Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community College – Media Design Program
Spring 2018 - GD201 Digital Games

Tuesday 2:00-4:45pm **Room C-593**

Professor Dylan Shad

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Office Hours: by appointment
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Class Website: www.dylanshad.com/blog/GD201

Course Description

This course introduces students to the concepts of game mechanics, game theory and digital game production by affording them the opportunity to read about games and game development, play test several different video games, and finally to create their own game using important development tools. The course explores the effect of gaming on entertainment, learning, and even business by analyzing how games can be more critically discussed. In this way, students learn to be better developers through building skills in critical thinking, analysis, game design, and communication. On a deeper level, the course works to find ways to address fundamental misunderstandings by the general public that the form is entirely represented by games with a violent subject matter.

Prerequisites: None
Credit Hours: 3 hours

Course objectives:

By the end of the course, students will have learned:

· An introduction to game theory
· A brief History of games
· The principles of user testing
· Better methods of iterative design
· Methodologies for designing interaction
· How to develop and write a rule set

Required readings:

- Poole, Steven. **Trigger Happy: Videogames and the Entertainment Revolution**
- Wolfe, Mark J. P.. **The Medium of the Video Game**
- Koster, Raph. **A Theory of Fun for Game Design**
- Rogers, Scott. **Level Up! The Guide to Great Video Game Design**
- Hunicke, LeBlanc, Zubek. **MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research**

Expectations:

While this class has not been designed as 'web-enhanced,' it is expected that students wishing to take full advantage of the class have:

- Familiarity with the internet;
- Access to the internet from home or elsewhere
- An **active Hostos email** account, which they check daily

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/.

Due dates:
Late assignments will get only partial credit. Presentations may not be turned in late.

Grading:		**Grades:**	
Reviews:	5	95-100	A
Game Projects	85	90-94	A-
Participation	10	87-89	B+
Total	**100**	84-86	B
		80-83	B-
		75-79	C+
		70-74	C
		60-69	D
		0-59	F

Digital Games (DG) assignments:
This is a studio course involving a combination of lecture, project activities, and discussion of assigned readings. Staying on top of the reading assignments is essential in order to be informed and make contributions during in-class discussions and activities. These readings will reference and introduce concepts and vocabulary that may at times be unfamiliar and so require students to do independent research. This will be expected.
10% of the grade will be based on engagement and consistent attendance. The balance of the grade will be determined by several projects undertaken over the 15 week course.

Assignment	Due:	Points
Tutorial: Roll-a-ball		2
Tutorial: Choice		2
Rube Goldberg Machine		2
Reading Worksheet Quizzes		6
Reading/Game Response		8
Core Pitch & GDD Update		3
Core Playground Level & GDD Update		2
Core Menu and Scene Select & GDD Update		2
Core Mechanics Finished & GDD Update		4

Assignment	Due:	Points
Core Game Loop & GDD Update		4
Core Final Presentation & Turn In (with GDD)		20
Level Pitches & GDD Update		2
Level Mechanics Finished & GDD Update		4
Levels Implemented & GDD Update		4
Levels Polished & GDD Update		2
Final Presentation & Levels Final Turn In (with GDD)		23
Attendance & Participation	-	10
Total		100

Notes on the grading criteria:
Work will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Understanding and interpretation of readings
- Research and Analysis of related issues
- Creative Problem Solving
- Originality of work
- Contribution to in-class discussion

The assignments:
What follows are brief descriptions of the course assignments students will be doing over the course of the term. Detailed instructions will be provided in-class. Written assignments are to be posted to the class blog no later than 30 minutes prior to the start of class. Without a physician or counselor's note, late assignments will not be accepted and so will receive a grade of 0.

Reading and Game Response Papers (RGR)
Students will be assigned readings and games to play that illustrate both the history and the mechanics of our topic. Students will then write 200-500 word response papers analyzing the games played through the lens of the associated week's readings. Four papers are due at specified times throughout the semester, and may focus on the readings and game pairings of any week prior to its due date.
They should be completed and turned in to the class website as a PDF upload. Games are assigned as collections from which students may choose what to play. These collections are outlined on the class website.

Game Projects
Over the course of the semester, students will work on two halves of two separate game projects, working first on the core mechanics, followed by polish and level design. Every team is expected to give varying levels of presentation each week, as well as post an updated copy of their game's GDD in PDF form.

Presenting:

Beginning in week 4, student teams are expected to present work every week. There are three different presentation types, depending on the stage the project is at. Pitch presentations are due the first week a project is expected to be presented, followed by Updates every week after until the project is due, at which point students are expected to give a Final presentation.

Pitch Presentation

These are meant to communicate to the instructor and the class the team's intention for their project. It should detail the intended work, its division among all members of the team, and the end-user experience it is meant to provide. Presentations should be supported by visuals, and be no longer than five minutes in length.

Update

Updates are less formal, and do not require a powerpoint. Instead, students are expected to stand and briefly talk about their work accomplished that week. In addition, they must come to class with a working copy of their project in its current form to demonstrate their progress to the class and professor.

If the entire course of a project has changed, a Pitch Presentation is expected instead of an Update.

Final Presentation

At the end of a project, all teams are expected to make a final presentation, detailing the final product and contrasting the end result with their initial objectives. Specific expectations and requirements will shift between projects, to be announced in class and on the class website.

Documentation:

Students are expected to keep full documentation of their game projects, which shall be uploaded to the class website every week alongside the most recent iteration of their game. Exact details regarding content, formatting, and such shall be given in class and on the class website. However, it should generally follow GDD standards set up in previous classes, while also being comprehensive enough to (in the case of the game core) allow a smooth on-boarding experience for the next design team.

