GAM 224: Strategies in Game Design
Professor Robin Burke
Fall 2007, Section 402, Rm CS&T 216
M/W 11:50 am — 1:20 pm

Office: CS&T 453
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:30 am – 12 noon; Wednesdays 2:00 – 3:30 pm
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Description
This course approaches the study of computer games from three angles: first, as examples of media that can be analyzed and critiqued for their thematic elements, formal structure, plot and interactive appreciation; second, as complex software artifacts subject to technological constraints and the product of a labor-intensive design and implementation process; and three as a cultural artifact with behaviors and associations comparable in import to other popular art forms. Student will study the principles of game design and use them both to analyze existing games and to develop their own original game ideas. Students will also learn about the process of game development, starting from the game's narrative concept and moving to consideration of a game's components: the representation of the player, of artifacts, the virtual world that contains them and the interaction between them and the player.

Prerequisites
None

Course Text
Other readings on-line.

Supplies
All students are required to purchase and bring to class
- a deck of playing cards and
- a pair of ordinary six-sided dice.
These will be used for game design and analysis exercises.

Students may also need a memory card or other storage media for their game analysis project.

Resources
Students in the class will have access to the CTI PC Game Lab, CS&T 920 and Console Game Lab CS&T 710. Some assignments will require that student use specific games available in this lab. Students performing assignments have priority for the use of the lab hardware and software. See http://defrag.depaul.edu/ for information on lab times. You will be required to provide your student ID when checking out game hardware and/or software. You may also use your own equipment and games.

Web Site
The course web site will be an important resource for all aspects of the course:

http://josquin.cti.depaul.edu/~rburke/courses/f07/gam224/

The schedule and other syllabus information may change during the quarter: the web site will contain the most up-to-date information.
Assignments (except for the analysis papers) will be submitted on the Course On-Line site. http://dlweb.cs.depaul.edu/

**Organization and Assessment**
GAM 224 will meet twice a week. Generally, we will alternate our class sessions between lectures on game design topics, analysis of particular games and in-class activities designing and playing games. Students are expected to attend all classes, do the assigned reading and homework before class time.

Student progress will be assessed through a combination of 3 unit quizzes, short reaction papers for selected games, an individual analysis project analyzing a particular game, homework, group game design projects, and participation in the class.

- Analysis Project (3 papers) – 30%
- Design Projects (2) – 20%
- Reaction Papers (6) – 15%
- Quizzes (3) – 15%
- Homework (3) – 10%
- Participation (including in-class activities) – 10%

**Reaction Papers**
Students will write six reaction papers during the quarter, based on the games in the course game syllabus below: one from each line a-f. All students will play these games over the course of the quarter and write a short reaction paper. One of these papers is due to the Course On-Line site on the assigned day more or less every week from weeks 3 through 10. (They are spaced out somewhat so they are not due when other assignments are due.) They may not be turned in late or turned in by email. You can choose which game to do during any given week. All of the games are available in the CTI game lab.

- a) *Grand Theft Auto 3*, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, or *Bully*
- b) *Half-Life* or *Half-Life 2*
- c) *Katamari Damacy* or *We Love Katamari*
- d) *Age of Mythology*, *Civilization IV*, *Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle Earth (I or II)*, *Total War* (any) or *WarCraft III*
- e) *Guitar Hero*, *Guitar Hero II*, or *Dance Dance Revolution* (any)
- f) *Gears of War*, *Rainbow Six: Vegas*, or *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter* (XBOX 360)

**Analysis Project**
Each student will perform an in-depth analysis of a single video game title of his or her choice. The following will be required:

- Substantial play-time with the title, sufficient to master basic game play and to encounter most of the game's components. (Playing the game all the way through would be ideal but not practical for many titles.)
- Researching the game's community presence through FAQ files, walk-throughs, fan sites and other documents.

The analysis will follow the rubric of our book: "rules, play and culture", and will consist of three 5-page (1200-1500 word) papers analyzing the selected game through each of these perspectives. These papers will be submitted to the turnitin.com website.

