

GCOM 420

Game Design Theory

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Office Hours

Tues: 10 - 11:30AM
Wed: 10 - 11:30AM
Thur: 10 - 11AM
Fri: 11 - 12PM

Class Times

Wednesday (Room CM110)
5:30 - 7:20p.m. - *Lecture*
7:30 - 8:45p.m. - *Lab*

Course Description

This course introduces students to the basics of designing of computer/video games. Students learn historical perspective, the production process, and industry trends. The basics of game design are emphasized through lecture and the optional use of computer graphics software for prototyping. Students work on hands-on projects. There will be a final project at the end of this class comprising of a prototype of your game design.

Goals

Master the craft of game design so you can create that elusive combination of challenge, competition, and interaction that players seek. This design workshop begins with an examination of the fundamental elements of game design; then puts you to work in prototyping, playtesting and redesigning your own games with exercises that teach essential design skills.

Workshop exercises require no background in programming or artwork, releasing you from the intricacies of electronic game production, so you can develop a working understanding of the essentials of game design.

Objectives

Unlike goals, objectives are supposed to be measurable. Here's what you will have to do to pass with course with flying colors:

- Develop skills for designing video games from concept through prototyping
- Create game designs using analog means and/or the personal computer
- Develop an understanding of the game production process
- Increase familiarity with the Game Development Industry
- Familiarize each student with one's own personal specialty/specialties
- Expose each student to constructive criticism with a professional attitude

*** Students with prior training will be assigned more advanced projects ***

Text and Materials

Required Text:

Game Design Workshop, By Tracy Fullerton
ISBN: 978-0240809748

Required Materials:

USB Flash Drive (at least 128mb) for homework assignments
Sketch Book - 8.5 x 11 inches

Class Policies

- Please arrive and conduct yourself in a professional manner.
- Please show up to class on time.
- At the beginning of each class, there will be an attendance sheet for you to sign next to your name. If you miss **THREE OR MORE** classes, and have not discussed these absences with me, I may drop you from the class.
- Please do not bring guests to class unless prearranged with the instructor.
- Contact the instructor in advance to make appropriate arrangements for missing a class and lesson.
- The student is responsible to learn the assignment and/or information if a class/lecture is missed.
- **NO** active cellular phones/beepers (turn the ringers **OFF**) in class or lab.
- Please raise your hand to ask questions or speak up if I'm not looking!
- Feel free to tape record lectures, but your recording device must be compact and you must come to class early enough to set it up without disturbing the class—do not bring in your boom box to record lectures and do not interrupt the class to set up your recorder.

If you miss **THREE OR MORE classes, and have not discussed these absences with me, I may drop you from the class.**

Evaluation

Grades are compiled from the following:

	Ind. Value	Opportunities	Total
Class Participation	10	15	150pts
Weekly Assignments	50	12	600pts
Mid-Term Exam	100	1	100pts
Final Project	250	1	250pts
Grand Total =			1100pts

The first 15 minutes of class will be devoted to turning in assignment, unless otherwise noted by the instructor. It will be required to upload certain homework assignments to D2L. The instructor will alert the class where homework assignments will be turned in before the home assignment is due. Assignments handed-in after class will be counted as "Late".

**** Assignments CANNOT be emailed to the instructor ****

Late Assignments

- One Class = One Letter Grade
- Two Classes = Two Letter Grades
- Three or more classes = the assignment will not be accepted

Only extreme circumstances warrant a grade of "incomplete". An incomplete grade is reserved for those students who meet all of the following criteria:

- Student experiences an extreme situation which is unexpected (Such as a death in the family, serious illness requiring the student to miss several classes)
- Student's grades are passing (C or higher) at the time of the extreme situation.
- Student notifies the instructor within 10 days of an extreme situation

**** A home computer crash is not an acceptable excuse ****

Academic Dishonesty

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty while pursuing their studies at Sacramento City College. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: plagiarism and cheating; misuse of academic resources or facilities; and misuse of computer software, data, equipment or networks.

Plagiarism is the use (copying) of another person's ideas, words, visual images or audio samples, presented in a manner that makes the work appear to be the student's original creation. All work that is not the student's original creation, or any idea or fact that is not "common knowledge," must be documented to avoid even accidental infractions of the conduct code.

Cheating is to gain unfair advantage on a grade by deception, fraud, or breaking the rules set forth by the instructor of the class. Cheating may include but is not limited to: copying the work of others; using notes or other materials when unauthorized; communicating to others during an exam; and any other unfair advantage as determined by the instructor.

Disability Policy Statement

It is our policy not to discriminate against qualified students with documented disabilities in our educational programs, activities, or services. If you have a disability-related need for adjustments or other accommodations in this class please contact the Disabilities Resource Center. You must inform your instructors and the Disabilities Resource Center before the end of week one of classes and preferably before the class start.

Desire to Learn (D2L)

This class will utilize Desire to Learn, our online learning resource system. Assignments, grades, rubrics and class materials will be placed in our class's D2L website. Please bring your student ID number and password to class each session. We will be actively using this platform for this class.

Advanced Technology Lab Hours and Information

Lab Location: T109

Lab Phone: 916-558-2277

Lab Schedule: The Lab is open 6 days a week, during the following hours:

Monday - Thursday: 8:00 AM - 9:00 PM

Friday: 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Saturday: 1:00 pM - 5:00 PM

Sunday: Closed

The computer lab is equipped with Apple iMac computers and are loaded with the latest software. They are for you to use for class projects –please treat them with respect. Every time you use the computer lab you **MUST** sign-in at the computer near the door using your student ID number. The lab attendance records generate funds for new equipment and software. The lab coordinators and tutors are available for assistance if you are experiencing difficulty with the homework.

