

Game Design 102: Beyond Games

Fall 2019 -- Section 208A (2364)

Mondays 9:30-12:15PM -- EA 516

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Office Hours: Room C417 ; Mondays 2-3:30 & Thursdays 3:30-5 ; 718-518-6683

Pre-Requisites: Game Design 101 (Intro to Games)

Course Description

This course explores the revolutionary effect that games have had on our culture at large and how artists, sociologists, politicians, musicians and others have used games and gaming tools to create new forms of expression. The class will be divided into four sections focusing on: games as art, games as story, games as social interaction, and games as tools for learning. Students will read and analyze a variety of articles relating to these topics. Students will develop educational games, research related topics and develop papers about their research. In addition students will have the opportunity to create game art as well as explore the narrative power of games

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this class, you will...

- Have a rich understanding of the many ways games affect us both individually and as a society
- Know the larger history of games and play
- Be able to speak intelligently about games and game concepts
- Be able to make games that speak to issues beyond pure leisure

Assigned Texts & Resources

You are expected to come to each class with paper and a writing instrument.

You are not required to purchase any texts for this class. Games are a wonderful and weird discipline, new and rebellious enough that a huge portion of the most interesting writings and creations on the topic are available free online. Any assigned readings that are not available online for free will be provided by the professor in-class.

Any readings/etc I've assigned can be found in the schedule below. Note that they are placed on the day that they are DUE, not the day they are ASSIGNED. I'll be posting reminders (and possibly modifications) on Ryder each week, as well. There will probably be some changes made to the assigned readings based on what I feel fit this specific class, so keep an eye on there to make sure you don't do an obsolete reading assignment

Attendance & Participation

Attendance will be taken every single class. Students enrolled in this course will be allowed a fixed number of flexible absences for any reason throughout the semester (including both those that would traditionally be considered excused and unexcused). No points will be deducted from the grade for all absences up to the number chosen or allotted by default for the student.

Students will indicate how many flexible absences they want allotted before the second class of the semester. **There will be no excused absences beyond the number allotted.** It is recommended that students choose the smallest number of absences that they can strive to achieve. Setting high, but realistic standards for oneself encourages better performance. The option chosen will be permanent for the remainder of the semester and cannot be changed.

For each class session missed in excess of the allotted amount, 5 points will automatically be deducted from your final grade. Lateness is highly discouraged; 3 tardies will be treated as one absence. Students arriving more than half an hour late will be considered absent and marked accordingly.

Participation in in-class discussions is mandatory. Repeated failure to do so will lower your participation grade.

Student Services

Students with documented disabilities should contact Ms. Salazar (psalazar@hostos.cuny.edu) in the Savoy Building. Students wishing counseling for any reason should contact the Hostos Counseling Center (also in the Savoy Building) at 718/518-4319 (email: infocounseling@hostos.cuny.edu). Math tutoring is available at the Hostos Academic Learning Center (C-596), Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. through 8 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. through 3 p.m. Online tutoring is available at [http:// www.hostos.cuny.edu/halc/](http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/halc/).

Academic policies (from Catalogue)

Hostos Community College believes that developing student's abilities to think through issues and problems by themselves is central to the educational process. Since the Hostos College degree signifies that the student knows the material s/he has studied, and the practice of academic dishonesty results in grades or scores that do not reflect how much or how well the student has learned, understood, or mastered the material, the College will investigate any form of academic dishonesty brought to its attention. If the charge of academic dishonesty is proved, the College will impose sanctions. The three most common forms of academic dishonesty are cheating, plagiarism, and bribery.

Plagiarism/Cheating

If you do it, I'll know.

Students caught plagiarizing will be asked to meet with me during my office hours to determine appropriate consequences, with the default consequence being an automatic failing of the class. If the deadline is looming and you're in a panic about getting it done on time, please reach out to me and we can work something out. Getting it in a little late is going to be way better for your grade than turning in work that isn't your own, I promise you.

Bribery (from Catalogue)

In the collegiate setting, bribery involves the offering, promising, or giving of items of value, such as money or gifts, to a person in a position of authority, such as a teacher, administrator, or staff member, so as to influence his/her judgment or conduct in favor of the student. The offering of sexual favors in exchange for a grade, test score, or other academic favor, shall be considered attempted bribery. The matter of sexual favors, either requested or offered, in exchange for a grade, test score or other academic favor, shall also be handled as per the Sexual Harassment procedures of the College.

