GAME 100 – Intro to Game Project

UNM Valencia, Digital Media Arts   updated 1-2012
Fall 2012
Monday | Wednesday, 3pm – 4:15pm
Professor: Alexa Wheeler
alexa08@unm.edu

Campus Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday   10am-10:30am & 1pm-1:30pm
                        And by appointment

Virtual Office Hours: by email, text, IM, and by appointment for live chat
                         **see "How to Contact the Instructor" below

Office: Business & Technology Building Rm. 110A

Course Description

This course focuses on game development concepts and techniques. Topics covered are common to all game development: history of modern games, player considerations, game elements, storytelling and narrative, character development, gameplay experience, levels, interface design, audio, strategy, and project management. Lectures, demonstrations, discussions, and other content will introduce various issues of game development, design, and art. Assigned projects, readings, presentations, exams and group critiques will assist in a critical understanding better preparing the student for further study in game development.

Objectives

-   Demonstrate a working knowledge of game history including key evolutionary developments in game design.
-   Develop an understanding of all game genres.
-   Create a game concept, back-story, character, biographies, rules and conditions for victory.
-   Write a game proposal including an evaluation of playability and marketability of the product.
-   Create character/vehicle/setting rough concept art.
-   Create commercial, package design, poster for game development idea
-   Employ video game development processes and production techniques.
-   Gain an excellent working knowledge of the Mac computer and it's operating system

Required Text

Game Development Essentials, 3rd edition
Jeannie Nova

Student Responsibilities/Attendance/Participation

Student Responsibilities:
- Students <u>must</u> have basic computer and file management skills for all DMA courses. Custom tutoring services are available through the TLC. Required pre/co requisite is IT 101: Computer FUNdamentals. Students that fall behind due to lack of basic computer skills will be dropped.
- Bring a USB Flash Drive (at least 2 GB) to every class. Make sure it is clearly labeled with your name on it.
- Have a UNM email to access WebCT:
  - o Students will access supplemental information, class agenda/syllabus, and their grades through WebCT at https://vista.unm.edu. Just enter your NetID and your password. You must set-up a UNM email account (https://netid.unm.edu) if you do not already have one.
- Have access to our class WIKI, know your username and password, and access it and participate regularly
- If you have a disability, please inform me of your needs as soon as possible to ensure that your needs are met in a timely manner.
- Cell phones need to be muted during class times. If you must receive a call, leave the lab before you answer. No phone conversations in the studio. No web browsing, email, or text messaging during lectures, demos, discussions, or critiques.
- **COMPUTERS WILL BE OFF DURING ALL CRITIQUES!!!**

Attendance/Participation:
- Students are required to complete all projects on time, participate in scheduled critiques/class discussions/presentations, and maintain a safe, respectable, positive lab environment.
- Students are required to attend class, arrive on time, remain present until the end of class, and be prepared for each day's work. More than three absences without prior consultation may result in a failing grade or a drop from the class. Leaving early or arriving late three times results in one absence.
- If you have not attended class for three consecutive class periods and have made no attempt to call/email/IM/contact me, you WILL be dropped.
- Students who do not attend the first week of class will automatically be dropped.
- Students will need to work a few hours each week in addition to the scheduled class times. Open lab hours will be announced.

Grading Policy

Grading:
- Grading is based on a timely completion of course assignments, the quality of individual technical and critical development, conceptual progress, personal commitment and the ability to work in a community studio setting. Personal commitment involves regular attendance, consistent effort, completion of work, participation in presentations, critiques and class discussions, and the general willingness to try. Make each project meaningful to yourself!
- Each assignment will culminate in a presentation, which will consist of discussing your work and/or projecting your completed work in class for all to see. All due dates will be announced in the YELLOW BOX on WebCT, as well as on the syllabus. No full credit will be given for any late work. If an assignment is not presented on time, an automatic 0 will be issued. You will need to make arrangements with me if you are planning to make-up the work, and a fair grade will be issued once the work has been submitted, presented, and critiqued, minus an automatic one letter grade deduction.
- Incompletes are rarely issued. If 75% of the semester's work/projects/deliverables and participation/attendance have been completed with a satisfactory grade, and incomplete may be issued.

