**Game Design**

**IGME-602**

**GOL-2435, M/W/F 2-2:15pm**

**Fall 2018**

**Professor**: David Simkins

**Office Hours:** Tu 3-4:30pm, W 3:30-5pm & by appointment

O**ffice:** 3160 MAGIC (MSS-3160)  
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**Course Description:**  
This course presents students with core theories of game design. Specific emphasis is placed on the examination of successes and failures, along with presentation of ethical and cultural issues related to the design of interactive media. Students will engage in formal critique and analysis of media designs and their formal elements.

**Important RIT deadlines:**

Last day of add/drop is **September 4.**

Last day to withdraw with a grade of “W” is **November 9, 2018.**   
Withdrawals are completed online. See the IGM office for information on how this process works.

***NOTE***: Department policy states that a student has one quarter to **challenge** any **grade**. After that, grades cannot be challenged.

**Readings:**  
All readings will be provided, and whenever possible, will be distributed electronically. Students should come to each class of each week prepared to discuss all of the readings for that week. You will also be responsible for leading discussion for some of the weeks during the quarter.

**General Course Goals**

Students will be able to create, analyze, and critique all the elements of a computer game’s design. They will be able to ideate on design that reflects an understanding of game design principles. Students will be able to create an initial game design document and will be able to understand game design document formats common in the industry.

**Specific Objectives (Learning Outcomes)**

7.1 Students will be able to describe and critique the different types of game genres with an emphasis on design requirements. Assessed through critical writings and classroom discussion.

7.2 Students will be able to identify, describe and differentiate between the different aspects of the design document in the game development and design process and will be assessed through critical writings and classroom discussions.

7.3 Students will be able to create a game design document that meets industry practices and encompasses the wide range of materials inherent in computer game development and design. Assessed through the final design document.**Course topics and assignments** (Subject to change)

