

## Part 1: Make a Game or a Model of a Systemic Challenge

### Due Week 2 Section for Playtesting

In groups of 1-3 create a game, interactive model, or simulated experience that immerses participants in some system-level interactions of a real-world system you have studied. The aim of this experience should be to have participants learn and implicitly understand the challenges in the system as *active agents* in your designed experience.

1. **Identify a dynamic** within a complex, challenging system (either one from last quarter or one you are familiar with) that you feel like is unheard, misunderstood, or needs to be shared broadly via this project. Illustrate this system dynamic in a diagram, description, or map. Think about the following:
  - What general rules, incentives, or constraints do people operate by in this system dynamic? Is there a balancing or reinforcing loop?
  - What behaviors emerge when people within this system act according to its rules?
  - For some help/inspo here's Nicky Case!: <https://blog.ncase.me/i-do-and-i-understand/Links to an external site.>

### Submit via canvas. Due Section Week 1

1. **Make a Game.** Create an 'raw' prototype of a game, interactive model, or simulated experience that will lead participants to engage and feel like a part of this system dynamic.
  - Select a medium & kind of experience. Is it physical or digital? Is it a board game, role-playing simulation, digital model, physical model, improvisational enactment or live-action experience? You can look at existing games, experiences, etc for inspiration!
  - Identify the core gameplay loop that you want participants to engage in. How will you get your participants to involve themselves in this loop via your rules?
  - Make a rough prototype of your game and test it with each other and some friends!
2. **Playtest your experience.** We will have an 'official' playtesting session in Section Week 2. We strongly encourage you to playtest outside of this session as well! Part of your grade will be on how you thoughtfully & strategically iterated! Make sure to take lots of pictures and notes for your reference and for your final deliverable. During a playtesting session your team will be both running the experience and collecting data about how it is going:
  - Ask peers to provide feedback on their engagement and feelings.
  - Observe how players interact—where do they struggle or feel immersed?

- Identify unintended consequences or unexpected emergent behaviors.
- Create and use a set of constructs and measures for your game (to be discussed in class Week 2)

## Due Section Week 2

## Part 2: Align or Disrupt Your System

### Due Section Week 4 for Playtesting

Let's use your model now to actively imagine potential futures for this system. Remember: the goal of an interactive model, system or game like this is not merely didactic – i.e., to help people understand how this system works or feels. It is also *speculative* and *imaginative*, in the sense that it should help us think about: What is the ideal state of this system? How *might* we change it? What small moves, shifts, additions or subtractions might lead to dynamics that are better for our goals?

- **Identify a goal or value** that is not currently being expressed in the system. This could be a set of needs that are not being met, or something that isn't happening that should, or something that is happening that should stop, etc. This is an important step that involves more than just Needfinding "out there"; it should involve internal discussions around your team's values and priorities as a design team. What is the world that **SHOULD** exist?
- **Shift the ruleset until this goal or value is better expressed in the system.** This will require a lot of experimentation and ample playtesting. Some levers to consider:
  1. Could you add a new player-type or agent? Take a player-type out?
  2. Introduce a new rule banning something? Release the ban on something else?
  3. Could you change how players interact with each other, or which players interact with whom, and in what order?
  4. Could you change timing or ordering in general (i.e. same process, but the steps occur in a different order or at a different time)?
  5. Could you change the setting or context?
- 2. **Playtest this experience with real users.**  
 Invite people you feel will be valuable participants in this experience to our final 'official' playtesting session in Week 4 Section. You will again be running the experience and collecting data on how participants engaged with the experience.

## Due Section Week 4

# Monopoly Redux

### Understanding Systems Through Making

Last quarter, during our final presentations, many of you invited us, “*to close our eyes*” so as to deepen our immersion in your story. This quarter, with *Monopoly Redux*, you’ll create an immersive experience that builds on that – that doesn’t just tell a story but allows players to actively engage with your system.