Grading Breakdown

Semester Requirements:

Projects (3)	30 points	10 points each
Final Project	35 points	
Group Team Contract	5 points	
Midterm and Final Exams	30 points	15 points each

Extra Credit:

Extra Credit   10 points maximum for the semester – consider the Career Analysis Project

Points will be added up and a letter grade will be issued according to the following scale:

Grade	Range
A+	101+
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	88-89
B	84-87
B-	80-83
C+	78-79
C	74-77
C-	70-73
D+	68-69
D	64-67
D-	60-63
F	50-59

How to Contact the Instructor

Weekly Office Hours:
- Office Hours are held weekly on-campus and virtually.
- On campus, the office hours are:
    - o Mondays & Wednesdays– Monday & Wednesday 10am-10:30am & 1pm-1:30pm in B&T Rm. 110A, or check other DMA classrooms
    - o Also, by appointment
- Virtually, reach me any other time through email, text, IM (see below).

Email:
I prefer all email to be from the internal WebCT class email. I will check this WebCT email   regularly and will respond to all emails within 48 hours, and usually sooner.
Although less preferred, you can email me at alexa08@unm.edu. In the Subject Line of the email, ALWAYS write your full name and class number. For example – "Laurie Anderson IT 205"

Instant Messaging:
If I am available to talk, I will set my status to online. You will first need to set up an account with the following services, then you can use these IM services:

Google Talk - "alexatoast"
Set up a Gmail account: gmail.google.com
Email me with your gmail address: alexatoast@gmail.com
I will add you & you add me to your buddy list
GOOGLE TALK HELP: http://www.google.com/support/talk/?hl=en

Yahoo Messenger – "alexatoast"
Download Yahoo Messenger:
Mac: http://messenger.yahoo.com/download/
PC: http://messenger.yahoo.com/download/win/
Once successfully downloaded, open the program. Add me to your contacts by clicking on the "+" at the bottom left of the screen. My Messenger ID is – alexatoast@yahoo.com

AIM (AOL instant messaging) – "alexawheeler"

Skype – "alexatoast"
Download a Skype account:
Mac: http://www.skype.com/download/skype/macosx/
PC: http://www.skype.com/download/skype/windows/
Once successfully downloaded, open the program. You can "call" me by typing – alexatoast – in the search bar.
SKYPE HELP: http://www.skype.com/help/guides/

WebCT Chat:
If I am online in the WebCT system, invite me to chat!

Text:
You can also reach me **BY TEXT ONLY** at: 505-515-1055. I WILL NOT answer phone calls and ask that you please NEVER LEAVE A MESSAGE!!! Any messages left by students will be deleted and will not constitute an attempt at communication. In the event of an absence, you will be counted unexcused if you only left a message and made no other written attempt at communication. All communication between instructor and student outside of class time MUST be in written format for this class. If you must reach me or have an emergency, USE: email, IM, text, or my office phone (if needing to leave a message – as a last resort) at 925-8702.

Support Information, Resources, & Tutorials

Access to the book:

- University of New Mexico Valencia Bookstore:
  - o http://www.unm.edu/~unmvc/Bookstore/Bookstore.htm

- Library System:
  - o University of New Mexico Valencia Campus Library:
    - ▪ http://www.unm.edu/~unmvclib/
      - • There will be one copy on reserve. You will need to check it out at the front desk. It will only be available for 2-hour checkout, and cannot ever leave the library.

- Purchase Online:
  - o If you plan on purchasing this book online, you need to do so immediately. We will start using it right away! A couple of sources for purchase online are:
    - ▪ Amazon.com: www.amazon.com - some new, some used
    - ▪ Half.com: www.half.ebay.com - discounted prices for used books!

