GAME 610: Game Production

Term: Spring 2019
Section: 001
Time: Friday 1:30PM – 4:10PM
Room: Art & Design 1018
Instructor: James Casey
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Office Hours: By Appointment (Friday)

Note: This syllabus may change according to class needs. Students will be advised of any changes immediately through George Mason e-mail and/or through Blackboard.

Course Description
This course is presented in combination with the capstone experiences of the Game Design Major and Minor which serves to prepare students to pursue further game education or possibly to enter the game design and development workforce.

The 400/490 capstone courses require 3/6 credits to complete and is designed to be completed over one/two semesters. The first semester will result in a project being ‘greenlit’ and include a fully fleshed out design document and production plan as well as a demo or vertical slice of the game design. The second semester takes the ‘greenlit’ game and uses it as a blueprint for a fully functional game that will be developed by the student or student team and be presented to a panel of colleagues, instructors, and industry professionals at the end of the semester.

The 610 Masters course will coincide with the above courses and students in Game Production will be assisting the professor and the individual students and student groups in accomplishing their projects within the timeframe and resources provided.

Course Objectives
The course objectives for 400/490 are listed below:

- Understand, follow, and utilize the game development framework.
- Write, design, and continuously develop a set of professional Game Design Documents.
- Compose and follow a comprehensive and itemized development schedule and agile development.
- Design, conduct and assess a prototyping and playtesting process for their game design.
- Produce a fully functioning platform, PC, or mobile game.
- Present their game, game design, and process publicly to a group of peers, instructors and industry professionals.

The course objectives for 610 are as follows:
• Assist the professor with the classroom experience as needed.
• Assist individual students and student teams in accomplishing their objectives.
• Participate in the planning, production, testing, and general development of assigned student team(s) as directed.
• Develop production schedules and processes for the assigned teams.

Team versus Solo Projects
Students may choose to work with a team of developers on their senior project or decide to develop a project on their own.

Students in 610 will be assigned teams as appropriate by the professor as an additional resource for these teams. The success of the assigned team will be a part of the assessment for this class.

Project Focus
The focus of a student's senior project should function as a synthesis of what they have learned in the Computer Game Design curriculum. Game development is a multidisciplinary field, and our students often have different areas of interest and expertise.

Production Focus
Students will be working with the professor and teams to develop practical production processes for all assigned teams. These processes will be developed using industry standard approaches but will vary based on the team(s) needs and students should be flexible on how they approach each group. As well, analysis of the production processes and overall development timeline will be a key part of the graded assessment for this class.

Requirements and Evaluation
Each week, students should be prepared to discuss and demonstrate the state of their game project or design.

The teams will present their progress four times during the two-semesters: at midterm and again at end-of-term. As a resource for the assigned teams, students will provide leadership and guidance in ensuring that each presentation and product is polished and ready.

In the first half of this two-semester course, students will develop their game design in what the game industry refers to as the “pre-production” phase of development. During this phase, the game idea will be refined, the scope will be determined, the look and feel of the game will be decided, and all necessary assets and functionality will be defined. Once the core design is complete, the student will design, conduct and assess prototypes needed for the development of this game. It is the goal of these prototypes to determine the final target feature set of the game and to test any
design assumptions the student's design may pose. The final project for this course is a presentation of the design and prototyping process along with analysis, followed by a presentation of the completed game design, accompanied by a demo or vertical slice of the game as developed via the prototyping phase.

During the second half of the two-semester course, students will focus solely on the production phase by developing the game described and prototyped from the first semester. At the conclusion of the second semester, students will present a professional public presentation of their final fully functioning game.

**Required Texts/Materials:**

**Textbook Required:**
- None. All reading, lectures, and other assignments will be given virtually.

**Software Required:**
- Web browser (See Blackboard Support for supported web browsers)
- Blackboard Courses (http://mymason.gmu.edu)
- Blackboard Collaborate (select from the course menu)
- Kaltura CaptureSpace Desktop recorder (free for students via Blackboard) OR other screen-recording software.
- Zip or Rar archive program
- Access to all software needed for development of the project as appropriate to your role and position. (ex. Unity, 3DSMax, Photoshop, Office)

**Software Suggested:**
- Online backup and collaboration software (ex. Google Drive, Dropbox)
- Online communication software (ex. Slack, Discord, Google Hangout)
- Production planning and version control software.

**Hardware Required:**
- Access to a Desktop/Laptop that is capable of running the software needed for production.
- Access to any platform specific devices – For development, testing, and presentation of project (as applicable).
- Access to a fast, reliable broadband internet connection.
- A webcam and headset microphone for virtual meetings.

