

## **GDD 101: Introduction to Game Design (3 credits) Fall 2013**

MWF, Section A: 1:00-1:50pm, CAS1:105; Section B: 2:00-2:50pm, CAS3:303

### **INSTRUCTOR**

Instructor: Professor Eric Nersesian  
Office: CAS 2-101

Email: [eric.nersesian@quinnipiac.edu](mailto:eric.nersesian@quinnipiac.edu)  
Tel: TBD

Open office hours: Mondays 3:00–4:00 pm, Tuesdays, Wednesdays 12:00-1:00pm and Fridays 12:00-1:00pm. Additional office hours are by appointment. Open Virtual Office Hours for email contact: during the week (Monday-Friday) I will try to respond to emails within 24 hours. Emails received on the weekend will be responded to by the beginning of the following week.

**I am unable to accept work submitted by email. All work will be submitted via your blog.**

### **COURSE BLOGGING**

All course related materials and announcements are posted online. If you are reading this syllabus then you have already logged into <http://blackboard.quinnipiac.edu> Please set up a blog for the course. You can use the blog tool of your choice such as Blogger <http://www.blogger.com/> or WordPress <http://wordpress.org/>

Please use the following format for your blog address: username-GDD101. Use lower case. Brad Pitt would create the following address using his assigned username: bpitt-GDD101.blogspot.com

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces students to the history and development of games (card games, social games, digital games); theories of game design and play; the study of the social effects of games; the role of serious games for teaching and learning and production practices in the games industry.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Everyone has played games at one time or another, and games allow people to connect with each other across age, culture, language, and gender. While any good game provides entertainment, games have the power to do much more, like improve surgeons' skills, help students learn, or encourage people to make positive social change. At the heart of any game is the game designer.

The purpose of this class is to analyze and engage in a variety of interactive media: games and other forms of play. The assignments are intended to help you turn a critical consciousness towards an activity that you have engaged in since birth. You will learn the fundamental concepts of game design, and how they apply to games, any designed experience, and our daily lives. You will be exposed to many different types of games and explore the game design themes across genres. You will learn to apply critical analysis to game products and also develop and hone your personal game design skills through practice. Frequent critiques will increase your ability to give and receive thoughtful feedback, which is a key skill for game designers (and for life). Assignments are intended to provide a philosophical and theoretical understanding of play and the ability to apply this knowledge to game development.

we will experience and examine these kinds of media and analyze them in light of the readings. The final project requires students to create something new. Informed by our class discussions about games and the role of play in our culture and the concern about media effects of film and videogames, students will have the opportunity to come up with a prototype of an interactive media product or a study of such an environment. This is a tremendous challenge and one that will require a great deal of creativity and ingenuity.

What is fun? Why do we play? How does play help us evolve into ever more complex beings? How and why is play gendered? How does play teach us about power and how to use it? Why is play such an important part of art, philosophy and science? These and other questions will be the focus of this class. We will have fun, but we will also study play very seriously.

### **ESSENTIAL LEARNING SKILLS**

Although it seems self-evident, you should only take this class if you really enjoy playing games and want to do a lot of it. The first rule of play is that no one can force you to play, you have to willingly engage in it.

In this course, you will learn, practice, and develop many skills, including:

#### Game Design:

- Writing game rules
- Playtesting
- Revising game rules
- Empathizing with the player
- Observing the game
- Listening
- Authoring critical papers and game design documents
- Understanding and using probability
- Critiquing games

#### Game Production:

- Estimating time required to complete tasks
- Prioritizing tasks
- Trying to figure out how/why something is fun and making fun happen
- Adjusting to change
- Staying on schedule
- Facilitating collaboration
- Helping other people work more effectively
- Communicating status updates, good news, and bad news clearly
- Note taking
- Presenting to others

### **COURSE STRUCTURE**

We meet three times a week for 50 minutes. Monday class is for seminar, discussion and reading review. Wednesday class is for student presentations. Friday class is for group work, project presentations, game reviews and breakdowns.

