George Mason University
College of Visual and Performing Arts
Computer Game Design Program

GAME-626: Game Business Entrepreneurship & Practice
GAME-399: Game Entrepreneurship

Instructor: Dr. Scott M. Martin
Office: AB 2020
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Prerequisites: Game 310 or acceptance into the MA Graduate Program

3 Credit Hours
Lecture: Thursday, 4:30-7:10PM
Room: RM 2001
Fall Semester 2014

Course Description:
Combined lecture and studio course in discovering and developing entrepreneurial skills in the game design industry. Special focus will be given to developing communication skills, planning strategies, and nurturing the skills and attitudes that enable students to creatively solve problems and identify opportunities in the game design industry. This entrepreneurial perspective is in line with the GMU experience, and is widely applicable outside the business world, in fields such as politics, education, and the arts. Assigned readings in the class will be augmented and supported by presentations, lectures and meetings with successful entrepreneurs in the region. Students will conceive, develop, and present a for-profit or not-for-profit business strategy (idea summary) at mid-term, and a full business plan (financial, partnership, and marketing plan) for the final project and presentation. Special attention will be given to ‘serious game’ business market. The semester concludes with a presentation of the business plan where each student team presents a public 15-20 minute presentation before a panel of entrepreneurs, investors, business executives, and game studio managers.

Objectives:
To build student awareness of entrepreneurship in the game industry, and to develop communication skills, planning strategies and to nurture the skills and attitudes that enable students to creatively solve problems, and identify entrepreneurial opportunities in and outside of the game design industry.

Requirements and Evaluation:
At the beginning of each class meeting, students should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings, topic assignments, and entrepreneurial examples. In addition, students should be prepared to discuss with the class the status and stage of their project(s), as well as any related strategic, political, philosophical, technical, or ethical issues. A lecture will follow, then students are expected to work during class on their assignments or projects.

At mid-term, each student team (2-3 students) is required to submit and present a professional 20 minute for-profit or non-profit business plan summary (idea
summary). The mid-term project shall contain original concept ideas (business model), mission statement, appropriate feasibility studies, and website interface content. During the first two weeks of class, student teams will write a proposal detailing the concept, the intended market and purpose, and the ‘go-to-market’ strategy of their project.

During the final week of the semester, undergraduate students will submit and present a complete professional for-profit or non-profit business plan, including corporate strategy, refined business model (including game concepts and ideas), revenue model, marketing and feasibility studies, technical strategy, capitalization plans, and 3-year financial projections including pro forma cash flows and financial assumptions.

Graduate students will secure a temporary 5-week Business Assistant Fellowship with a game-related start-up or new spin-out company and assist that entity with solving a business-related problem, as agreed upon by both the student and the company’s chief executive (it can not be a company they have hold shares in, or have an investment interest in). Examples of acceptable business problems to help the company solve are:

1. How to penetrate a new market with services or products
2. Devise new marketing approaches to selling a new game product or service
3. How to secure new equity or convertible debt investment
4. How to secure specific market partnerships

In the 9-10th week of class, students will write a proposal detailing their company refined business plans, game concepts and plans (products), the corporate strategy, intended market, and organization structure. Graduate students will detail the company they intend to help, outlined the problem, and summarize the approach they intend to take to solve the problem(s).

The semester concludes with a public presentation of the business plan or Fellowship before a panel of entrepreneurs, business executives, investors, and game studio managers, and game faculty.

A series of short projects and readings will be assigned to complement most lectures and presentations.

Required Texts/Materials:


Grading:
Grading will be based on participation in classroom discussions (20%), mid-term presentation and project (40%), and the final presentation and project (40%). To receive a grade of "A" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 90% on the course work requirements. To receive a grade of "B" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 80% on the course work requirements. To receive a grade of "C" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 70% on the course work requirements. To receive a grade of "D" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 60% on the course work requirements. Failure to receive a "D" grade will result in a grade of "F".

Course Outline and Class Schedule

Week #1  Concepts and Purpose
          Objective Appraisals & Teams

Week #2  Business Models/Non-Profit and For-Profit
          Team Assignments
          Research and Positioning (Product/Service)

Week #3  Organization Type (C, S, LLP, etc…)
          Market Understanding/Vertical Targets

Week #4  Management Structure
          Company/Organization Support
          (Accounting, Legal, Marketing/PR)
          Guest Presentation

Week #5  Brand/Identity
          Marketing Plan Studies and Marketing ‘Event’ Campaigns

Week #6  Summary Ideas Draft Presentation
          Market Studies/Focus Group Studies
          Guest Presentation

Week #7  Web Site Identity
          Web Site Strategy
          Technical Strategy

Week #8  Presentations of Business Plan Summaries
Week #9  
Financial Projections/Financial Assumption Planning Intro  
Projecting Cash Flow  
Collateral Development  
Guest Presentation  

Week #10  
Proof-of-Concept  
Revenue Models Review  
Marketing Strategies and Event-based Campaigns Continued  

Week #11  
Financial Projections/Financial Assumption Planning  
Cash Flow Projections and Income Statement Development  
Investment & Funding Strategy  
Guest Presentation  

Week #12  
Financial Projections/Financial Assumptions continued  
Investment & Funding Strategy Continued  
Board Building Review (BOD, Advisory Support)  
Partner and Client Acquisition Strategy  

Week #13  
Financial Projections/Financial Assumptions continued  
Board Building Review (BOD, Advisory Support)  
Personnel Growth Projections  
Partner Acquisition Strategies  

Week #14  
Dress Presentations  

Week #15  
Final Presentations