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|  | Hour1 | Projects |
| Week 1 | **Introduction / Games as Media** |  |
| M 8/27 | Syllabus |  |
| W 8/29 | [**https://blogs.swarthmore.edu/burke/permanent-features-advice-on-academia/how-to-read-in-college/**](https://blogs.swarthmore.edu/burke/permanent-features-advice-on-academia/how-to-read-in-college/)  **\* Read this carefully because you should know both the suggestions and the exceptions before deciding how to read one of the readings here.** | Determine Pitch Groups |
| F 8/31 | McLuhan – The Medium is the Message (from Understanding Media)  McLuhan – Media Hot and Cold (from Understanding Media) |  |
| Week 2 | **Games and Culture/Terminology** |  |
| M 9/3 | **Labor Day** |  |
| W 9/5 | *Huizinga – Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon (from Homo Ludens)*  Nardi – My Life as a Night Elf Priest |  |
| F 9/7 | Kostner – A Theory of Fun  Norman – Fun and Games |  |
| Week 3 | **Terminology/Games and Culture** |  |
| M 9/10 | Crawford – Play (from Chris Crawford on Game Design)  Adam & Rollings – Fundamentals of Game Design ch. 5 & 9 |  |
| W 9/12 | *Caillois – The Classification of Games (from Man, Play, and Games)*  Murray – Hamlet on the Holodeck Ch. 4-6 |  |
| F 9/14 | Simkins – Arts of LARP Ch. 4-10 | Game Critique 1 (non-electronic) |
| Week 4 | **Identities – Gender, Race, more** |  |
| M 9/17 | Flanagan – Hyperbodies  Turkle - Life on the Screen  Rakham – Safety of Skin (reskin) |  |
| W 9/19 |  |  |
| F 9/21 | Higgin - Blackless Fantasy The Disappearance of Race in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games  Williams, et. al. - The Virtual Census: Representations of gender, race, and age in video game  Always Black – Bow N\* (<https://phocks.tumblr.com/post/2976413342/bow-nigger>) | Pitch Presentations |
| Week 5 | **User Experience** |  |
| M 9/24 | Crawford – The Art of Interactive Game Design  Crawford – Common Game Design Mistakes |  |
| W 9/26 | Adams & Rollings – Fundamentals of Game Design ch. 1 & 8  Beechler – HUD taxonomy  Saunders & Novak – Game Development Essentials, Ch. 4 |  |
| F 9/28 | DeKoven – Well Played Game ch. 4 & 5 |  |
| Week 6 | **Challenging Meanings of Play** |  |
| M 10/1 | *Caillois – Competition and Chance*  Malaby – Anthropology and Play (Play as Disposition) |  |
| W 10/3 | Work day |  |
| F 10/5 | Work day | Critique 2: Early (pre-2000) electronic game |
| Week 7 | **Documentation** |  |
| M 10/8 | **October Break** |  |
| W 10/10 | Moore & Sward – Game Design & Development, ch 10  Saltzman – Game Creation & Careers, ch 6 & 7 |  |
| F 10/12 | Example Game Design Docs | Class Participation Self-Assessment |
| Week 8 | **Semiotics & Narrative** |  |
| M 10/15 | Vick, McDaniel, Jacobs – Semiotic Grammars |  |
| W 10/17 | Neitzel – Narrative  Moore – Writing for Comics, Ch.1 |  |
| F 10/19 | Laurel – Computers as Theater, Ch 2 & 3 |  |
| Week 9 | **Narrative** |  |
| M 10/22 | Freeman – Creating Emotions in Games, Ch 2.16 & 2.17  Glassner – Interactive Storytelling Ch.2-3, 8-10 | Game design doc groups |
| W 10/24 | **Work day**  Brooks – Reading for the Plot  Moore – Writing for Comics, Ch. 4 |  |
| F 10/26 | **Work day**  Krawczyk & Novak – Game Design Essentials, Ch. 4  Miller – Digital Storytelling ch.6-7 | Game design doc: game, sections & ownership |
| Week 10 | **Narrative** |  |
| M 10/29 | Adams & Rolling – Fundamentals of Game Design, Ch. 7  Juul – Do Games Tell Stories? |  |
| W 10/31 | Huber – Epic Spacialities  Dourish – re-space-ing place  Harrison & Dourish – re-placing space |  |
| F 11/2 | **Narrative Exercise** |  |
| Week 11 | **Level Design** |  |
| M 11/5 | Co – Level Design for Games, Ch. 4 & 5 |  |
| W 11/7 | Saltzman – Game Creation and Careers, Ch. 8-10 |  |
| F 11/9 | **Level Design Exercise** | Critique 3: post-2000 popular electronic game |
| Week 12 | **Balance** |  |
| M 11/12 | Co – Level Design for Games, Ch. 3  Turnbull – Game Architecture and Design, Ch. 5  Crawford – On Game Design, Ch. 4  **What goes into game balance?** |  |
| W 11/14 | **Spreadsheets – the designer’s tool of choice** | Draft Design Doc |
| F 11/16 | **Game Balance Exercise** | Narrative/Level Write-ups |
| Week 13 | **Thanksgiving catch-up** |  |
| M 11/19 | **Redirect and Discuss** |  |
| W 11/21 | **Thanksgiving** |  |
| F 11/23 | **Thanksgiving** |  |
| Week 14 | **Audio and making worlds** |  |
| M 11/26 | Murch – Transom Review (to page 23)  Murch on Echo – “Worldizing:” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_py6jVyOqUY> |  |
| W 11/28 | Manovich – The Language of New Media, Ch. 2  Flanagan – re:skin Reskinning the Everyday | Critique 4: post-2010 Indy game |
| F 11/30 | Moore – Writing for Comics, Ch. 3  Bogost – Unit Operations, Ch. 11  Glassner – Interactive Storytelling, Ch. 12 |  |
| Week 15 |  |  |
| M 12/3 | **Design Doc Presentation** | Complete Design Docs |
| W 12/5 | **Design Doc Presentation** |  |
| F 12/7 | **Design Doc Presentation** |  |
| Week 16 |  |  |
| W 12/19 10:45-1:15 | **Debrief @GOL-2435** | Final Design Docs |

**Academic dishonesty:**

All deliverables submitted must be your own work. Names of all contributors should be listed on the submitted document. All references must be cited. All media used in projects must have their sources properly credited. Any deviation from this requirement **will** earn you an “F” for the course.

**Attendance:**

Much of the value of the class will occur in the interactions during the class period. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Class participation will count for a large percentage of the grade. Repeated absence and tardiness will count strongly against the class participation assignment.

Absence for one’s own presentation, whether individual or group, without **documented** circumstances beyond the student’s control will earn the student an inadequate (F) grade for the presentation and the course. The instructor will attempt to accommodate students who miss a presentation, by rescheduling the presentation when possible. If not possible, additional and/or alternate work may be required.

