**Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community College**

**GD201 Digital Games**

**Fall 2020**

**Mondays, 10:00 a.m. - Noon**

**Online Videoconference via Blackboard**

**Professor Dean Razavi**

Email: dean@razburygames.com

Office Hours: Mondays, 12:15 – 2:00

**Class Materials:** Reading excerpts and links to relevant videos are all posted on Blackboard, as are links to the games listed in each section. No textbook is required for the course.

**Class Structure**: Class lectures will be synchronous over Blackboard. **Course material and announcements made during lecture often differ from the reading**, and as a result simply doing the assignments is no substitute for presence in class. Lectures will be from 10:00 am to Noon on Monday mornings.

**Turn-In Assignments**: Any assignment that is to be turned in must be submitted no later than 10:00 am the day that class starts. You will be submitting four kinds of assignment throughout the course of the semester. **Late assignments will receive a grade of 0:**

* Journal Reading Responses: You have a personal journal created for you on Blackboard. For each week that reading is assigned, you must write a minimum 5-sentence entry in your journal about that reading. The entry must be submitted no later than 10:00 am before class starts.
* Discussion Forum: For each assigned game to play, a public discussion forum will be created on Blackboard. You must submit a forum post about the game before 10:00 am before class starts.
* 10-Pager sections: During the semester you will be creating a new game concept and writing a 10-page document about it. Each section will be turned in individually, and then the final 10-pager will be turned in as a single document. Documents should be submitted on Blackboard as a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file **only**. If you do not know how to create one of these file formats, please contact Hostos technical support.
* Game Prototype: **Separate from your game concept**, you will be using Unity to create a new game prototype. When submitting project builds, you must export a full build from Unity. You must create a **Windows** build, even if you are using a Mac to develop. You should ask a classmate to test this build on a different Windows machine than the one you built on before submitting. You must submit a .zip containing **both** the .exe and the \_data folder created by Unity, or else it will be unplayable. **Technical difficulties in the build creation process, or in uploading to Blackboard, will not be grounds for an extension**. For that reason, technical projects should be finished, tested, and submitted well in advance of the deadline.

**Attendance**: Three absences from virtual lectures during the semester will be excused. After that, your final class grade will be reduced by 10% for each absence.

**GRADING**

Journal Reading Responses: 20%. For each week that reading is assigned, you must write a minimum 5-sentence entry in your journal about that reading. The journal should be a reflection on the concepts explored in the assigned reading, and can include thoughts about relevant games, agreements or disagreements with the author, or ways in which you would like to apply the concepts to other projects you are working on. The submissions must be completed in your Blackboard Journal, and must be submitted to me before class starts the day that they are due.

Discussion Forum: 10%. For each week that a game is assigned to play, you must participate in a discussion forum on Blackboard with your peers about the game. For each discussion, I will post some initial questions to explore, but you are free to use this opportunity to respond to ideas or tangents raised by your classmates, so long as they pertain to the game and topic of that week’s discussion. The forum posts should occur throughout the week, and must be submitted before class starts the day that they are due.

1-on-1: 10%. Twice during the semester, once before October 19 and once after, you must schedule a 15-minute 1-on-1 session with me. You must prepare for the session with any topic in digital games that you wish to explore – either something that we’ve already covered that you want to discuss further, or something not covered by the syllabus. You must schedule the meeting on Blackboard. Available days are Wednesdays and Fridays, but you are encouraged to schedule these as soon as possible; a last-minute inability to attend any open slot will receive a 0.

Design Project: 10-Pager: 30%. At the end of the semester, you will turn in a 10-pager fully explaining a multiplayer game concept of your choosing. You will not be creating this game during the semester, and the game should be significant in scope with a full statement of mechanics, narrative, aesthetic vision, monetization, etc. See the grading rubric on Blackboard for the full project requirements.

* *Milestones*: throughout the semester you will be expected to turn in each page individually as we cover the relevant topics in class. Your completion of these periodic turn-ins will be factored into your final grade on the 10-Pager.

Development Project: Prototype Game: 30%. At the end of the semester, you will turn in a prototype build of a game constructed in Unity. You will be provided with a tutorial to create a simple “roll a ball” game. After that, you must create a new mechanic for the game, as well as a new level showcasing that mechanic. *This game is not the game you are designing in your 10-pager*. This is instead a new game that presents a single design concept through a prototype. See the grading rubric on Blackboard for the full project requirements.

