

Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community College – Media Design Program
SPRING 2018 - GD101 Introduction to Games

Wednesday 5:30-8:15pm

Room C-456

Professor Dylan Shad

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Office Hours: by appointment

Phone: 518/852-6524

Class Website: www.dylanshad.com/blog/GD101

Course Description

This course introduces students to game culture, theory, design and development.

Principles from traditional board games, sports games, and party games will be analyzed and this analysis will then be applied to designing two paper-based games over the course of the semester. Students will analyze several readings focusing on game history and theory. They will also play, make and analyze several games in order to build a common and more extensive vocabulary to both discuss and understand what game development is all about.

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:

- Shad. **Einstein & The Honeybee**. The Hive Cooperative, 2012.
ISBN-13: 978-1479113576
ISBN-10: 1479113573
\$17.99 at Amazon.com

SEVERAL COPIES OF THIS ARE IN THE LIBRARY. SO WHILE ON ORDER YOU CAN STILL GET READINGS DONE.

- Hunicke, LeBlanc, Zubek. **MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research**. 2004
Does not need to be bought - a PDF will be provided through the class website.
- McGonigal, Jane. **Reality is Broken**. Penguin Books, 2011.
ISBN-13: 978-0143120612
ISBN-10: 9780143120612
\$6.26 at Amazon.com
Does not need to be bought - a PDF of relevant pages will be provided through the class website.

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/](http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/halc/).

Due dates:

Late assignments will get only partial credit. Presentations can not be turned in late.

Grading:

Reviews:	4
Game Projects	86
Participation	10
Total	100

Grades:

95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
75-79	C+
70-74	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

Introduction to Games (IG) 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
Rules Exercise	2/7	1
Designer Bio	2/7	1
Game Analysis 1	2/14	2
Game Analysis 2	2/21	2
Reading Worksheet Quizzes	weekly	8

Assignment	Due:	Points
Game 1 - Overview & Initial GDD	2/21	4
Game 1 - Progress Report, with Playable version & Updated GDD	2/28	3
Game 1 - Final Presentation & GDD	3/7	13
Game 2 - Overview & Initial GDD	3/14	4
Game 2 - Progress Report, with Playable version & Updated GDD	3/21	2
Game 2 - Playtest Report & Updated GDD	3/28	5
Game 2 - Final Presentation & GDD	4/18	14
Game 3 - Overview & Initial GDD	4/25	4
Game 3 - Progress Report, with Playable version & Updated GDD	5/2	2
Game 3 - Progress Report, with Playable version & Updated GDD	5/9	2
Game 3 - Playtest Report & Updated GDD	5/16	5
Game 3 - Final Presentation & GDD	5/23	18
+ Attendance		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. Without a physician or counselor's note, late assignments will not be accepted and so will receive a grade of 0. All written assignments should be submitted to the class blog as a PDF attachment to a post, and formatted in MLA style.

Rules Exercise

In the first class, a game will be explained to and played by the group. Create a clear and functional instruction set for the in class game, from which another can learn how to play the game. Test these instructions on a friend or family member by having them learn the game from only your instruction set. Are the instructions clear? Can the friend or family member play the game properly without being prompted by the writer? Rewrite these rules based upon the results.

Before the start of the second class, post a PDF of both rulesets to the class blog, along with a writeup detailing what went wrong with the first ruleset, and how you addressed it in the second. As with all written assignments in this course, this

paper should be typed and checked for grammatical mistakes and misspellings before being posted.

Designer Bio

Post to the class discord's "Introductions" channel, following the instructions provided and including a clear photo of yourself.

Game Analysis Assignments

During the first third of the course we will be learning and reading about the foundation of game design. In class we will be playing games that illustrate these mechanics. Students will be expected to write response papers that relate this game play back to the lectures and readings. These papers should be typed using standard MLA format, and each assignment will address a particular audience. They should be posted as PDFs to the class blog at least a half hour before class begins.

Game Analysis 1

Good designers of anything from a game to a mousetrap must initiate their creative process by recognizing deficiencies and strengths of other similar or related designs. To this end it is important for an aspiring game designer to become a discerning game player, recognizing what works well in games while also noting things that are not as effective. It is important to be able to communicate these observations to others.

Take the information you have been given in the readings and apply it to the observation of a non-digital game played in class 2. Consider how well the game is designed in terms of its components and rules, the system these help create, and the outcomes and goals.

The audience for this analysis should be other game designers and game critics, and should be between 500 and 600 words. See textbook and class website for examples.

Game Analysis 2

This analysis is intended to be read by other designers and must explore the second analog game played in class. It should consider the level of engagement that players have while playing the game. What is the structure of the game? How rigid is it and what sort of free movement is the player allowed? How does the game designer utilize this balance to create an engaging experience? Where does it fail?

Finally, the reviewer must recommend options for improvement by providing a detailed redesign statement outlining a means of making the game more engaging. This game analysis should be between 500 and 600 words. See textbook and class website for examples.

Game Assignments

During the course of the semester you will be gathering into small groups in order to propose, develop, and test three separate analog games. The goal of these projects is to exercise some of the design approaches we will learn about in class and to gain firsthand knowledge of game development and testing. Every week, students are expected to present the status of their project, and every

presentation should have accompanying and up-to-date game design documentation (GDD). These GDDs are worth half of the presentation's grade. Each project will have three elements:

Proposal

The objective of the game proposal is to pitch a game, not tell us the nitty gritty details. Get us excited, and tell us enough that we have a sense of how it plays out, but do not worry about teaching it. For example, it is enough to say "you receive points for completing [THING A], with an amount based upon your success," but telling us exact breakdowns would be too much. See the class website for full details on what the proposal should contain.

