

# Game Design 101

# Intro to Games

*Fall 2020 Syllabus*

# GD101 Intro to Games

**Units:** 3 | **Semester:** Fall 2020 | **Sections:** 508A and 710A | **Prerequisites:** None

## Meetings:

- 508A: Mondays 2:00-4:45pm
- 710A: Wednesdays 5:30-8:15pm

**Location:** Online

**Online Community:** Discord server, link in Blackboard

**Instructor:** Marcelo Díaz Viana Neto (he/him)

Office: C-417 | Office Hours: TBD | [mviananeto@hostos.cuny.edu](mailto:mviananeto@hostos.cuny.edu)

→ [Jump to Course Schedule](#)

## 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 analog 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.

### A note on this syllabus:

*This is a living document.* While the course's topic and main structure are final, most of the material herein, including the course schedule and readings are liable to change throughout the quarter. The instructor will periodically revise this document to take into account student input and to better fit the student body's interests and composition. Please check the syllabus regularly for updated content and revised schedule.

## Learning Outcomes

- Develop familiarity with the core concepts and vocabulary of game design, and be able to speak about them in an informed manner
- Become comfortable with iterative design techniques
- Develop competency at both running playtests and interpreting player feedback
- Integrate yourself into a team and be a healthy part of the team dynamic
- Be able to write the game rules in an easy to read and understand fashion
- And, in general: [Things that Colleges Should Teach Students](#)

## Required Materials

### Textbooks

*This is a ZERO COST course.* There are no required textbooks and all course readings will be provided as downloadable PDFs or links to existing sites posted in the *schedule* below.

### Hardware (if using a personal computer)

Access to a computer with a reliable internet connection is going to be very important in this course for attending and participating in the live video lectures. A mobile device that you can access Discord and email with is also recommended.

### Software (if using a personal computer)

Students will be required to download and install free software or software with a free educational license, announced ahead of time during live lectures. Image-editing software like GIMP and Photoshop are recommended, but not required.

### Other required materials

Bound sketchpad with cleanly removable sheets:

- 8.5"x11" or larger
- Dot grid paper or graph paper highly recommended

## Course Expectations

1. Punctual attendance to all meetings.
2. Complete assignments on time.
3. Participate in critique and playtests, providing feedback about other students' work.
4. Read the entire syllabus and refer to it during the quarter.
5. Be proactive in communicating and arranging to meet with the instructor if you're having difficulties with the course.

## Class Governance

This isn't your usual passive, sit back and respond course. While the professor will provide the structure and bring in most of the content for the course, you will be expected to be proactive and seek out more knowledge outside of the classroom structure. Being a proactive learner is one of the most important skills you can have as a game artist/designer/developer. You're also expected to contribute to making this course the best it can be. This is *your* classroom, even if it's a virtual one.

## Commitment to Diversity and Safer Spaces ([source](#))

We understand the classroom as a space for *practicing freedom*; where one may challenge psychic, social, and cultural borders and create meaningful artistic expressions. To do so we must

acknowledge and embrace the different identities and backgrounds we inhabit. This means that we will use preferred pronouns, respect self-identifications, and be mindful of special needs.

Disagreement is encouraged and supported, however our differences affect our conceptualization and experience of reality, and it is extremely important to remember that certain gender, race, sex, and class identities are more privileged while others are undermined and marginalized. Consequently, this makes some people feel more protected or vulnerable during debates and discussions. A collaborative effort between the students and instructor is needed to create a supportive learning environment.

While everyone should feel free to experiment creatively and conceptually, if a class member points out that something you have said or shared with the group is offensive, avoid being defensive; instead approach the discussion as a valuable opportunity for us to grow and learn from one another. Alternatively if you feel that something said in discussion or included in a piece of work is harmful, you are encouraged to speak with the instructor.

## **Assignments and Grading** *(in-progress)*

There are four game assignments due over the course of the semester, and these make up the bulk of your grades (20% each). Each one follows more or less the same format: you'll be divided into groups and given some additional prompts to help guide your process. You'll then have some limited time to get a working prototype working, using lab time provided during the live classes, and then you'll be asked to playtest and play the game until you find its best form. Participation accounts for the final 20% of your total grade.

### **Broken Game Fix (20%)**

You'll be assigned a 'broken' game in-class and be asked to revise it into something genuinely fun/interesting. The game should be recognizable as the game it is based on.

### **Concept Game (20%)**

You'll be given a familiar dynamic or situation and be asked to make a game based on it. The game's general topic will be set, but you'll be able to choose whatever mechanics you like for it.

### **Abstract Game (20%)**

You'll be assigned a mix of mechanics and asked to make an abstract game based on them. By stripping away the theme we're going to take a close look at how rules create dynamics.

### **Experiential Game (20%)**

You'll be assigned a reaction you'll be trying to provoke in your players, and be asked to make a game that creates that reaction. Theme and mechanics can be anything you'd like, but make sure to choose them carefully in service of the experience you want to provide.