Open Studio Time – Digital Media Arts Open Lab & Darkroom:
- Located in Room 123A in the Business & Technology Building (directly in front of the current B&T open computer lab Room 123). You will need to enter the lab through the current B&T computer lab and sign-in to use the computers.
- Monday through Thursday 8:00am to 8pm
- Friday 8:00 am to 2:00 pm

Support for WebCT:
  - o   - WebCT help: http://webctinfo.unm.edu/student/.

DMA / UNM Valencia Tutoring Services:
- • We are proud to have our very own DMA tutor available for Digital Media Arts specific courses! You can walk-in or if you prefer to make an appointment during these times, please call the Learning Center at 925-8900.
- • Custom tutoring services are available through The Learning Center http://www.unm.edu/~tutor/. Even online tutoring is available!

Other tutorials:
- I will post a number of links to video tutorials in WebCT for this course.

Instructor Support:
- Please see "How to Contact the Instructor" for methods of contacting the instructor for help.

Community Support:
- We will have a HELP FORUM discussion board in the WebCT course. Use this as a place to post questions to the community. It is important for peer learning and peer communication to enhance our community.

Course Schedule

Dates	Schedule	Textbook Readings	Projects
Week 1	• Introductions • Review Syllabus • Review WebCT • Lecture • Equipment Overview • Supplies Overview • **WebCT**: "Getting Started"	Chapter 1: Historical Elements: how did we get here?	
Week 2	• Lecture • Demo	Chapter 2: Player Elements: who plays and why?	
Week 3	• **Project 1 Presentation** • **WebCT**: L.M. 3 • WIKI info emailed	Chapter 3: Game Elements: what are the possibilities?	**Project 1** Due: *Game Analysis*
Week 4	• Enroll on WIKI • **WebCT**: L.M. 4	Chapter 4: Storytelling	
Week 5	• Lecture • Demo • Work time • **WebCT**: L.M. 5	Chapter 5: Characters	
Week 6	• **Project 2 "Elevator Pitch"** • **WebCT**: L.M. 6	Chapter 6: Gameplay: creating the experience.	**Project 2** Due: *Game Story & Character Elements*
Week 7	• Lecture • Demo • Work time • **WebCT**: L.M. 7		
Week 8 *Fall Break	• **WebCT**: L.M. 8 – **MIDTERM EXAM –** covers chapters 1 - 6	Chapter 7: Levels: creating the worlds	
Week 9	• **Project 3 due**	Chapter 8: Interface: creating the connection	**Project 3** Due: *Game Play Elements*
Week 10	• Lecture • Work time • Break into Groups • **WebCT**: L.M. 10	Chapter 9: Audio	

Week 11	• Work in Groups • Group Team Contracts • **WebCT**: L.M. 11	Chapter 10 Roles & Responsibilities: developing the team Chapter 11: Production & Management Chapter 12: Marketing & Maintenance	
Week 12	• Lecture • Work time • Work in Groups • **WebCT**: L.M. 12		
Week 13	• Work in groups • **WebCT**: L.M. 13		
Week 14 *Thanksgiving Break	• Work in groups • **WebCT**: L.M. 14	Conclusion: The Future: where are we going?	
Week 15	• **Extra Credit Due** • Work in groups • **WebCT**: L.M. 15		**Extra Credit Due**
Week 16	• **Final Project presentations** • **WebCT**: L.M. 16 • **FINAL EXAM –** covers chapters 7 - 12		**Final Project** Due: *Game Adaptation*

Project 1: Game Analysis

Objective:
To analyze and be the critic of a current electronic game. To introduce basic game syntax and concepts, such as story, characters, audio, interface, environment, levels, graphics, artificial intelligence, and gameplay.

Process:
Play an electronic game for at least 4 hours, then write a review of the game. In 500 words or less, provide the following information:

1. Complete Title
2. Game development studio and publisher
3. Platform (mention only the platform on which you played the game)
4. Genre (mention the published genre only)
5. ESRB rating
6. What worked: discuss three features of the game that worked for you and why
7. What did not work: discuss three game features that did not work for you and why
8. Score – rate the game on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best

Project 2: Game Story & Character Elements

Objective:
To introduce and discuss:
- Game Story Elements: title, genre, theme, premise, backstory, synopsis
- Game Character Elements: background, physiology, sociology, psychology, verbal characteristics

Process:
Length/Format: On your WIKI page - discuss the following topics in 1 paragraph (on average) for each section.

