**Explain how you applied material from the class to the production of your GDW project**

**400-600 words**

The process of creating my board game combined many different aspects of game design. When thinking about how to tell the story of Greek gods battling each other in ancient Greece, our team realized that the scale of the game needed to take place on a larger size. Therefore, we decided to choose a map as the mainboard. Since we wanted the game to have replayable mechanics that engaged with the player and kept the game interesting, we added the concept of event cards. These cards would not only further the lore of the story but build excitement for each turn.

The player learns what they need to do as the game progress as the game forces players to think strategically or risk destroying themselves. To keep the grand ambience of Greek mythology, our team included the idea that the gods would die if they lose all their territories.  This concept is accurate to Greek mythology, as once you kill the significance of their domain. For example, if the relationship between Athena and wisdom ceased to be authentic, then Athena will no longer exist.

The usability of this game is the hardest thing that I found when creating this game. Our team wanted to create a game with higher difficulty to draw in more experienced board game players and those who want an in-depth gaming experience. Our ambitious game combined a variety of familiar aspects of other area control games like Risk and Ender’s Game to appeal to our core audience. While simplifying this game may add more usability for the players, our team felt that the multitude of actions and options could be learned and used by many kinds of players. The game is engineered to teach the player through trial and error what they need to do. The intent of our team was to create an atmosphere where players learn to better their strategies and grow as a person.

As a team, we also applied game design to the way we presented our game pieces and the board. Creating simple designs for the board and the tokens allowed for the game to not feel cluttered or overwhelming to new players. The tokens also reinforced the game’s themes with the use of religion token, army tokens and magic potions. The tokens contribute to the player’s feelings of power and of the mindset of a god, by allowing them to control and strengthen themselves. The feeling of power as you storm an opponent's city or when you capture a nice area is only amplified as you progressively capture all the territory on the board.

**Reflect on your personal experiences and progress in the course – note any surprises or challenges, or any connections you drew between course content and your past experiences.**

In Week Three, we discussed the idea of pitching and how to effectively present your ideas. I was surprised to realize that much success in this industry relies all on your pitch and not even necessarily your concept, but it makes sense. In my Business class in Grade 10, I presented the idea of an advertising company for your garage sales. Our duo got the highest mark in the class due to our presentation, not the validity of our concept. In our performance, I came up with the idea of bringing a box of used clothes as props and doing a short skit before the presentation. I also spent much time making the website look as presentable as possible. However, I could have used some of the pitching tips presented in the lesson. I did think of being arrogant and too confident as a bad trait for presentations, and I tend to go into that headspace to keep my calm, rather than being extremely nervous.

Doing presentations for many classes for all of my school career, we were never formally given these tips but rather were we’re supposed to glean them from Ted Talk videos. Adding purposeful humour and giving your presentation a bit of flair by timing your videos and images with your voice is something I never really thought of doing. I feel like the most challenging aspect of these ideas was to practice with lots of distractions, because I have a tough time with channelling out background noise. Due to my auditory-processing disorder, I actively struggle to stay on track with a ringing cell phone or a reeving car sounding off when I was trying to talk or listen. So actively overstimulating myself to prepare me for my presentation would probably not work in my situation.

Additionally, we talked in class about our GDD and how we would display our information and concepts for the game. The organization and usage of sectioning off individual aspects of the game would have been beneficial to know in my Grade 12 computer science course. When I was creating on different assignments, I found myself always making the mindmaps and pseudocode after the actual project as I was constantly changing it. The ability to constantly this GDD and organize all your thoughts into a document sounds incredibly helpful for managing what needs to be completed or changed. Keeping track of your asset list and characters make playtesting and creating the game much more manageable when working in a team. I especially liked the idea of the One-Pager for displaying the contents of my game rather than running 10+ pages and displaying them individually.

**Take an existing game and provide some analysis or critique based on course concepts, or suggest new ideas/design changes based on these concepts.**

While listening to the Lecture in Week 4, one slide brought up the idea of using Pokemon Emerald as a form of entertainment. When people think about the Pokemon series, they rarely associate them with being anything other than a form of entertainment, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. I feel as a player that the general public underappreciates the effort put into these games by developers to make innovative, meaningful games.