Grade Breakdown

20% Participation
10% Favorite Game Reflection
40% Expository Essay
30% Final Game

Grade Definitions

95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
75-79	C+
70-75	C
60-69	D
0-60	F

Assignments

Favorite Game Reflection -- 500 Words (10%)

An informal assignment to get your analytic juices pumping for the semester. Tell me in 500 words or more what your favorite game is and what it means to you. That sounds simple enough, right? The thing is, I really want you to think about what, exactly it is that you value about the game; what makes it your favorite? Is it especially well made on a technical level? Was it something that helped you create great memories with a friend or loved one? How does it fit into your life and routines? Do its themes speak to your identity or beliefs on a deep level? Think about the ways this game has impacted your life, and then tell me about them!

Expository Essay -- 2000-2500 Words (40% in Total)

In this essay, I want you to make a bold but defensible claim about a game, and then back it up with well reasoned writing.

- **Proposal: (5%)** Figure out a topic you're interested in exploring in the essay and bring it to class. You don't actually need to know what your conclusion is going to be yet, but it should be a topic that feels like it has a lot of room for exploration. Importantly, this should not be a direct value judgement or matter of opinion--an essay talking about how your favorite game is good is not appropriate (and, honestly, is way harder to write). We'll discuss appropriate topics in-class!
- **Sources: (5%)** Now that you have a topic, it's time to educate yourself! Even if it's a topic you're already familiar with, you need to do some research online and see what other people have said about it. Find **3-5 articles** on the topic you wish to explore--these will be the points of view you'll be engaging with (either to argue against or build on top of) for your essay.
- **Thesis/Outline: (5%)** Now that you've been thinking about the topic a good bit, it's time to get your thoughts down on paper. Come up with the argument you'll be making and express it in a

strong thesis statement. Then, additionally, make a bullet-point list of the points you'll be making that prove your thesis. They don't have to be fully fleshed out yet, but they should be organized in a way that you can pretty much just turn each into a paragraph

- **Final Submission: (25%)** Now that you've done all this prep work, it's time to actually sit down and write the essay. I look forward to reading it!

Final Game (30% in Total)

The culmination of this class is taking everything you just learned about the greater ways that games impact us and the world around us and try to make a game that, in some way, makes the world a better place.

What this means is pretty flexible. A Serious Game that is meant to open people's eyes to something about the world? An educational game meant to help people build themselves up in some way? An art game that pushes the boundaries of what games could be? An intensely personal piece of self-expression? All are appropriate--it's just important to make sure the game has ambitions beyond only being 'fun'. If you're feeling blocked, maybe skim the class schedule for inspiration.

The game itself can either be a tabletop (board game or RPG), or can use Twine as an engine to make a digital game. Non-twine digital games must get special teacher approval.

- **Design Document: (5%)** This should take the form of a word document that describes what the game is, what will be needed to make it, and what your ambitions are in making it. What this means, exactly, will depend somewhat on the type of game you're making. Examples will be given in-class as this becomes due.
- **Prototypes: (5%)** You'll be expected to bring a playable version of the game to the final several classes. These don't need to be pretty, or even finishable, but they should be complete enough that you can sit down and try out the game's core mechanic with people to see if it's working.
- **The Game: (20%)** The final day of class will be us all getting to hear about each other's game and try them out! Expect to be graded primarily on how well the game accomplishes what it set out to do, although polish/mechanics/etc will be factored in as appropriate.

