into levels, and the story of the individual levels. Project 6 - Part 1 - Break your narrative into five level summaries, give each level an act structure that also connects to the overarching story. - 10/18 LAB	Journal 6 Project 6 - Part 1
9	10/23 Marrying narrative experience with the level / player flow. Multiple choices, branching paths. Evolution of player choice Do players control the narrative? Project 6 - Part 2: Develop your five levels into flow charts that exhibit branching events, player choice, and gameplay experience working with the narrative. - 10/25 LAB	Project 6 - Part 2
10	10/30 Game Dialogue Game Barks Journal - Analyze the dialogue from a single level of an existing game. Is it text or VO? How is the dialogue used to communicate information to the player. What kind of information does it convey? Project 7 - Write dialogue for the five levels of your game in required spreadsheet format. Identify if it is on-screen text or voice over. Dialogue must move the story forward. - Write series of barks for player characters and NPCs that are functional, while adding to the narrative. - 11/1 LAB	Journal 7 Project 7
11	11/6 Maps and Storyboards Journal - Review three environments from a current game. Explain how they communicate narrative with just the environmental elements Project 8 Part 1: Create maps for the first three gameplay environments in your game (total 3 maps). Identify key gameplay	Journal 8 Project 8 - Part 1

	<p>and narrative elements within the map, and player movement to communicate what they will experience and when. Identify and create a scale which will be used in building the environment.</p> <p>-</p> <p>11/8 LAB</p>	
12	<p>11/13 Environmental Storytelling Project 8 Part 2: Create Moodboards for the environment within each of your five maps.</p> <p>-</p> <p>11/15 World Building Project 8 Part 3: Build an environment in Unity that communicates a narrative. Follow scale outlined in your map (Single Unit is 1 meter in Unity)</p>	
13	<p>11/20 LAB</p> <p>-</p> <p>11/21 Thanksgiving (No Class)</p>	
14	<p>11/27 In Class - Teams of two: Exchange environments and write the story your team member's environment is telling you. Compare what you found with what they intended. Project 8 - Part 4: Submit your environment with the write up it is intended to communicate, along with the write up from your teammate</p>	
	<p>11/29 Narrative through sound design Project 9 - Develop a tone video with sound and visuals for your environments. https://freesound.org/</p>	Project 9
15	<p>12/3 Final Requirements Project 10 Final Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative Bible • Tone Video (Character and Environments) • In-Game Environments <p>-</p> <p>12/5 LAB</p>	Project 10 - Final
	<p>12/10 (Last day of class) Narrative Careers in Games Final Due</p>	

Units of Study

1. Narrative Approaches to Games

- Explore game design and storytelling opportunities through all elements of a game.

2. Elements of Narrative Design

- Terminology and concepts useful for narrative design.
- Define Narrative development construction through design, visuals, audio, and player experience

3. Narrative Designer Role

- Displaying narrative in environment, sound, and emotion through the building of a game environment and the creation of a tone video.
- Articulate how the narrative will be constructed for a game through the building a series of design documentations, culminating into a Narrative Bible

Process

Students will work individually in the role of Narrative designer for a game. They will research narrative design in existing games, pitch a game concept and narrative, then integrate the narrative into all elements of their game.

Narrative Design Journal

Throughout the course students will document research, analysis, writing and design exercises that they must document in an online journal.

Projects 1 : Game Concept Pitch (Mechanics Only)

Ludology argues that player experience is the the central focus of all games. Write a game concept focusing on mechanics and player interactions. Do not include the story.

Project 2: Story Pitch

Develop a narrative for a game that work with the game mechanics pitched in Project 1.

Project 3: Characters

Answer a series of questions about your characters. The answer to these questions will help flesh them out as characters that can be identified with.

Develop character sheets for your player character and the key NPCs (minimum of three)

Project 4: Hero's Journey

Outline your narrative to develop a character arc. Show how this arc connects to the phases of the The Hero's Journey

Project 5: Level Narrative Outlines

Break story into five level summaries, give each level an act structure that also connects to the overarching story.

Project 6: Narrative and Player Flow

Develop your five levels into flow charts that show branching events, player choice and gameplay experience working with the narrative.

Project 7: Dialogue

Write dialogue and barks for the five levels of your game in required spreadsheet format. Identify if it is on-screen text or voice over. Think about how the dialogue can compliment the gameplay and environments. Main dialogue must move the story forward, while Barks should be functional, while adding to the narrative.

Project 8: Environments

Create a map of one environment per level (total 5 environments) then build the level out within Unity (okay to use Unity Store Assets). Finalize Maps upon completion of your level.s

Split into teams of two. Exchange your environment projects and write the story your team member's environment is telling you.

Project 9:

Develop a tone video with sound and visuals. Include the environment you've created.

Project 10:

Final Narrative Bible

- Narrative Bibles are used for all development team members to understand how the narrative will be integrated into every element of the game.
- Updating, refining, and combining your previous document based projects will culminate into a full Narrative Bible.
- Final Tone Video of your game.
- Submit In-Game Environments Unity Project

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.