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

GAME 210: Basic Game Design

Term: Fall 2019                    Hours: Monday 4:30-7:10pm
Section: 004

Professor: Daniel Greenberg       Email: dgreenb2@gmu.edu
Office: Art & Design Building     Office Hours: Monday 3:30-4:30p, by appt.

Course Description
This course is an introductory overview of the video game development process
with an emphasis on game design. Through detailed study of both historical and
current games, students will learn the language and structure needed to develop
their own game ideas. Students will learn the many aspects of a game
development team and learn how each of these roles contributes to a game’s
overall design. Projects will focus on creating and understanding digital game
concepts. A strong focus on the elements of game design and process will
support class projects. Students will get a basic overview of game studies and
integrate those concepts into their work.

Course Objectives
Students who complete this course will:
● Be familiar with the evolution of electronic gaming and factors that drove its
development.
● Be able to evaluate the video game industry and market.
● Understand the basic mechanics and design structure of digital games.
● Understand elements related to game strategy, theory and gameplay.
● Understand the basic game development process.
● Be able to identify the roles within a game development team.
● Analyze and develop game concepts and proposals.
● Develop a simple video game.
● Develop a complex video game in a team environment.

Requirements and Evaluation
At the beginning of each session, students should be prepared to discuss
assigned readings, review work, test game examples, and work on ongoing
projects. Sessions will combine elements of lecture, multimedia, and discussion.

Readings and/or short assignments will complement most lectures. Some of
these readings will be quizzed during a following class. The assignments will be
submitted through Blackboard and may be discussed via the Discussion Board.
Students will learn the concepts and terminology of game development and game studies and be able to write and speak about games in both technical and formal ways. Students should explore and understand games as a form of art but also as a form of persuasive play.

For mid-term, students will submit and present a playable digital game of their own design. The mid-term project shall contain an original game concept developed by the student, to be accompanied by a vertical slice prototype of the game, along with pitch documentation to define the concept, the core mechanics, the visual look and feel and the intended market for their game. This project will begin early in the semester and build upon itself leading up to the mid-term. (Details on the Mid-term requirements will be posted to Blackboard.)

For the final, student teams will submit and present a working prototype of a team developed game built with an established game engine. Student teams will be self-evaluated as part of the project grade for work contributed, communication and excellence. Artifacts include pitch document, beat chart, game design document, presentation, and game demo. (Details on the Final requirements will be posted on Blackboard.)

**Required Texts/Materials:**
West Sussex: Wiley
Access to an internet enabled device for coursework and Blackboard submission. (This can be a personal or university device, as long as access is arranged.)

**Grading**
Grading is additive in this course. Completing various assignments will increase the student’s score, based on performance in the following areas of assessment:

- Homework / Game design exercises (up to 1,000 points)
- Reflections and Quizzes on lecture material (up to 1,000 points)
- Midterm documentation and project (up to 1,500 points)
- Final documentation, presentation, and project (1,500 points)

Grades will be based on the following scale:
To receive an "A" grade, a student must earn at least 4,500 points.
To receive a "B" grade, a student must earn at least 4,000 points.
To receive a "C" grade, a student must earn at least 3,500 points.
To receive a "D" grade, a student must earn at least 3,000 points.
Failure to receive a "D" grade will result in a grade of "F".
Extra credit opportunities are provided in the midterm and final submissions.

**Assignments**
Students are expected to check Blackboard on a weekly basis to preview their upcoming assignments. Digital assignments must be turned in via Blackboard.

**Written Material:**
All written material must be free of typos, misspellings, and grammatical errors. It must be fully foot-noted (or end-noted) and follow a consistent style. If you do not know when or how to footnote, it is incumbent upon you to discover how; there are resources available in the library and on campus to assist in writing papers. Be sure to cite video, games, news, websites, or any form of media also used in your assignments.

**Participation & Attendance**
Students are expected to actively engage in class discussions, answer questions when prompted, and in general, add to the collective dialogue. Participation in class discussions and activities is necessary for the course. Each class is a building block for the next. Some of the information for the course can be found in the text, but not everything. The lecture will cover additional necessary information and discussions that you will not want to miss, so follow along with each session’s lecture material. Engagement with class discussions does weigh into your final grade (see Grading above). In the event that you cannot complete a session, you still are responsible for the material covered in it going forward, including project or homework assignments and changes in schedules.

**Late Work and Make-up Policy**
Meeting deadlines is one of the most important aspects of game design. Please pay careful attention to the due date and time for each assignment. Assignments must be in before the due date and time to receive credit for the assignment.

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from finishing an assignment before the due date and time, the student must contact the instructor before the assignment is due. Late work will only be accepted at the instructor’s discretion. If it is accepted at all, grading may be adjusted based on the tardiness.

**Academic Integrity**
Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit
in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

**Mason Email Accounts**
Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See http://masonlive.gmu.edu for more information. All digital communication with the professor must be made using your GMU email account.

**Office of Disability Services**
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. http://ods.gmu.edu

**Writing Center**
B213 Robinson Hall
(703) 993-1200
http://writingcenter.gmu.edu

**University Libraries ("Ask a Librarian")**
http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html

**Counseling and Psychological Services ("CAPS")**
(703) 993-2380
http://caps.gmu.edu

**University Policies**
The University Catalog, http://catalog.gmu.edu is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/Members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.