##	Date	Topic	Summary	Assignments Due
--	9/2	No Class	That's right! Our first day of class is a vacation day!	
1	9/5 (Thurs)	Intro Day	What's on the syllabus? Who are we all? What is a game? Are games art? Why would we even have this discussion? How do we do theory responsibly?	None! You probably haven't even seen this syllabus yet

2	9/9	Writing About Games	<p>What's the difference between reviews and games writing?</p> <p>What are the types of games writing?</p> <p>How do you write about games?</p> <p>What's up with this expository essay that's due?</p>	<p>Due: Favorite Game Reflection</p> <p>Read: A year in Stardew Valley</p> <p>Read: Stardew Valley Review</p> <p>Read: Swap Adjacent Gems to Make Sets of Three</p> <p>Read: Game Criticism, Why We Need It, and Why Reviews Aren't It</p>
3	9/16	History of Games	<p>Ancient Games</p> <p>Classic Games</p> <p>Sports</p> <p>War Games, RPGs, & Board Games</p> <p>Early Digital Games</p>	<p>Due: Expository Essay Proposal</p> <p>Read: The Full History of Board Games</p> <p>Read: TBA</p>
4	9/23	Games as Story	<p>What types of stories do games give us?</p> <p>How do games relate to other media?</p> <p>What do games do that's unique?</p> <p>What was Ludology vs Narratology?</p>	<p>Read: A breakdown of 2013's most fascinating video game moment</p> <p>Watch: The Solo Eggplant Run</p> <p>Read: Video Games Are Better Without Stories</p> <p>Read: Games Telling stories?</p>
--	9/30	No Class	--	--
5	10/7	Games as Community	<p>What's a game community?</p> <p>What communities are you in?</p> <p>How do game communities use games?</p> <p>How do game communities go beyond games?</p>	<p>Read: When a Video-Game World Ends</p> <p>Watch: Evo Moment #37</p> <p>Read: HEARTS, CLUBS, DIAMONDS, SPADES: PLAYERS WHO SUIT MUDS</p> <p>Due: Expository Essay Sources</p>
--	10/14	No Class	--	--
6	10/16 (Wed)	Playing Well	<p>What does it mean to play well?</p> <p>What's a scrub?</p>	<p>Due: Expository Essay Thesis/Outline</p>

			<p>Is the point of a game to win?</p> <p>What's speedrunning?</p>	<p>Read: Dekoven TBA</p> <p>Read: Introducing...the Scrub</p>
7	10/21	The Magic Circle	<p>What is the magic circle?</p> <p>Does what happens in a game stay in the game?</p> <p>Are games addictive?</p>	<p>Read: Jerked Around by the Magic Circle</p> <p>Read: MUTILATED FURRIES, FLYING PHALLUSES: PUT THE BLAME ON GRIEFERS, THE SOCIOPATHS OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD</p> <p>Play: The Marriage</p>
8	10/28	Art Games	<p>What is the full range of what games can be?</p> <p>What's the history of art games?</p> <p>What does it mean for games to be queered?</p>	<p>Read: Death of the Player</p> <p>Read: QUEERING HUMAN-GAME RELATIONS</p> <p>Read: Notes on Yoko Ono's White Chess Set</p> <p>Due: Expository Essay</p>
9	11/4	Games as Social Change	<p>What do games do to us?</p> <p>Can games be used to improve the world?</p> <p>What is procedural rhetoric?</p> <p>Can games educate us?</p> <p>Can games hurt us?</p> <p>What is gamification?</p> <p>How do I write a design doc?</p>	<p>Play: The Evolution of Trust</p> <p>Play: Super Tofu Boy</p> <p>Play: The Best Amendment</p> <p>Read: Persuasive Games: Exploitationware</p> <p>Read: All Rise And No Fall</p>
10	11/11	Identity & Games	<p>How does race, gender, sexuality, etc interact with games?</p> <p>Should sex be in video games?</p> <p>Is representation important?</p> <p>What's Twine and how do I use it?</p>	<p>Read: A RAPE IN CYBERSPACE</p> <p>Play: Dys4ia</p> <p>Due: Final Game Design Doc</p>
11	11/18	Making Games	<p>Who makes games?</p>	<p>Read: TBA</p>

			<p>How do game studios work?</p> <p>What is user created content?</p> <p>Who do games belong to?</p> <p>How do I playtest, again?</p>	Due: Final Game Prototype I
12	11/25	Playtest Day	<p>Is my game fun?</p> <p>Is my game functional?</p>	Due: Final Game Prototype II
13	12/2	Playtest Day	<p>What last touches can I do to my game to make it better?</p>	Due: Final Game Prototype III
14	12/9	Play Day	<p>What games did you all make?</p> <p>Let's play them!</p>	Due: Final Game