Part I: Game Story Elements
- **Title**: Make sure your title is brief, descriptive, and "snappy." Try to come up with something that will attract players to your game.
- **Genre**: Use an accepted genre, a hybrid – or make up your own!
- **Theme**: What is the theme (usually philosophical) of your game? Are you trying to make a statement, promote an agenda, make a value judgment about good vs evil? Common themes include survival, redemption, transcendence, and temptation. Come up with a theme and discuss it in one paragraph.
- **Premise** (or high concept): In order to create a strong premise, you need to determine the goal, hook, mood and theme of the game. Your premise should consist of 2-3 short sentences and should be written in 2nd-person voice, addressing the player directly. Your premise also needs to "sell' the game to the prospective player by revealing the game's dramatic elements and "fun factor"!
- **Backstory**: The backstory should address what happens before the game begins. It should be no longer than one paragraph—around 3-5 sentences.
- **Synopsis**: The synopsis should address what happens while the game is being played. It should be at least one paragraph long—and it may be several paragraphs long, depending upon your storyline's complexity. Your synopsis should not read like a scripted story. Remember: You can have several different endings in a game—and your characters can go down different paths in the story! Do not get bogged down in details associated with plot points. Stick with the general storyline only.

Part II: Game Character Elements
Create descriptions of 3 characters from your game. Using 1 paragraph (3-5 sentences) per character, include each of the following elements:

- **Background**: Discuss character name, history, and relevance to the game's storyline.
- **Physiology**: Discuss body type, hair/skin/eye color, gestures, expressions, distinguishing features, health, walking cycle, and signature/idle movements.
- **Sociology**: Discuss economic power, family roots, marital status, occupation, education, religion, race, political affiliation, and each character's relationship to other characters. Make sure you create a character triangle relationship between the 3 characters you've chosen to describe.
- **Psychology**: Discuss beliefs, sexual orientation, temperament, attitude, complexes, intelligence, strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, goals, fears, and emotional well-being. Make sure each character experiences an "arc" as the game progresses.
- **Verbal characteristics**: Discuss vocal tone, volume, and speed. Provide a sample dialogue phrase.

Each of the above elements should be discussed in detail. Make sure that at least one of your characters is a player character—and consider how player characters and non-player characters will differ from one another. Also, make sure you consider both visual and verbal character development in your descriptions.

Project 3: Game Play Elements

Objective:
To introduce and discuss many Gameplay elements: challenges, strategies, platform, target rating, level structure, environmental design, interface design, artificial intelligence, target market, competitive analysis, concept art, feature summary.

Process:
Length/Format: On your WIKI page - discuss the following topics in 1 paragraph (on average) for each section.

Content: Both of the following sections should be covered, and all should be related to your original game idea:

