Computer Game Design Program  
College of Visual and Performing Arts  

GAME 600 – Fall 2019  
Research Methodologies for Game Design (3 credits)  

Instructor: Seth Hudson  
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Office Hours: M 12:00-3:00 / AB 2021 Lecture: W 1:30-4:10 / AB 2002  

Prerequisite: Admittance to the MA Game Design Program or permission of instructor  

Required Texts:  

Recommended Texts:  

Texts of Interest:  

***Other readings/recordings available online as ebooks or pdf***  

Course Description:  
This graduate seminar focuses on development of independent research projects in game design, theory, philosophy, criticism and production. Explores principal methods of researching, exploring, and documenting game design and contemporary and historic practice. Along with traditional methods of library research, this course emphasizes new processes of examination and investigation through the use of computer-aided research systems and techniques. Students will research and write a publishable paper following best practices in their chosen field. Assigned readings in the class will be augmented and supported by visual presentations, game play, guest lecturers and field trips.  

Objectives:
To build student awareness about the contemporary research tools and technique available to pursue academic research, as well as about current and historical trends in ‘serious’ and entertainment game theory, philosophy, and criticism.

Requirements and Evaluation:
At each class meeting, students should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Additional out-of-class viewings and game play will be assigned.

SEMESTER ASSIGNMENTS

FINAL PROJECT (50 points)
Further details will be provided on Bb, but the project will include:
- Idea Memo (5 pts)
- Researcher Identity and Relationship Memo (5 pts)
- Abstract, Outline, and Literature Review (10 pts)
- Midterm Progress Presentation (5 pts)
- Final Paper and Presentation (25 pts)

All papers submitted and presented must be in APA format (unless specific submission specifications dictate otherwise) and cleanly edited for mechanics, grammar, and style.

By the end of the semester, all students are required to further their research via a 20-page (roughly, depending on your intended publication submission) paper addressing the theories, issues and ideas presented in the reading assignments and other course materials from the semester. In the final two classes, students will give a 20-minute presentation and discuss the methodological, political, cultural, art historical, and/or theoretical content of their paper. The instructor will provide extensive guidance and advice for each student throughout his or her research and presentation. Students should also find a relevant publication for their paper, preparing submission materials for the actual journal/publication.

WEEKLY READING REFLECTIONS (10 points)
To facilitate more meaningful class discussion and deeper engagement with our texts, students will be required to participate in Blackboard (Bb) discussions in conjunction with each reading assignment. The form these take are largely up to the individual student, but all posts:
- Are due at least 48 hours prior to our scheduled meeting;
- Should demonstrate either breadth of understanding for all reading, or depth of understanding for one reading in particular (with rationale regarding your choice), citing specific parts of the text when necessary;
- Should raise questions for further discussion in class;
- Must identify a source of interest from the author(s)’ references, simply stating why you would be curious to pursue it further (though you’re not required to read it).

CLASS LECTURE / LESSON (10 points)
All GAME 600 students will plan and lead a lecture during the semester, including in-class activities for classmates. Lecture leaders are required to provide an outline of the discussion points, with sample discussion questions, in addition to any presentation materials (PDF, video clips, etc.). All materials are due to the instructor no later than 24 hours before the planned session. Lectures will be assessed through instructor and participant feedback. Post-lecture, students should schedule a consultation with the instructor.

CRITICAL GAME ANALYSES (30 points)

Students will complete THREE critical game analyses, focusing on specific topics in game design/culture/criticism. These analyses will require students to play games and do some field work. Plan on allotting several hours to each of these projects, though the final written component will generally be 2 to 4 pages in length. You are encouraged to add digital media (screenshots, photographs, game play clips) to accompany your analysis. Details are available on our Bb Site.

Grade Points:
- A+ 99-100
- A 94-98
- A- 90-93
- B+ 88-89
- B 84-88
- B- 80-83

Although a B- is a satisfactory grade for a course, students must maintain a 3.00 average in their degree program and present a 3.00 GPA on the courses listed on the graduation application.

POLICIES & IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Formatting Specifications
All projects must be submitted in the format dictated by the assignment. Generally, this means papers to be produced in the APA style (with title page) and delivered as instructed (a stapled hard copy will sometimes be requested; all electronic submissions must be in the form of student & assignment-specific PDF). Failure to follow these guidelines will result in a reduced score of the given assignment.

Professionalism
Many of the policies below relate to professionalism. Being courteous to the professor and other students is mandatory. All guidelines for assignments must be followed. If unsure about a policy, contact the professor immediately. This is the same for late work, absences, etc. Sending notice after the fact just doesn’t look good; unless, of course, your absence is due to illness or other factors beyond your immediate control. Be professional.
All work should be cleanly edited: free of careless mistakes. Any questions you have regarding the use of the English language or other conventions should be researched thoroughly before
taking them to the instructor—we will follow APA format in the headings of assignments and with citation unless noted otherwise.

Assumptions
It is assumed that students have regular access to email and the Internet, so they will be able to receive updates and participate electronically when necessary. It is also assumed that students will diligently back up their work, rendering technical difficulties harmless. Failure to turn work in on time due to this type of issue will be treated like all other late work. When hard copies are required, they are required.

Late Work
Late work will only be accepted without penalty in the case of a documented medical illness or another situation that is out of your control. Late work will be reduced by a letter grade for each class period it is late. WHEN IN DOUBT notify the instructor if the situation is tenuous.

Writing Center
The Writing Center is available for writers of all levels. Tutors in the Writing Center will talk with you about how you can improve your revision and editing strategies; they will not, however, edit or proofread your work—professionalism, once again. You can make an appointment online: http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/

Writing Assignments
Due dates and revision guidelines will be clearly outlined at the outset of each assignment. Digital copies of assignments will be available on Bb. Some writing assignments will be assigned in class and completed in our time together, calculated into your grade via class participation.

Class Participation
Many of our sessions will operate like a traditional writing workshop. You will be expected to read others’ work aloud and give thoughtful input to aid their revision process. The best way to get a good mark for class participation is to participate meaningfully every day. Respecting each other’s opinions and work is crucial.

Online Participation
Blackboard (Bb) will be your friend in exchanging ideas and communicating with one another during the term, as will individual student websites. Student may be randomly assigned to Bb Groups. These groups will be responsible for peer review and weekly discussion periodically throughout the semester. The frequency and depth of online participation will factor into your grade.

Email Policy
Students must use their MasonLIVE or gmu.edu email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See http://masonlive.gmu.edu for more information.

Mason Emergency Information
You may want to sign up for emergency alert messages. If so, go to https://alert.gmu.edu. You'll also find information about emergency procedures at http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert.

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

**Honor Code**
George Mason University has an Honor Code that requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

**University Catalog**
Students are to be aware of the policies listed in the University Catalog: http://catalog.gmu.edu/. University dates concerning withdrawal are not negotiable by the professor. Other questions regarding university and program policies can be directed towards the Assistant Director outside of class time.

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**OTHER RELEVANT RESOURCES**

Note: When beginning your semester research process, these texts may be a good place to start. Keep in mind that many e-books are available to your free of charge with your university access—see me for details.


Links to Relevant Resources:
http://www.gamesstudies.org/0401/
http://gamescriticism.org http://press.etc.cmu.edu/content/well-played-10-video-games-value-and-meaning
http://press.etc.cmu.edu/content/learning-education-and-games-volume-one-curricular-and-design-considerations
http://www.gamesforchange.org