The two game projects will be as follows:

Project 1: Game Core

Forming a team of 2-3 students, develop a game core in Unity. Begin by conceiving of either a new core game mechanic, or an unusual use of an existing one. Develop all of the relevant pieces together into a full game loop with one test (or "playground") level, and polish the feel and interactions of the game.

Project 2: Level Design

Forming a team of 3-6 students, choose one of the Project 1 game cores. Develop a set of levels for that game core. These levels should teach the game, introduce a few new mechanics, and provide a sense of progression for the player.

Participation:

A student's participation grade is based primarily on their attendance and participation in class. Every student begins the term with 10 participation points. Attendance is mandatory for every single scheduled class. For each class missed, 3 participation points will be deducted. Tardy students will have 1 participation points deducted. More than three absences amounts to a failure, as a student may not earn less than 0 participation points.

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.

Cheating (from Catalogue):

In the collegiate setting, cheating is defined as the purposeful misrepresentation of another's work as one's own. Faculty and students alike are responsible for upholding the integrity of this institution by not participating either directly or indirectly in act of cheating and by discouraging others from doing so.

Plagiarism (from Catalogue):

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which occurs when persons, even if unintentionally, fail to acknowledge appropriately the sources for the ideas, language, concepts, inventions, etc. referred to in their own work. Thus, any attempt to claim another's intellectual or artistic work as one's own constitutes an act of plagiarism.

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.

College attendance policy (from Catalogue):

Students are expected to attend all class meetings in the courses for which they are registered. Classes begin at the times indicated in the official schedule of classes. Arrival in class after the scheduled starting time constitutes lateness.

The maximum number of absences is limited to 15% of the number of scheduled class hours per semester and a student absent more than the indicated 15% is deemed

excessively absent. Attendance is monitored from the first official day of classes. In the case of excessive absences or lateness, the instructor has the right to lower the grade, assign a failing grade, or assign additional written work or readings.

Absences due to late registration, change of program, or extenuating circumstances will be considered on an individual basis by the instructor. Each department and program may specify in writing a different attendance policy. Instructors are required to keep an official record of student attendance and inform each class of the College's or department attendance policy.

NOTE:

- Any work missed during any period of absence must be made up by the student.
- To meet financial aid criteria, a student must attend class at least once in the first three weeks and once in either the fourth or fifth week of class.

Course schedule:

Readings must be completed for each class. Not all assigned texts will be discussed in class or covered in the class lectures.

Class Date	Room	Topic / In-Class Activities	Due	Read for Today
1 **1/30**	C-593	Class introduction **Discussion**: Digital vs analog **Unity**: Introduction	–	–
2 **2/6**	C-593	**Discussion**: History, Genre, and Physical Context **Unity**: Physics, interaction, and triggers	**Tutorial #1: Roll-a-ball** Play 3 Classic games install Unity	**Trigger Happy** Ch 2
3 **2/13**	C-593	**Discussion**: Narrative and Interactivity **Discussion**: What does it mean to be a game?	**Tutorial #2: Choice** Play 2 Narrative games	**The Medium of the Video Game** Ch 5
2/20		**SCHOOL ON MONDAY SCHEDULE**		
4 **2/27**	C-593	**Discussion**: Mechanics, Verbs, and Nouns **Discussion**: Agile Development **Activity**: Brainstorm/Pitch Workshop **Activity**: Team Formation	**Rube Goldberg Machine** Play 2 Interesting Mechanics games **RGR #1 Due**	**A Theory of Fun**, Ch 2 & 3
5 **3/6**	C-593	**Discussion**: How to Pitch a Game **Discussion**: Your GDD and You **Activity:** Game Core Pitches & Progress Presentation	**Game Core Pitch & GDD** Play 2 un-played Classic, Narrative, or Mechanics games	**Level Up!** Ch 12
6 **3/13**	C-593	**Discussion**: Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics **Activity**: Unity Workshop	**Playground Level & GDD** Play 2 un-played Classic, Narrative, or Mechanics games **RGR #2 Due**	**MDA** (all)
7 **3/20**	C-593	**Discussion**: Procedural Generation **Activity**: Unity Workshop	**Menu and Scene Select & GDD** Play 2 Procedural games	read at least two topics on: **pcg.wikidot.com**
8 **10/19**	C-593	**Discussion**: Ethics of Game Design **Activity**: Unity Workshop	**Completed Basic Mechanics & GDD** Play 1 Serious Game **RGR #3 Due**	**A Theory of Fun**, Ch 10
4/3		**SPRING BREAK**		

Class Date	Room	Topic / In-Class Activities	Due	Read for Today
9 **4/10**	C-593	**Discussion**: Game Feel and Polish **Activity**: Unity Workshop	**Full Game Loop & GDD** Play 1 un-played game from any category	Watch: "**Juice it or Lose it**" & **"The Art of Screen Shake"**
10 **4/17**	C-593	**Discussion**: How to pitch a level **Discussion**: What is Level Design? **Activity**: Game Core Presentations **Activity**: Level Design Team Formation	**Core Final Presentations & GDD** Play 2 Level Examples	**Level Up!** Ch 9
11 **4/24**	C-593	**Discussion**: Level Design in Detail **Activity**: Level Pitches	**Level Pitches & GDD** **RGR #4 Due**	
12 **5/1**	C-593	**Discussion**: Open Topics Q/A **Activity**: Unity Workshop	**New Mechanics Finished & GDD**	
13 **5/8**	C-593	**Discussion**: Open Topics Q/A **Activity**: Unity Workshop	**Levels Implemented & GDD**	
14 **5/15**	C-593	**Discussion**: Open Topics Q/A **Activity**: Unity Workshop	**Levels Polished & GDD**	
15 **5/22**	C-593	**Activity**: Final Presentations	**Final Presentations & Levels Turn in (with GDD)**	