

HUM 380: Fundamentals of Game Design
Illinois Institute of Technology
Department of Humanities

Instructor: Carly A. Kocurek

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.; or by appointment

Office: Siegel 212

E-mail: ckocurek@iit.edu

Course Description

A course introducing students to fundamental practices in game design using a non-technical approach.

Learning Objectives

Students will cultivate their abilities to:

- Design games with particular attention to the design of effective systems of rules.
- Read and interpret texts in the humanities.
- Produce written and oral discourse appropriate to the humanities.
- Make concise presentations of complex issues pertaining to the humanities.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the issues and methods entailed in providing and evaluating evidence or intellectual justifications for claims.
- Work cooperatively in groups.
- Use methods of peer evaluation.

Class Format

Information in this class will be provided through in class through interactive workshops and discussions, and out of class through assigned readings.

Students will complete a major and minor game-design project, a book review, and all in-class activities. Timelines and deadlines for all assignments and readings are noted on the class schedule below.

Readings

1. Brenda Braithwaite and Ian Schreiber, *Challenges for Game Designers* (required)
2. Katie Salen Tekinbas and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play* (recommended)
3. A game design book of the student's choosing selected within the parameters of the review assignment. (required)

Grade Breakdown

Participation	20%
Minor Project	15%
Book Review	15%
Major Project	50%

You must receive a passing grade on all components in order to pass the class.

Course Participation

Participation and attendance are an integral part of this class. As such, students are expected to come to class prepared and participate actively in discussion and in-class activities.

Attendance accounts for only part of participation -- attending class to sit silently does not constitute adequate participation. Additionally, attending class without preparing appropriately does not constitute adequate participation or attendance. Finally, there a number of disruptive, distracting, or otherwise inappropriate behaviors that are to be avoided. Engaging in any of these behaviors, or attending class unprepared for discussion, will result in a daily participation grade of 0. In general, students should remember the following:

- Turn off the ringer on your cell phone. Laptops, iPads and other devices are to be used for note taking only. Do not distract fellow students by surfing the web, watching multimedia programs, texting, playing games, or engaging in any other behavior that might distract from classroom engagement.
- Refrain from conducting private conversations during class, even if you are discussing course material.
- Raise your hand instead of interrupting the instructor or other students.
- Debate is encouraged in class, and everyone's opinion will be respected. It is not acceptable to hurl insults, raise voices, or behave aggressively in any way.
- Arrive in class having completed the week's readings and other assignments. Completing the week's work will prepare you to participate actively in the week's discussion. Active participation is a critical component of this course.

Please note: Disruptive and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. Failure to comply with classroom decorum standards will have a negative impact on your participation grade. Any behavior that violates the IIT student Code of Conduct will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Major Project

The student's major project is a prototype game completed in assigned groups of 3-4 people. The game should meet the following constraints: the game may be a card, board, or dice; the game may take no more than 10 minutes to play; the game must take fewer than 5 minutes to set up; the game must fit in a box of the assigned size; and the game must be playable by 2 to 4

players. Further, at least two game mechanics must be embedded into the game. Completion of the project involves successful production of the following components:

1. A **concept doc** of 1-2 pages that provides a high-level overview of your proposed game.
2. A **proposal**, of 5-8 pages that elaborates on the concept doc and additionally includes budget and time estimates and a production timeline.
3. A **design document** detailing gameplay and game components.
4. A **playable prototype** of the game. The prototype must be professional looking all components must be usable. There should not be handwritten cards, unevenly cut boards, pennies being used instead of pieces, etc. unless that is a deliberate design decision (ie, your packaged game would look that way).
5. A **playtesting report** detailing what was learned from playtesting and explains what the students plan to iterate to improve the game.
6. A **final post mortem** covering the final, public play test.

Minor Project

The minor project involves reverse engineering a given game. Students will work in groups of 2 to produce a design document describing the assigned game. The document will be given to another group to see if they can successfully reproduce the game from the documentation. Each pair of students will then complete a postmortem reflecting on how usable the documentation provided was.

Book Review

Each student individually will complete a review of a book on game design. Students will identify the book they wish to review; each student should be reviewing a separate book. Reviews will be 500-700 words and adhere to the standards of a scholarly book review.

Course Policies

Late Work Policy

Please note the due dates. Anticipate all possible contingencies (computer failure, illness, heartbreak, or anything else that may arise). Assignments received after the due date will receive a grade of 0. This penalty will only be waived in exceptional circumstances, such as those which would require a student to be absent for an extended period (such as hospitalization) or an unforeseen emergency such as a death in the family, and only when the student communicates such problems in advance of the deadline – not after the fact. You should contact me as soon as such circumstances arise and recognize that you will be asked to verify your excuse with documentation. I will not consider common illness such as a headache, cold, or flu (even with a doctor's not) to be grounds for an extension to any assignment.

Technology Policy

In the spirit of the campus iPad initiative, I strongly recommend using an iPad or tablet over using a laptop. You are welcome to use your iPad or similar tablet for note taking; pen-and-paper note taking is, of course, always permissible.

If you are observed using your iPad, tablet, or other technology for purposes other than class work during class, your participation grade will suffer.

Attendance

This class is based on discussion and hands-on activities, so attendance is essential to the successful completion of coursework. Any unexcused absences will negatively impact participation grades. If you miss more than four class meetings, you will receive a failing grade for participation.

