Game Design as a Cultural Practice
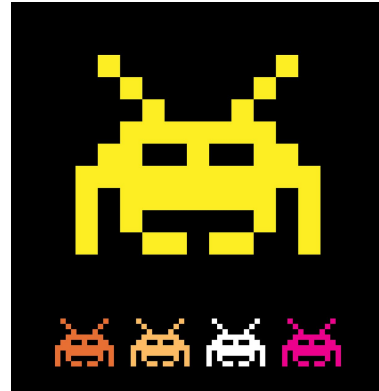
Course #: LMC 4725, LMC 6325
Instructor: Brian Magerko
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Email: magerko@gatech.edu
Office hours: by appointment, online or in person

Class meetings: T/TH: 12:00-1:20PM Skiles 002

This syllabus is a living document subject to change during the term.

Games and play are a ubiquitous part of the human (and animal) experience. They teach, foster imagination, enable friendly competition, and communicate social concepts. Designing games can be a creative, mathematical, expressive, or even pedagogical process. This course focuses on the practice of playing, designing, and building playable artifacts. Students will be actively engaged in a) reading and discussing articles related to game design and culture, b) playing and reflecting on the design of games in and outside of class, and c) designing and developing multiple games across a variety of digital and non-digital media.

Undergraduate Learning Objectives
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate existing digital media artifacts, services, and environments using formal knowledge, and to explain and defend one's critical evaluation.
- Demonstrate the ability to devise, design, create, and assess prototypical digital media artifacts, services, or environments and to contextualize them within recognized traditions of practice.
- Demonstrate use of digital media to create prototypes
- Demonstrate good time management skills
- Develop interactive media artifacts
- Can justify the design choices in their works
- Can formulate and test design hypotheses
- Can communicate, coordinate, and work productively as a team member

M.S. Learning Objectives
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate existing digital media artifacts, services, and environments using formal knowledge, and to explain and defend one's critical evaluation.

- Demonstrate the ability to devise, design, create, and assess prototypical digital media artifacts, services, or environments and to contextualize them within recognized traditions of practice.
- Demonstrate use of digital media to create prototypes
- Demonstrate good time management skills
- Develop interactive media artifacts
- Can justify the design choices in their works
- Can formulate and test design hypotheses
- Can communicate, coordinate, and work productively as a team member
- Can serve in a team leadership and / or mentorship role

Ph.D. Learning Objectives
- Students can identify and analyze a domain within the field digital media and identify areas for original contribution as well as methods to pursue these contributions.
- Apply theoretical concepts to specific digital media works
- Students can formulate and explore the answers to critical questions in the domains of Arts & Entertainment, Public & Civic Media, and Knowledge & Creativity as related to new media
- Summarize and paraphrase key theoretical works
- Can serve in a team leadership and / or mentorship role

Attendance & Participation

Class attendance and participation is mandatory. Participation in class discussion is imperative because it allows you to explore the readings, design concepts, and projects collaboratively, and in the process, discover meanings and issues that you probably would not discover on your own. Participation in class also challenges you to continuously question, refine, and articulate your own ideas and interpretations.

Document your work. If there is a question about your effort in team work, I may ask all members to present their documented contributions to reflect their continued involvement in the work as a responsible team member. This can mean git commits with your username, written notes of yours from meetings or design sessions, etc. This is as much about learning the habits of documentation as it is to make your efforts clearly communicable.

Assignments

There are design prototype projects due approximately every two weeks.

Grade distribution will be: course discussion & participation (10%, pass/fail) and six projects (15% per project). If you complete all of the requirements for the above reasonably well, you should

expect to earn a B. In order to earn an A, you must complete and go "above and beyond" all of the requirements and your work / efforts / contributions must be exceptional.

Absence from more than three classes will result in the loss of 1-letter grade for the course. Tardiness for more than four classes will result in the loss of 1-letter grade for the course.

Information for Students with Disabilities

Please notify the instructor if you have any disabilities with which you need special assistance or consideration. The campus disability assistance program can be contacted through ADAPTS: http://www.adapts.gatech.edu.

Course Communication

Slack will be used as the primary form of communication for collaboration during the course. Please download the Slack app for your computer and phone, register your email account, and join the ADAM lab slack (www.adamlab.slack.com). Once you've joined the ADAM lab slack account, please join and monitor the *#gamedesign* and *#general* channels.

Honor Code Statement

Students are expected to adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code: http://honor.gatech.edu.

Lagniappe

ADAM Lab and GAL Lab door access (TSRB 325) is for lab members only. Please coordinate with Mr. Terrell for door access.

Please do not remove any equipment from the lab without permission & signing it out. There is a signup document for games, books, etc.   Some equipment can be purchased in support of your projects; speak to Dr. Magerko about what is needed. The DILAC Lab is the official first place to check for computing equipment to be trained on, check out, etc., on the third floor of Skiles.

	Date	Class activity	Project	Readings to be done
	1/9	Intro and errata		
Poetics of Games	1/11	Reading discussion (& game group formation?)		Salen and Zimmerman, "Core Concepts: Meaningful Play, Design, Systems, Interactivity," in Rules of Play, 28-70.
	1/16	Reading discussion		Salen and Zimmerman, "Core Concepts: Defining Games, Defining Digital Games, The

				Magic Circle, The Primary Schema," in Rules of Play, 71-115.
	1/18	SNOW DAY		Read rules for One Night Ultimate Werewolf
	1/23	Gaming session: One Night Ult. Werewolf		
Play	1/25	Presentations	Board Game, writeup, & video due	Salen and Zimmerman, "Play: Definition, Experience, and Pleasure," in Rules of Play, 298-362.
	1/30	Class discussion		Salen and Zimmerman, "Social Play" in Rules of Play, 460-501.
	2/1	Gaming session: Shelter in Place		Read the rules!
	2/6	Design exercise		Work on P2!
Prototyping	2/8	Project work		Salen and Zimmerman, "The Design Process," in Rules of Play, 11-27; Filament Games, "PlayTesting"; League of Gamemakers, "How to Playtest: Part 3."
Games as Systems	2/13	Presentations	Playground game, writeup, & video due	
	2/15	Reading discussion		Salen and Zimmerman, "Play as Simulation" in Rules of Play, 420-459.
	2/20	Reading discussion		Salen and Zimmerman, "Rules I" in Rules of Play, 116-190; Gingold, "What Warioware can teach us about Game Design".
	2/22	Reading discussion		Salen and Zimmerman, "Rules II" in Rules of Play, 190-297.
	2/27	Presentations	Digital game design doc due	
Games as Narrative	3/1	Reading discussion		Salen and Zimmerman, "Games as Narrative Play," in Rules of Play, 377-419; Ian Bogost, "Video Games are Better Without Stories," The Atlantic (Apr. 25, 2017).

	3/6	Improv exercises		Simons, "Narrative, Games and Theory", Game Studies
	3/8	In class playtesting		TBD
	3/13	TBD	Story-based game due (digital or non), writeup, & video due	
Retro Games	3/15	Gaming session: GAL consoles		
	SPRING BREAK	whistle while you work		
	3/27	In class playtesting		
	3/29	Design challenge	Retro game, writeup, & video due	
	4/3	game pitches		
	4/5	game pitches		
Games and Culture	4/10	Reading discussion		Salen and Zimmerman, "Culture I" in Rules of Play, 502-536.
	4/12	group game design work		
	4/17	Reading discussion		Salen and Zimmerman, "Culture II" in Rules of Play, 536-601
	4/19	In class playtesting		
	4/24	Demo session in GAL	Experimental game, writeup, & video due	