**Design Projects**
Student will work in instructor-assigned teams on two separate game design projects. Each team will present its project work to the class on designated days. Contribution to the project will be assessed via a peer-assessment protocol.
Tentative Class Schedule


Unit 1: Rules
9/10: Game design activity. Game rules Reading: Rules of Play, Ch. 5-10, Garfield game design Assigned: Homework #1


9/17: Systems of Information. Information economies: hiding and revealing information in games. Reading: Rules of Play, Ch. 17 Due: Homework #1


9/24: Conflict. Conflict in games. Systems of conflict. Managing difficulty. Reading: Rules of Play, Ch. 20 Due: Reaction paper #1

9/26: Case study: Guitar Hero II Quiz #1: Rules

Unit 2: Play
10/1: Play and experience. Experiential aspects of game design. Qualities of play activities. Defining the "core mechanic". Reading: Rules of Play, Ch. 22 & 23 Due: Homework #2 Assigned: Design project #1

10/3: Game design activity: Core mechanic Due: Analysis project paper #1 (rules)

10/8: Simulation. Games as simulation engines. Abstraction and verisimilitude. Immersion and remediation. Reading: Rules of Play, Ch. 27 Due: Reaction paper #2

10/10: Guest speaker. Play and player experience.

10/15: Social Play. The play community. Player roles. Rule making and breaking. Forbidden play. Reading: Rules of Play, Ch. 28 Due: Design project #1 (draft design)
10/17: Case study: Katamari Damacy.
Quiz #2: Play

(10/21) Due: Design project #1 (presentation)

10/22: Presentations for design project #1
Due: Design project #1 (final design), Reaction paper #3

Unit 4: Culture
10/24: Games as culture. The context of game creation and game play. Cultural interactions in games.
Rhetorics and politics of play.
Reading: Rules of Play, Ch. 29 & 30.
Due: Analysis project paper #2 (play)
Assigned: Homework #3, Design project #2

10/29: Gender in games. Imagery, symbolism and media. Ethical aspects of game design.
Reading: The Escapist 17 (entire issue) (http://www.escapistmagazine.com/issue/17)
Due: Reaction paper #4

(10/30) Due: Homework #3

10/31: Game analysis activity: Gender

11/5: Case study: Grand Theft Auto III
Due: Design project #2 (draft), Reaction paper #5
Quiz #3: Culture

11/7: The game industry. Guest speaker TBA.

(11/11) Due: Design project #2 (presentation)

11/12: Presentations for design project #2
Due: Design project #2 (final design)

11/18: Finals week.
Due: Analysis project paper #3 (culture)

Policies
Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in in-class exercises. Class will start promptly. I
will usually take attendance. Arrival more than 10 minutes late for class will constitute an absence.
Students are individually responsible for material they may have missed due to absence or tardiness.

Most assignments will be submitted to the Course On-Line site, the "turnitin.com" site or in class. Do not
submit assignments by email. Analysis papers are due by class time on the due date. All other assignments
are due at midnight on the due date. Late analysis papers except for the last one will be accepted up to two
days after the due date with a ½ grade point penalty per day. The design presentations must be made on the
presentation date.

Assignments (except for designated group assignments) must represent a student's individual effort. While
students are permitted to discuss assignments at the conceptual level, under no circumstances should
students share specific answers (electronically or otherwise). Papers must conform to the course guidelines
on references and documentation. Use of sources without attribution constitutes plagiarism, a serious
violation of academic integrity. Consult the assignment handouts or the instructor if you have questions
about how or what to document.
Domain Description
GAM 224 is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature Domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature Domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts by developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning, and through critical and/or creative activity to come to experience art with greater openness, insight, and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of literature, art, theatre, or music as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Students who take course in this domain choose three courses from such choices as literature, the visual arts, media arts, music, and theater. No more than two courses can be chosen from one department or program.

School Policies

Online Instructor Evaluation
Course and instructor evaluations are critical for maintaining and improving course quality. To make evaluations as meaningful as possible, we need 100% student participation. Therefore, participation in the School’s web-based academic administration initiative during the eighth and ninth week of this course is a requirement of this course. Failure to participate in this process will result in a grade of incomplete for the course. This incomplete will be automatically removed within seven weeks after the end of the course and replaced by the grade you would have received if you had fulfilled this requirement.

Email
Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at http://campusconnect.depaul.edu/ is correct.

Plagiarism:
The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course, as well as all other courses in which independent research or writing play a vital part in the course requirements, should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report, or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

Incomplete:
An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final, and approved by the Dean of the School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.