Course Description
This course is an introductory overview of the video game development process with an emphasis on game design. Through detailed study of historical as well as current games, students will learn the language and structure needed to develop their own game ideas during the course term. Students will learn the many aspects of a game development team and how each of these roles contributes to a game's overall design. A strong focus on the elements of game design and process will support the development of a tabletop game through the iterative design process. Quizzes and tests will draw from reading and will be administered at the instructor's discretion.

The mid-term project will require students to develop an alpha prototype of a tabletop board game. The final project will require students to revise their initial design and further develop the prototype into a polished, functional game.

Course Objectives
Students who complete this course will:
• Be able to evaluate the video game industry and market
• Understand the basic mechanics of traditional games
• Be able to identify the roles and within a game development team
• Develop a traditional game in a team environment

Course Requirements
During the semester students should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings, design blogs, and game examples. In addition, students should be prepared to discuss with the class the status of their midterm and final projects.

Participation in class discussions and activities is necessary for the course. Some of the information for the course can be found in the text, but not everything. The lecture or supplemental materials will cover additional information and discuss topics that will inform smart design choices for the projects.

Required Reading

Grading
Grading will be based on the following criteria:
• Design Reflections (15 x 2 = 30)
• Midterm Prototype (25)
• Midterm Peer Feedback (10)
• Final Assessment (35)
Assignments Types

Design Reflections
The Design Reflections are a series of writing assignments where students analyze a design concept from the course material, and then make a careful decision about how their game will implement that design concept. Students should use the required text, supplemental online materials, and their own knowledge of gaming to analyze the effects of the concept on games they know and apply that analysis to their own projects. Students must use multimedia in the form of sketches, computer-generated images, pictures, or videos to enhance their ability to illustrate for the reader the work they are doing on their project. Clipart or stock images copied from the internet do not count toward multimedia usage.

There should be 8 entries by the end of the course, so not all weeks will have a designated entry. Reflections should be about 300-500 words (about half a page single-spaced) but take up about a single page when multimedia is embedded into the text (see template on Blackboard). Significant points will be deducted if multimedia is not used to “tell the story” of the design process. View the rubric on Blackboard for more specific grading criteria.

(Please use the Design Rationale Document Template located in the “Resources” section of Blackboard as a starting point for the format of this assignment. Students may “make it their own” if they are artistically or inclined.)

Peer Midterm Feedback
Once the Midterm Project files have been posted to the Discussion Board in Blackboard, students will respond to two classmates and give them peer feedback on their design. The goal of this assignment is to further the student's own analysis of design concepts, but also to generate constructive criticism for classmates as they begin work on revising their games for the final prototype. These peer responses should be about 100-250 words in length, and should be written in a way that furthers the design conversation by offering insightful playtesting suggestions to potentially improve their design.

Midterm Project
The class features an iterative design process similar to real world game design scenarios. The students will read a case study about a failed game design team, and be tasked with completely redesigning the game according to the best practices discussed during the course. Students should be creative in their approach, but should implement some elements of strategic decision making, and avoid trivia and physical activity games always. The midterm does not need to be as polished as the final, but should still be easy to understand from a grading perspective. The grading criteria for the project are as follows:

(5) Instructions: How well are the instructions communicated? Can they be understood easily the first time?
(5) Skill Play: Can a player increase their skill level each time? Can luck override skill?
(5) Gameplay: Is it fun? This can be subjective, but would a player have a reason to play again?
(5) Aesthetics: Do the materials for your game look good? Are they easy to manipulate?
(5) Demo: Does the demo go smoothly? Does it showcase your game and all of its features?

Students will turn in their project in the form of a 10-15 minute narrated gameplay video.
Final Project
The final project is the last iteration of the design process where students are able to apply all of the feedback they have received over the course and turn it into a polished tabletop game. The students are expected to create an original concept and use non-copyrighted materials in order to demonstrate their game for the final project, and special consideration will be given to students that effectively use the feedback from the course to make positive changes to their game design. The grading criteria for the final project are as follows:

(10) Adaptations: How well did you consider the feedback from the alpha test? Is the game better?
(5) Skill Play: Can a player increase their skill level each time? Can luck override skill?
(5) Gameplay: Is it fun? This can be subjective, but would a player have a reason to play again?
(5) Aesthetics: Do the peripherals for your game look good? Are they easy to manipulate?
(5) 1-page Rationale: What were the major decisions your group made over the design process? Why did you make those decisions, and why were they a good design decision?

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(5) 1-page Market Analysis: Who is the target market? Who are the top competitors? What is the feature comparison and unique selling points in relationship to the competition?

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Students are not required to invite others to test their final prototype with them, but having others play the game can showcase how the rules are clear enough for an outside observer to understand and execute.
Grading Scale

- 100-97: A+
- 96-93: A
- 92-90: A-
- 89-87: B+
- 86-80: B
- 79-77: C+
- 76-70: C
- 69-60: D
- 59-00: F

Academic Honesty
All Students are expected to observe the George Mason University Honor Code. For complete information about the University’s policies on academic honesty, please see: http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/

Honor Code
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.

GMU Resources
GMU student information and resources: http://www.gmu.edu/mlstudents/

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Students must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester, and the specific accommodation will be arranged through the Disability Resource Center.

Calendar of Assignments
Refer to the reading calendar for all reading pacing and major grades for the course. Smaller weekly assignments will be assigned in class, and then posted on Blackboard for reference.