Submission of Assignments

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the specified date. Assignments must be printed and properly formatted. No late work is accepted. An assignment is late if it is not submitted at the start of class.

Course Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verified disabilities. In order to access these resources or get special provisions in class you must register with Aggie Niemiec aniemiec@iit.edu in the Disability Service Office at the beginning of the semester and you must speak with me at the beginning of the semester as well so we can plan accommodations.

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. At minimum, academic dishonesty will result in a failing assignment grade as well as sanctions from the university. If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, re-read the code of student conduct and sections on academic dishonesty in the student handbook. If you are still unsure, make an appointment to speak with the instructor before turning in your work. It is never appropriate to use someone's ideas or words without giving them credit, and copying text from sources or peers is dishonest and short-circuits the learning process.

If you are unfamiliar with the University Academic Integrity Policy, please visit http://www.iit.edu/cac/student_resources/general/plagiarism.shtml and refer to the IIT

code of conduct statement on academic honesty at http://www.iit.edu/student_affairs/handbook/information_and_regulations/code_of_academic_honesty.shtml, or ask me for clarification.

Athletics

IIT Varsity athletes are responsible for notifying the instructor of any absences related to any formal sanctioned contest with another university or college. Absences related to these events are excused without penalty. If a student is missing a critical in-class exercise, such as peer review, as a result of participation in a formal sanctioned contest, alternative arrangements will be made for the student to complete this assignment. In all cases, the student is responsible for notifying the instructor of their athletic affiliation on the first day of class.

Writing Resources

Students interested in improving their writing can get help at the Humanities Department Writing Center located in Siegel 232-233. The writing center staff can help with any writing issues and are specially trained to assist students who did not learn English as a first or primary language: http://www.iit.edu/csl/hum/resources/writing_center.shtml

Course Schedule

Note: While all efforts have been made to assure this schedule is accurate, there is always the possibility that changes will occur as the semester develops. Any such changes made are intended to enhance the learning experience; no changes will require the purchase of additional materials.

Week 1: Introduction to class (January 12-16)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapters 1 and 2; *Rules of Play*, Foreward, Preface, Chapters 1 and 2

Meeting 1: Overview of syllabus and course assignments

Meeting 2: Discuss reading; in-class challenges

Week 2: Puzzles (January 19-23)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 3; *Rules of Play*, Chapters 4-7

Meeting 1: MLK Day Holiday. No class.

Meeting 2: Discuss reading; in-class challenges

Week 3: Digital v. Physical (January 26-30)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 4; *Rules of Play*, Chapters 8-10

Meeting 1: Minor project (reverse engineering)

Meeting 2: Discuss readings; In-class challenges

Week 4: Chance (February 9-13)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 5; *Rules of Play*, Chapter 11, 12, 14, and 15

Meeting 1: Discuss readings; in-class challenges

Meeting 2: Minor project (reverse engineering 2)

Week 5: Skill (February 16-20)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 6, 7, and 8; *Rules of Play*, Chapters 16, 17, 19, 20, and 21

Meeting 1: Discuss readings; in-class challenges; minor project post-mortem due

Meeting 2: Library day (select books for review)

Week 6: Group Projects (February 23-27)

Meeting 1: Groups assigned; rapid prototyping day

Meeting 2: Work day; research concept doc and proposal details

Week 7: Intellectual Property (continued) (March 2-6)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 9; *Rules of Play*, Chapters 22-24

Meeting 1: Concept doc workshop; drafts due at the beginning of class

Meeting 2: Discuss readings; In-class challenges; concept doc due

Week 8: Targeting a Market (March 2-6)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 10 and 11; *Rules of Play*, Chapters 22-24

Meeting 1: Discuss readings; In-class challenges

Meeting 2: Proposals workshop; drafts due at the beginning of class

Week 9: Genre (March 9-13)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 12

Meeting 1: Discuss readings; in-class challenges

Meeting 2: Visit to Idea Shop; proposals due at the beginning of class

Week 10: Spring Break (March 16-20)

Week 11: Genre (March 23-27)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 13; *Rules of Play*, Chapters 25-26

Meeting 1: Discuss readings; in-class challenges

Meeting 2: Peer review of book reviews; drafts due at the beginning of class

Week 12: Adding and Subtracting Mechanics (March 30-April 3)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 14

Meeting 1: Discuss readings; In-class challenges

Meeting 2: In-class playtesting; bring prototype and development document to class

Week 13: Multiplayer (April 6-10)

Read: *Challenges for Game Designers*, Chapter 15; *Rules of Play*, Chapter 28

Meeting 1: Discuss readings; in-class challenges; book reviews due at the beginning of class

Meeting 2: Discuss readings; In-class challenges

Week 13: Work week (continued) (April 13-17)

Meeting 1: In-class playtesting and revision

Meeting 2: In-class playtesting and revision

Week 14: Public play tests (April 20-24)

Meeting 1: In-class peer review; drafts due

Meeting 2: Final presentations; prototype and design document due at time of presentation

Week 15: Public play test (April 27-May 1)

Meeting 1: Final presentations (continued)

Meeting 2: Final presentations (continued), class evaluations, final thoughts

Finals: Major project postmortem due.