Details on presentation requirements and course schedules will be available on Blackboard under Course Content.
Grading
Grading will be based on how the class does as a whole and the participation of the graduate student in achieving that success. The following represents where individual groups will be assessed.

Group grading will be based on a number of criteria based on the portion of the class being taken. In general, the following will be used a guideline for what will be evaluated. They are mirrored to match the grading criteria for the assigned teams.

- Participation in the general assessment and running of the class.
- Participation in weekly status updates and demonstrations.
- Development of design documents, production plans and relevant plans.
- Presentation of documentation and projects.
- The final product (vertical slice or fully functional game).

For the first portion of the class, developing the game design and vertical slice, the following is a guideline for expectations on grading:

- Participation in the general assessment and running of the class. (10%)
- Participation in weekly status updates and demonstrations (10%)
- Midterm Grading
  - Game design documentation for assigned team(s) (10%)
  - Prototype development and analysis (10%)
  - Presentation of the Prototype (10%)
- Final Grading
  - The completed game design document (10%)
  - Presentation of the product and game design document (20%)
  - The completed product (20%)

Please note that the above grades may be based on a singular assigned team or an average of grades obtained by multiple assigned teams based on the assignments made and applicable for the class.

Presentation is an important part of the grade. The midterm and final both require students to pitch their projects. Generally, this is done in front of the class to allow peer participation through questions and answers. As noted above, the final presentation may be given before other faculty or industry professionals. The presentations are recorded for review of content and presentation style. This footage is viewed only by the instructor and the student or group involved, who receive a copy of the footage for their own evaluation.

Grading Criteria
Specific grading criteria for each graded work is given in Blackboard.
Grading Scale
Grading will be assigned based on the following scale once all grades have been given, weighted, and assessed.

90 – 100 = A  
80 – 89 = B  
70 – 79 = C  
60 – 69 = D  
0 – 59 = F

Please note that the scale is only full grades, no negatives or plusses are given.

Late Work and Make-up Policy
Late work is only accepted at the instructor’s discretion, and a deduction will be applied to the grade in most situations. Failure to turn in work on time will result in a zero for the assignment. Meeting deadlines is one of the most important aspects of production. Please pay careful attention to the DUE DATE & TIME for each assignment.

If extenuating circumstances prevent a team from finishing an assignment, the student must contact the instructor BEFORE the assignment is due.

General Information

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 “masonlive” 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

GMU Add/Drop Policy
The last day to drop this class without any penalty is provided on the GMU academic calendar page http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendar/ . It is the student’s responsibility to check to verify that they are properly enrolled as no credit will be awarded to students who are not.

OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:
WRITING CENTER: A114 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/. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

Honor Code
This course will be conducted in accordance with the GMU Honor Code, and all students are expected to abide by it. The GMU Honor Code, as found in the University Catalog, is as follows: To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm
If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor or utilize the GMU writing center.

**Plagiarism and the Internet**
Copyright rules also apply to users of the Internet who cite from Internet sources. Information and graphics accessed electronically must also be cited, giving credit to the sources. This material includes but is not limited to e-mail (don't cite or forward someone else's e-mail without permission), newsgroup material, information from Web sites, including graphics. Even if you give credit, you must get permission from the original source to put any graphic that you did not create on your web page. Shareware graphics are not free. Freeware clipart is available for you to freely use. If the material does not say "free," assume it is not. Putting someone else's Internet material on your web page is stealing intellectual property. Making links to a site is, at this time, okay, but getting permission is strongly advised, since many Web sites have their own requirements for linking to their material. http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm#plag-int

**Academic Integrity & Inclusivity**
This course embodies the perspective that we all have differing perspectives and ideas and we each deserve the opportunity to share our thoughts. Therefore, we will conduct our discussions with respect for those differences. That means, we each have the freedom to express our ideas, but we should also do so keeping in mind that our colleagues deserve to hear differing thoughts in a respectful manner, i.e. we may disagree without being disagreeable. http://oai.gmu.edu/

**Diversity, Religious Holiday**
Please refer to George Mason University's calendar of religious holidays and observations (https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/) It is the student’s responsibility to speak to the instructor in advance should their religious observances impact their participation in class activities and assignments.

**Student Privacy Policy**
George Mason University strives to fully comply with FERPA by protecting the privacy of student records and judiciously evaluating requests for release of information from those records. Please see George Mason University's student privacy policy https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/privacy/