## Participation/Engagement (20%)

Your participation grade is a combination of your level of activity in and outside of class, including regular attendance to class meetings, positive participation in in-class exercises, critiques, responsiveness to instructor meetings, and so on. Your willingness to actively contribute to peer-to-peer instruction and overall progress throughout the quarter will also be used to determine your participation grade modifier.

## Assignment Submission Policy

*All assignments are due at the start of class time, unless otherwise noted. Digital files must be submitted using the correct file format, to the location specified by the assignment's prompt.*

### A Note on Late Assignments

This is a learning community. What this means is that we rely on one another to learn and grow, and so must commit to being active contributors to the community. A late assignment submission means we will be missing your contribution to the class, will not be able to critique your work, and it will impoverish the experience for everyone. To reflect this, *late assignments will receive a lower grade.*

*However, life happens and it is very likely you will encounter difficulties doing the required work and submitting it on time. As long as you communicate with the instructor ahead of time in an honest manner, you will not be penalized.*

## Attendance Policy

*I will not take attendance. But if you're constantly MIA, I'll know and I'll assume you're either going through stuff and you're not able to come to class, or you think this class is boring or unimportant, in which case I'll want to know why so I can make it better. Either way, the important thing is to communicate so I know what's going on. If you don't attend class, you will fail the course and this has unfortunate consequences for you...*

**TL;DR:** Come to class, participate, every single class meeting is important. Communicate if you can't, I'm not a cop.

## Hostos-wide Academic Policies

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**

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 the act of cheating and by discouraging others from doing so.

## **Plagiarism**

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**

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**

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's 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.

## ADA Statement

As required by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, reasonable accommodations are provided to ensure equal opportunity for students with verified disabilities.

If you have a disability that requires accommodations, contact:

*Accessibility Resource Center*  
Savoy (D) Building  
120 Walton Ave, Room D101P  
Bronx, NY 10451  
Phone: (718) 518-4454 (Voice/TTY)

If you are already registered with ARC and have a letter from them verifying that you are a qualified student with a disability, please present the letter to the instructor as soon as possible. The instructor will work with you and ARC to plan and implement appropriate accommodations.

*Please Note:*

*Students who do not register with the ARC office and have their disability verified are not eligible to receive any special accommodations.*

## Additional Policies

- CUNY Policy on [Academic Integrity](#) (pdf)
- [Política de Integridad Académica de CUNY](#) (Spanish)
- Policy on [retention](#) of academic records
- CUNY [Uniform Grade Symbols: Glossary and Guidelines](#)
- CUNY [Testing Policy for students with disabilities](#)
- CUNY Policy on [Drug and Alcohol](#)
- CUNY [Testing Policies and Procedures](#)
- State Education Department [rules on awarding credit for same courses in different degree programs.](#)
- [Religious Accommodation of Students - Memo from General Council.](#)
- [CUNY student complaint procedure](#)
- [Board of Trustees resolution on articulation and transfer](#)

## Course Schedule (in-progress)

This schedule is subject to change throughout the semester.

Week	Unit	Topics	Assignment/Reading Due
1	Intros	Course expectations and introduction	
2	Games and Play	What is play? What are games? MGE Framework	Play 3+ ZoomJam games Read a minimum of one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Evening and the Morning and the Night</i>, by Octavia Butler</li> <li><i>What's the Point if We Can't Have Fun?</i>, by David Graeber</li> </ul>
3	Intro to Game Design	<i>Exercise: Fixing Tic Tac Toe</i> <b>Assigned: Broken Game Fix</b>	Find another design framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share with the class</li> <li>Analyze a game using this framework</li> </ul>
4		Broken Game Fix playtest	<b>Broken Game Fix (final)</b>
5		Iterative Design Paper Prototyping Playtesting	<i>Game Design Workshop</i> Chapter on Playtesting, by Tracy Fullerton
6	Game Design Communication	MDA Framework <b>Assigned: Concept Game</b>	
7		<i>Exercise: Cube Taking Game</i> Dangerous Dynamics Busywork Kingmaking Analysis Paralysis Unfun Optimization	Concept Game (prototype)
8		Concept Game playtest	<b>Concept Game (final)</b>
9	Procedural Rhetoric	Core Mechanics <b>Assigned: Abstract Game</b>	<i>Procedural Rhetoric</i> , by Ian Bogost
10		Cybernetics Feedback Loops Pacing	Abstract Game (prototype)
11		3D Animation, Rigging and Motion Capture	<b>Abstract Game (final)</b>
12	Affordance	<i>Exercise: Blackboard Interface Game</i> <b>Assigned: Experiential Game</b>	Affordance chapter from <i>The Design of Everyday Things</i> , by Don Norman



13		Playtest session	Experiential Game (prototype)
14		Final playtest	<b>Experiential Game (final)</b>
15		<i>Make-up Day</i>	

*It was a pleasure working with you.*