They have been asked **NOT** to hand-feed you answers. They are there to help you learn and remember the material. There should always at least one lab employee close by to help you, but do not use the help as a crutch or you will not learn the material. I also recommend that you bring your text book to the lab as reference material, especially during busy hours when one-on-one help is harder to get.

A New Greener Approach

The GCOM Department at SCC recently became the first community college in the U.S. to join the Designers Accord—an international coalition of designers, educators, researchers, engineers, business consultants, and corporations, who are working together to create positive environmental and social impact. As part of GCOM’s effort, we are planning to implement more “sustainable” practices in the way we teach and run our program.

For more info on the Designers Accord, visit www.designersaccord.org

Most lesson assignments will come from the textbook and any extra instructions will be detailed on the class blog. As much as possible, any additional assignments and handouts will be available only as PDF files on the blog and **NOT** be handed out in paper form in the classroom. You are

encouraged to NOT print out these files, but to read them and keep them in digital form only.

Online Resources

SCC Website: www.scc.losrios.edu

Desire 2 Learn: <https://d2l.losrios.edu/>

GCOM Department Website: http://wserver.scc.losrios.edu/~tech/gc/gcom_home.html

GCOM Blog: <http://gcomscc.blogspot.com/>

Class Website: www.renderography.com

Adobe's Website: www.adobe.com

Autodesk Website: www.autodesk.com

Luxology Website: www.luxology.com

Academic Software: www.journeyed.com

Calendar of Assignments

January

Due Date	Assignment
1/22/14	Bring D2L Log-In Info
1/29/14	Student Survey

February

Due Date	Assignment
02/05/14	1.1, 1.2 & 1.3
02/12/14	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7
02/19/14	3.3, 3.4, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.12
02/26/14	4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6

March

Due Date	Assignment
03/05/14	4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10
03/12/14	5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.7
03/19/14	Mid-Term
03/26/14	6.2
10/30/13	6.6

April

Due Date	Assignment
04/02/14	6.8
04/09/14	6.9 & 6.10
04/16/14	Spring Break!
04/24/14	Final Project Pitch
04/30/14	

May

Due Date	Assignment
05/07/14	Work on Final Project
05/14/14	Final Project Due

WELCOME & INTRO

Week 01

Topics Discussed

- Class Policies
- Required Text Books
- Class Procedures
- Evaluation
- Desire 2 Learn
- Class Introductions

GAME DESIGN BASICS

Week 02

Chapter 01

Topics Discussed

- Advocate for the Player
- Passion and Skills
- A Playcentric Design Process
- Designing for Innovation
- What Designers Should Know
- The Iterative Design Process

STRUCTURE OF GAMES

Week 03

Chapter 02

Topics Discussed

- Engaging the Player
- What is a Puzzle
- The Sum of the Parts
- Defining Games
- Beyond Definitions
- Production Process

FORMAL ELEMENTS

Week 04

Chapter 03

Topics Discussed

- Persuasive Games
- Objectives
- Procedures
- Rules
- Resources
- Outcomes

DRAMATIC ELEMENTS

Week 05

Chapter 04

Topics Discussed

- Challenge
- State of Play
- Story
- Premise
- Dramatic Arc
- World Building

DRAMATIC ELEMENTS CONT'D

Week 06

Chapter 04

Topics Discussed

- Characters
- Characters Arcs
- Archetypes
- Journey of the Hero
- Crafting Good Characters
- Introspective Character Design

SYSTEM DYNAMICS

Week 07

Chapter 05

Topics Discussed

- Games as Systems
- System Dynamics
- Deconstruction
- Interacting with Systems
- Tuning Game Systems

GAME DECON

Week 08

Chapter 06

Topics Discussed

- Establishing Formal Elements
- Recognizing System Dynamics
- Playtesting
- Alternate Game Dynamics
- Creating Engaging Gameplay
- Experimentation

CONCEPT CREATION

Week 09

Topics Discussed

- Brainstorming
- Conceptualization
- Editing and Refining Ideas
- Turning Ideas into Games
- Focus Groups
- Playtesting

CREATING a PREMISE

Week 10

Topics Discussed

- Focussing the User Experience
- Understanding the importance of experience goals
- Creative Writing Techniques
- Editing and Refinement
- Scope of Experience
- Writing

FEATURES in GAMES

Week 11

Topics Discussed

- Experience vs. Features
- Invitation to Play
- Building Control Agents
- Creating Desirable Gameplay mechanics
- Playtesting the experience
- Importance of Feedback

PROTOTYPES

Week 12

Chapter 07

Topics Discussed

- Methods of Prototyping
- Prototyping your Idea
- Refining the Prototype
- Beyond the Physical Prototype

DIGITAL PROTOTYPES

Week 13

Chapter 08 & 09

Topics Discussed

- Types of Digital Prototypes
- Using Software in Game Design
- Prototyping the Game Feeling

Mood Boards

Week 14

Topics Discussed

- Presentations of Mood Boards

DIGITAL PROTOTYPES

Week 15

Chapter 08 & 09

Topics Discussed

- Designing Control Schemes
- Selecting Viewports
- Interface Design

FINAL DESIGN

Week 16

Topics Discussed

- Presentations of Final Projects and Designs