### Introduction

Games have long been used as tools for understanding and challenging real-world systems. One of the most famous examples is Monopoly, originally designed not as a celebration of capitalism, but as a critique of it. The original game called “The Landlord’s Game” was created in 1903 by Elizabeth Magie, an economist and anti-monopolist. Magie designed the game to illustrate the dangers of unchecked real estate speculation and wealth concentration. Her original version included two sets of rules: one that rewarded monopolization (which became the version we know today) and another that promoted shared wealth and economic fairness. When Parker Brothers acquired Monopoly in the 1930s, they eliminated the second set of rules, leaving only the version that rewarded monopolization. They transformed it from a critique of wealth concentration into a celebration of greed. As a result, generations of players learned to equate success with crushing opponents, unaware that the game was originally designed to expose the dangers of such a system.

Games can function as powerful metaphors, transforming complex systems into tangible, interactive experiences. Just as a metaphor draws connections between seemingly unrelated ideas to deepen understanding, a game can distill the essence of a real-world system into rules, roles, mechanisms, constraints, and feedback loops that define how participants behave and what outcomes may emerge. To play is to learn by doing!

By creating your own Monopoly-inspired game, we hope you’ll have the opportunity to explore and engage with the dynamics of a real system.

### Overview:

This assignment will take place in two parts. In Part 1 you will create a game or experience that models and immerses participants in a system. This is like the ‘Monopolization’ ruleset for Monopoly. In Part 2, you will push your system’s boundaries by disrupting or aligning system elements to possibly transform it. This is like the “Shared Wealth” ruleset for Monopoly!

Your final deliverable for this project will be a report on your design process, including your iterative changes, and your evaluation of your own work. Alongside this, you will submit a toolkit for anyone to run this on their own, including any rulesets, materials, and instructions needed.

We will have two official playtesting sessions in class in Week 2 and 4, but we encourage you to test this project on your own time as well.

## Learning Objectives:

Over the course of this project, we want you all to build your skills in three areas:

1. Your 'making' ability. We want you to create design artifacts that align elements of style and substance with *meaning*!
2. Your ability to iterate thoughtfully and strategically. We want to see you all thoughtfully critique, evaluate, and measure your work to iterate and refine your design.
3. Your systems design ability. You've demonstrated strong research skills over the last quarter. This assignment is intended to engage you in creating an embodied representation of that research. You will need to find a 'just-right' level of immersion to demonstrate and engage an audience in the rules of the system.

## Part 1: Make a Game or a Model of a Systemic Challenge

[Monopoly Redux Part 1](#)

## Part 2: Align or Disrupt Your System

[Monopoly Redux Part 2](#)

## Final Deliverable:

### Due Week 5 Lecture

The final deliverable involves two parts – the PRODUCT (the games themselves) and the PROCESS (your notes on learning from a class perspective).

### The PRODUCT

The Games. The public-facing, "play-ready" version of the games. Package your games however you like, considering all dimensions of Use, Usability and Meaning so that they are "out of the box playable" for an audience of strangers. Make them beautiful, and don't hold back! These should be portfolio-ready and usable by people who come across this on their own.

### The PROCESS

Please submit a team report covering the following:

- **Designer's Vision:**
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1.

1. What was the system dynamic that you wanted to represent? What is the story behind the system?
  2. What part of the human experience in that system did you want people to understand, learn about, or prove to themselves?
  3. How did your designed experience emerge from these goals?
- **Critique, Measure & Iteration:** This is for both Part 1 & 2
    1.
      1. **Critique:** Walk us through one of the pieces of critique that guided an important part of your project. What critique did you receive? Why was it impactful? How did you incorporate it?
      2. **Constructs & Measures.** How did you end up measuring or evaluating your design? How did it perform? What kind of feedback did you receive?
      3. **Iteration History.** How did you translate feedback into meaningful action that fit into your vision? Remember, we want you all to *thoughtfully* and *strategically* iterate. So explain your decision making!
      4. **Pictures & Video!** Show us how the iteration process went!
  - **Reflection:**
    1. Tell us about your experience engaging with this project. What was it like to model a system? Did the process of creating this experience change the way you thought about moving the system forward? How could we take these learnings to affect the system more broadly?