**Use of English:**

English writing and reading are prerequisite skills for this course. All written material in the course should be considered an English language deliverable and should be of the quality one might give to a client or to an employer.

For classroom presentation of work, it is permissible to arrange for technological or personal assistance to ensure a quality presentation. The student bears the responsibility for making any additional arrangements and, when necessary, for testing any technology.

**Assignment due dates and turn in process:**

All assignments due dates are noted under the assignment. Written assignments should be turned electronically into the appropriate dropbox on RIT’s MyCourses system. Presentation times will be determined by sign up sheet. All artifacts (powerpoint presentations, video, written materials, etc) that the student used in a presentation should be turned in electronically or delivered to the instructor (if not electronic) by the beginning of class the day the presentation is delivered.

Presentations must be delivered in class on the scheduled day, aside from **documented** circumstances beyond the student’s control (health, death of a family member, etc.). Written assignments will be reduced by one letter grade for each day they are turned in late. However, students may request a 24 hour grace period for any written assignment or project. A student should email the instructor indicating the desire for an extension *prior to the time the assignment is due,* but no explanation is required. Assignments placed in the drop box prior to an extended due date will be considered “on time”. If the grace period is missed, the letter grade will be reduced based on the original due date.

**Grades of "Incomplete":**

**May** be awarded to students, for an assignment or for the course, who:

* have been doing high quality work since the beginning of the quarter.

AND

* due to **documented** circumstances beyond their control, (health, death of a family member, etc.) are unable to complete the assignment or quarter.

Incomplete *assignments* must be delivered electronically to the instructor by the beginning of the listed time for the course’s final exam. *Course* incompletes should be rectified as quickly as possible after the end of the quarter.

**Grading:**  
This is a graduate level course. Students in a graduate level course are expected to bring their prior knowledge to the course, to engage fully with the materials presented in the course, and to produce work that shows development toward mastery of the material. Students who participate avidly during class, who turn in and present quality work on time, and who show their understanding of the materials presented in class will earn an A. All students should expect to earn an A.

Work below the standards expected of a graduate student will earn a C. Failure to produce work on time or work that fulfills the requirements of the course and that shows an understanding of the material will earn an F. Students are encouraged to discuss any concerns or struggles they are having with the material prior to the assignment due date. Time allowing, the instructor may choose to provide an opportunity for students to resubmit unsatisfactory work (any grade of C or F). The instructor is likely to offer an opportunity to improve unsatisfactory work only if the student and instructor have had ongoing discussion of the student’s struggles with the course and if the student has shown clear evidence of sincere attempts to address ongoing issues.

Each student will be provided with feedback on each of the following assignments. In addition to comments, the feedback will include a “grade” of excellent (A), satisfactory (A), substandard (C), or inadequate (F). Excellent grades will indicate work deserving of praise for offering a potential contribution not only to the class, but to the field. A grades receive full points. C grades receive 70% of the possible points on the assignment. F grades will earn 0 points for the assignment. Final grades will be determined on the following scale:

100-90% A

89-80% B

79-70% C

69-60% D

>60% F

**Evaluated work:**

* Class participation (across the quarter) (30pts)
* Critique 1 (5 pts)
* Critique 2 (5 pts)
* Critique 3 (5 pts)
* Critique 4 (5 pts)
* Pitch document (A/F) (5pts)
* Class participation self-assessment (A/F) (5pts)
* Initial design document (5pts)
* Presentation of Final Design (5pts)
* Final design document (35pts)

**Class participation** involves being present and prepared for class and engaging in discussion both by actively listening and speaking.

**Critiques** will be written documents (approximately 5 pages each) that will provide an insightful, narrowly scoped critique based on the requirements discussed in class.

The **pitch document** is a short group assignment that pitches a game project for greenlighting.

The **class participation self-assessment** is be a short, individual self-analysis intended to identify concerns about class participation early in the quarter when they can still be rectified.

The **initial design documents** is a preliminary version of the design document defining the scope and expectations of the project within the quarter.

The **final design document** will be a complete document for the quarter project. This will be of a designed game (not necessarily developed). A full accounting of the requirements of the game’s design will be expected. As this is occurring parallel to IGME601 Game Processes, the design will be expected to incorporate elements learned within that course as well, though the focus will be on design and not development.

I have every intention of returning all graded material within a few days. However, I reserve the right to grade course materials in my own time, and may at my discretion not meet the desired two-week window to return grades.

Assignments, like the rest of this syllabus, are subject to change.