The team should also hand in a carefully written initial Game Design Document (GDD), as detailed in class and on the class website.

Playtest Report

This presentation should, after a brief run-down of the game proposal presentation, provide the audience with an idea of your game's progress as measured by a series of playtests. It should follow logically from "this is what we intend the game to be" to "this is what our results say the game is" to "this is how we intend to change it as a result." See class website for further details on what a Playtest Report should contain.

In addition, each group is expected to have the entire report documented in an updated GDD. Again, see the class website for details on what the GDD should include.

Final Presentation: GDD, Rule Sets, and Assets

The final project deliverable is two-part: The first is a short presentation encompassing an updated proposal, game outline, and playtest report, prepared for people who have never seen or heard about your game. Present your work as a finished game, rather than an iteration of an on-going project.

The second is a final GDD, complete with all components and updated according to any new developments, as well as incorporating all feedback provided to date.

The three game assignments will be as follows:

Game 1 - Formal Game Design

Form a team of 3-5 students. Using the assets provided, develop an original game and its accompanying instruction set. The game may not use any additional assets, nor may it incorporate any form of story. It must be able to be played in the classroom by members of the class and have an average playing time of no more than 25 minutes.

In preparation for this project, review instructions for similar games, and pay close attention to the way game play is described, how important rule set information is delivered, and the way that steps and levels of game play are introduced. Do not provide any kind of narrative background for the game, but feel free to use imagery when designing the instruction manual for clarity of play and understanding of the rules.

Game 2 – Experiential Game Design

Form a team of 3-5 students, and choose a real-world *system*. This could be a transportation network, a household preparing for the day, or any other group of ideas or objects interconnected by a collection of rules defining how they interact. Create a game from this, basing the game's rules around those of the system, designing assets that communicate the ideas and/or objects they represent, and providing players with an objective and means to interact with and manipulate this system. Most importantly: make it *fun*.

The end result should be consistent with the original system in logic, aesthetics, and both micro- and macro- narrative, and have an accompanying set of instructions for play. The game must be able to be played in the classroom by members of the class, and have an average playing time of no more than 25 minutes. Develop heuristics and play-test strategies to be implemented in the iterative design of this project.

Game 3 – Subversive Game Design

Form a team of 3 to 5 students and, using any assets you wish, create a game designed to change the player's mind concerning a social, political, or environmental issue. Make use of both macro- and micro-narratives to communicate your issue, and design productive play to create an engaging, fun, and designed experience. For example a game could involve players taking on the personas of city council members addressing their constituents regarding a current issue concerning their community.

This game must be able to be played in the classroom by members of the class and have an average playing time of no more than 25 minutes.

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	Project Due	Read for Today
1 1/31	C-456	Class Introduction Discussion: From Gamer to Game Designer Play: 357	—	—

Class Date	Room	Topic	Project Due	Read for Today
2 2/7	C-456	Discussion: What is a game? Discussion: What is Formalism? Play: Formalist Games	Rules Exercise Designer Bio	Ch 1: What is a Game? (13p)
3 2/14	C-456	Discussion: Communication, Collaboration, Goals, and Engagement Play: Renaissance Games Form Teams	Analysis #1	Ch 2: Engagement (9p) Ch 8: Collaboration (4p)
4 2/21	C-456	Discussion: Systems Design: Rules, MDA, and Verb Thinking	Analysis #2 G1 Concept Overview	Ch 3: Rules (7p), MDA (5p)
5 2/28	C-456	Discussion: Iterative Design, Usability, and Playtesting Play: Game 1	G1 Status Report & Playtest	Ch 4: Iterative Design (17p)
6 3/7	C-456	Discussion: The Two Types of Storytelling Play: Micro-Narrative Games Form Teams	G1 GDD & Final Presentation w/ Playtest Report	Ch 7: Role of Narrative (7p)
7 3/14	C-456	Discussion: Mechanics in Detail, Verb Thinking Reprised	Game 2 Concept Overview	Ch 5: Defining Play (6p)
8 3/21	C-456	Discussion: Playful Work, and Meaningful Play Play: Game 2	G2 Status Report & Playtest	Ch 6: Game Mechanics (9p)
9 3/28	C-456	Discussion: Audience and Personas	G2 Playtest Report	
4/4	SPRING BREAK			
4/11	FRIDAY SCHEDULE			
10 4/18	C-456	Discussion: Influencing Player Perception And Opinion Play: Subversive Games Form Teams	G2 GDD & Final Presentation	Ch 11: Alternative Play (4p)
11 4/25	C-456	Discussion: Sandboxes, Social Interaction, and the Metagame	G3 Concept Overview	Ch 9: Social Interaction (6p)
12 5/2	C-456	Discussion: Game Design Beyond Games: Changing the World Play Game 3	G3 Status Report & Playtest	Reality is Broken Intro (15p)
13 5/9	C-456	Discussion: Cohesive Game Design Play Game 3	G3 Status Report & Playtest	Ch 10: How to Get Started (9p)
14 5/16	C-456	Discussion: Open Topics Q/A Play Game 3	G3 Playtest Report	
15 5/23	C-456		G3 GDD & Final Presentation	

WORK HARD.

PLAY CRITICALLY.

BE BRILLIANT.