* *Milestones*: twice before submitting your final project, you will be expected to submit a playable build of your game with specific requirements. Failure to turn in these milestones will result in a penalty to your final prototype grade.

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**Week 1 (August 31)** – Class Intro / Syllabus Review / Game Genres / GDD Review

**No Class September 7**

**Week 2 (September 14)** – Mechanics & Rules

Read:

* Lenses, Chapter 10
* Theory of Fun, Chapters 2 & 3

Play **Both**:

* QWOP
* Tetris

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading
* 2 Discussion Forum Posts
* 10-Pager Section: Game Concept / Overview

**Week 3 (September 21)** – Narrative Design + Worldbuilding

Read:

* Hamlet’s Hitpoints, Intro & Explanation
* Medium of the Video Game, Chapter 5

Watch:

* This Story Isn’t For You

Play:

* Stanley Parable

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading
* 1 Discussion Forum Post
* 10-Pager Section: Game Conflict
* 10-Pager Section: Game Mechanics

**No Class September 28**

**Week 4** (**September** **29**) – Development Tools / Unity Overview / Production Pipeline

Read:

* The Game Production Pipeline: Concept to Completion
* Choosing a Project Management Tool for Game Development, Meredith Hall

Watch:

* Production: Working at the Heart of the Team

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading
* 10-Pager Section: Story and Setting
* 10-Pager Section: Character / Controls

**Week 5 (October 5)** – Creative Cohesion / Game Feel & Polish

Read:

* Theory of Fun, Chapter 10
* Lenses, Chapter 20

Watch **One Of**:

* Art of the Screenshake
* Juice it or Lose It

Play **One Of**:

* Cuphead
* Monument Valley

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading
* 1 Discussion Forum Post
* Roll-a-Ball Tutorial Build

**No Class October 12**

**Week 6 (October 14)** – Multiplayer Design

Read:

* Players Who Suit MUDs
* The Trust Spectrum

Play:

* Guild Wars 2

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading
* 1 Discussion Forum Post
* 10-Pager Section: Gameplay Experience

**Week 7 (October 19)** – Unity II: Scripting Concepts

Due by 10 am:

* 10-Pager Section: Multiplayer Design

**Reminder: Your first 1-on-1 must be scheduled before October 19!**

**Week 8 (October 26)** – Level Design

Read:

* Level Up, Chapter 9
* Lenses, Chapter 19

Play:

* Super Mario Brothers, complete first level

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading
* 1 Discussion Forum Post

**Week 9 (November 2)** – Monetization

Read:

* Video Game Monetization Strategies, Chris Cobb
* Next Generation Monetization: Supremacy Goods, Ramin Shokrizade

Play:

* Fortnite

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading
* 1 Discussion Forum Post
* Prototype Mechanic

**Week 10 (November 9)** – UI & Tutorialization

Read:

* Designing for Problem Solvers
* Level Up, Chapter 8
* Lenses, Chapters 13

Play:

* Portal

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading
* 1 Discussion Forum Post
* 10-Pager Section: Monetization

**Week 11 (November 16)** – Unity III: Additional Components

Turn In:

* 10-Pager Section: Screen Mockups
* 10-Pager Section: Cover

**Week 12 (November 23)** – How to Pitch a Game

Read:

* Lenses, Chapter 27 & 28
* Level Up, Chapter 4

Watch:

* 30 Things I Hate About Your Game Pitch, Brian Upton

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading

**Week 13 (November 30)** – Procedural Generation

Read:

* The Death of the Level Designer (all 6 parts), Andrew Doull
* Search-based Procedural Content Generation, Julian Togelius et al.

Watch:

* Elite: Dangerous – procedural generation

Play:

* Minecraft

Due by 10 am:

* Journal Response to Reading
* 1 Discussion Forum Post

**Week 14 (December 7)** – Open Questions

Turn In:

* Final 10-Pager
* Final Roll-a-Ball Playable

**Reminder: Your final 1-on-1 must be scheduled before December 7!**

*Students who participate in this class with their camera on or use a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded solely for the purpose of creating a record for students enrolled in the class to refer to, including those enrolled students who are unable to attend live. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live.*