- **Challenges**: Gameplay is comprised of challenges or obstacles that are faced by players throughout the game. Players respond to these challenges by utilizing strategies, often represented by actions and player choices. Discuss 3 types of challenges and obstacles that a player character might face during the game. Some examples might be running out of gas, being locked in a strange room, hanging from a cliff, lack of food or money. Be as specific about these challenges, and tie each of them to your particular storyline. (Think of them as plot points.) Challenges such as "boss fight" or "locked door" are too general.
- **Strategies**: For each of the 3 challenges, discuss 3 strategies that players may use to overcome that challenge. These strategies should tie in with different story paths the player might take in the game—and they should also be as detailed as possible.
- **Platform**: What platform will you primarily target, and why? Will there be a secondary platform?
- **Target rating**: Indicate what the expected ESRB rating for your game will be, and why.
- **Level structure**: Discuss how you will structure your levels. How many levels will you have in your game? What theme will each level have? How will the levels relate to one another? How will you set up the difficulty progression within each level? How will your levels relate to your story and gameplay elements?
- **Environmental design**: What will your interior and exterior environments look like? Provide samples of one interior and exterior environment.
- **Interface design**: How will players control the game and access information? Provide one manual interface design and two visual (active and passive) interface designs for your game.
- **Artificial intelligence**: How will you structure your game's artificial intelligence? How will your NPCs interact with your player characters?
- Audio: How will you incorporate audio into your game? Discuss music, sound effects and dialogue.
- **Target market**: What is the portion of the game-playing audience that will be most likely to play your game? Describe the market in terms of geographics, demographics and/or psychographics – rather than genre-specific. Don't say something like "RPG players would love my game because it's an RPG." You aren't describing your market. What you need to define in this case is *who* are the RPG player? What are their characteristics?
- **Competitive analysis**: Choose 3 game titles currently on the market that could be considered competitors of your game. Describe each of these titles (1 paragraph per title), and discuss why your game can attract the same audience and establish a competitive edge over the other titles.
- **Concept art**: Choose one character, environment, and object that you will be utilizing in your game. Provide analog or digital concept art of each. (For the character and object, make sure you include front, back and side views – *and* an action shot.) The environment could be a map of a particular level in the game or a closer view of a particular "scene" in the game (interior or exterior).
- **Feature summary**: List 5 features of your game that make it different from other games currently on the market.

Final Project: Game Adaptation

Objective:
To work in a group to create an original game adaptation for which a current game does not exist. To create a package.

Process:
Length/Format: Create a complete package for a game concept and post on the WIKI as well as present in class. Come up with the concept art for at least one character, make a short commercial, and make a game poster.

After the class has chosen several properties (film, book, television series, CD) for which a game adaptation has not been created, join one of the groups and design a digital game that takes advantage of one theme associated with the chosen property. Do not attempt to "translate" the entire property into a game environment.

Discuss the following in your presentation:

- Title
- Premise
- Theme
- Genre
- Platform
- Time interval
- Player mode
- Market

- Backstory
- Synopsis
- Characters
- Level structure
- Environment
- Interface (manual & visual)
- Artificial intelligence
- Audio

Do NOT do the following:
- DO NOT read your presentation (boring)
- DO NOT go over the time limit (you can avoid this by rehearsing with your group and filtering out unnecessary (or less important) information
- DO NOT let your presentation become inconsistent (you can avoid this by having a leader who is a good project manager)

Resources
Refer to your textbook (*Game Development Essentials: An Introduction*) for elements of good game adaptations. Review the history of storytelling, game-specific story/character elements, and gameplay-story intersection concepts.

Extra Credit: Career Analysis Presentation

Objective:
To research and analyze the careers available in the gaming industry today. To choose one position of interest, and further analyze and discuss it. To create a slide presentation to present to the class.

Process:
Length/Format: Create a slide presentation with a minimum of 10 slides, posted in your WIKI page, and discuss the following topics in 1 paragraph (on average) for each section.

Content: Choose a position in the game industry--preferably one you're interested in attaining. Drawing from your textbook, speaker presentations, lecture and discussion, discuss the following areas in your presentation and paper:

Description
Describe the specific position you've chosen to analyze:
• What career area is it associated with?
• What other positions are associated with the same career area?
• What are the responsibilities and skill areas associated with this position?
• Where does this position fit in with the development/business cycle of a game?
• What impact does this position have on a game product? (Provide visual or audio examples -- preferably a "before and after" comparison.)
• What individuals does this person report to and supervise?
• What paths are taken in order to get to this position?
• What educational background do people in this position usually have?
• How do all of the above differ depending on the size of the company you're working for?

Strategy
Discuss your strategy for attaining this position. Include the following topics:
• Education
• Skill-building
• Demo (if applicable)
• Experience (prior to being hired)
• Events
• Research
• Resume
• Contacts
• Contributions (e.g., MODs, writing, speaking)
• Networking
• Online marketing (e.g., discussion, web site)
• Do you plan to approach a company or start one yourself?
• Why are you uniquely qualified for this position?