Even when the Pokemon series was beginning, Pokemon Yellow included a mechanic that allowed you to interact with Pikachu, something that I found to be therapeutic as a child. Knowing that I could turn on my Gameboy colour at any time and talk to my Pikachu meant a lot to me. Having Pikachu walk behind you, giving you moral support felt magical to my eight-year-old brain. Later in the series, games were Pokemon SoulSilver, and HeartGold allowed you to bring out all your Pokemon to follow behind you in-game. The Pokemon game sought to make the experience feel less isolating and to strengthen your relationship with the in-game characters. You could communicate with your Pokemon and in-game characters would mention your Pokemon as you communicate with them. This game mechanic made the Pokemon experience a personal experience rather than pure entertainment. Not only would you walk with them, but you would also be able to take photos with them, something I cherish as good memories even now.

Additionally, long before Pokemon Go began, Pokemon SoulSilver was sending you outside to level up your Pokemon with the “Tamagotchi” like mechanics. Holding my small pokemon device in hand, I would walk around the neighbourhood, getting the fitness I wouldn’t get otherwise. The games allow their core gameplay loop to feel rejuvenating, as you slowly add new friends onto your team of trusted Pokemon.

The Pokemon series didn’t solely exist for entertainment, marketing or fitness but a combination of all those reasons and more. These games were a personal project for Satoshi Tajiri, a man who collected insects as a hobby and wanted to share his passion in a meaningful way. I feel as though this idea that developers create games for only monetary value is a narrow way of thinking. As a game developer, you should have many compelling reasons to create a game.

Growing up, I was motivated to play these games for all the reasons listed: for escapism, the challenge and for the creativity the games offered. It allowed me to not only be social, trading with others, reaching new achievements and beating the elite four but many other reasons as well. The growth of emergent gameplay in Pokemon is one of the largest and most exciting of all the communities. As a child, I was regularly talking about glitches or the Mew under the truck or other rumours that made exploring the game feel fulfilling.

**Take an existing game and provide some analysis or critique based on course concepts, or suggest new ideas/design changes based on these concepts.**

Many existing games deal with the idea of the illusion of choice like Until Dawn, Detroit: Becomes Human and The Walking Dead. However, Life is Strange stands out to me as a game that not only creates the illusion of choice but extinguishes it in a narratively-potent way. Life is Strange is an episodic adventure game that perfectly demonstrates themes of choice and consequences through its series of moral dilemmas. The premise of Life is Strange focuses on the main protagonist, Maxine Caulfield, who gains powers to control time after saving her friend Chloe from being killed. Throughout the game, you gain a strong sense of agency as you are continually using your powers to redo choices and to control your environments (Example: Making paint fall on Victoria Price’s Head).

This game excels at engrossing you in the illusion of power and agency, as you feel like you are a god in this world. You can stop Kate from committing suicide, grow closer to Chloe and use photos to go back in time. However, when your characters prevent the accident that kills Chloe’s father, it leads to unforeseen consequences. In an alternate timeline, Chloe is now paralyzed from the waist down and asks Max to kill her. These emotionally devastating moments continually destroy your god complex and to perceive that your actions have real-world consequences. Something that felt right in the moment can lead to you losing loved ones and breaking other people’s trust in you.

This game only amplifies this theme of isolation, the loss of agency and the illusion of choice with its opening scene. Waking up to a vivid nightmare, you find yourself gazing at a massive storm approaching Arcadia Bay, where the story takes place. As the wind howls and the rain pelts down on you, you scream at the unfortunate end to your life. Then Max wake up in class and you as a player gradually forget this occurrence. However, this opening scene is essential to the game as you realize that your choices would always lead to this ending scene. No matter how you play, this opening credits scene would eventually become a reality, with your time travel, causing the universe to go into chaos.

This ending reverts all the confidence gathered from the entire game and puts the player in a terrible situation. With Chloe standing beside you, you have a choice to make: Would you save Arcadia Bay by allowing Chloe to die or save Chloe and destroy Arcadia Bay? Whatever your choice may be, this game successfully executes its illusion of choice and instantaneously destroys it in one moment.