### **ANALOG GAMES**

We will bring in, play, analyze and discuss the games that have been most significant in your lives and in the lives of your parents. Some starting points:

- Monopoly
- Chess
- Checkers
- Tag
- King of the Mountain
- Dolls
- Action Figures
- Parchesi
- Card Games
- Hide and Seek
- Doctor
- Sports: baseball, football, basketball, tennis, hockey, running, biking, etc.
- Spectacles: watching others play

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

The assignments for this class must be turned in complete and on-time. **NO LATE WORK IS ACCEPTED.** If you have a medical or family emergency which will prevent you from getting your work done, it is your obligation to notify me of this fact and provide me with the appropriate documentation **BEFORE** the due date of the assignment. If your work is not turned in on time and you have not provided me with an excuse prior to the due date, do **NOT** email me with justifications. You will simply not receive credit for the assignment.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Weeks 1-4, Intro to game structures, history, and theory:**

What is a game?

What has historically been the role of play in culture and how has it changed?

How do different types of games (analog, digital, dice, card, board, etc.) differ and what are they for?

What is game theory and how does it inform how we build and play games?

### **Weeks 5-10, Game Design Theory**

The role of probability and chance

Storytelling and interactive narrative structures

Game mechanics- boards, pieces, avatars, characters, currency

Cheating

Importance of usability and play testing for QA (quality assurance)

### **Weeks 11-15, Game Design Practice and current issues**

Different types of games: entertainment, educational, health, change, etc.

Process of game development: brainstorming, pitch, design document, paper prototype, beta, delivery. Issues designers need to be aware of: violence, representations of race and gender, gamefication, training and simulations for war, medicine, etc., effects of play on players

## **VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAM ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Play involves presence not absence. Play is about activity, engagement and passion. Only take this class if you are planning to attend and actively participate in the class. Following is the attendance policy for all QU Game Design classes: You are expected to be in class ready to work at the beginning of the scheduled class time. PROMPT ARRIVAL TO CLASS IS EXPECTED. Three late arrivals to class will equal one absence. PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU HAVE 9 OR MORE ABSENCES YOU MAY BE ASKED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE COURSE. 10 ABSENCES DURING THE SEMESTER WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE. Attendance for the last class meeting scheduled during Finals Week is required. There is no distinction between "excused" or "unexcused" absences - missed course work, content and class participation are an issue in any absence and can negatively impact the rest of the class members. In the case of extenuating circumstances, such as an ongoing illness or the death of a loved one, the professor should be consulted as soon as possible, and documentation from the Student Affairs office may be required. In such circumstances the faculty and student can negotiate the possibility of granting an "Incomplete." In the rare cases where a student is allowed to take an "Incomplete" as the result of extenuating circumstances, the student must follow the guidelines and timelines stipulated in the University catalog.

**Remember attendance is required for the last class meeting during the scheduled exam period.**

## **GRADING**

It is your responsibility to keep track of your grades over the course of the semester. Your grades are posted on BB and can be checked at any time. You earn your grades by the degree to which you meet the requirements of the assignments. If you find that you are not doing as well as you would like to be doing in the class you can meet with the professor to discuss extra credit projects. If you feel that a mistake was made in recording a grade, politely email the professor. Do not send emails requesting a grade change simply because you would prefer to have a higher one.

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

This is a seminar which means that the class consists of discussion rather than lecture. Your participation is thus essential to the success of the class. We play once a week and discuss the readings once a week, so if you miss a class or part of a class, you miss a great deal.

## **BLOG READING RESPONSES**

You are expected to post a weekly response to the readings, The point is not to summarize the readings or to make general comments about them, but to pick specific aspects of the reading that you found provocative/interesting/disturbing and discuss them. On Blackboard, I post a question to consider in your weekly response. Reading responses must be posted by 5pm on Monday nights.

## **IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS**

Each student will research and present an analog or digital game. When it is your turn, you are responsible for making sure that the technology is in place to make the game work before class starts. Web-based games and games on your laptop are the easiest to demo, but you can also bring in any console, tablet or other device. The class will play the game for 15-30 minutes and then the student will lead a discussion and analysis of gameplay and content which includes references to appropriate

readings. Following the presentation, the student will turn in a 3 page summary of the presentation and class discussion. Summary must also be posted to the class discussion list. Below is a list of criteria you should keep in mind as both presenter and audience for the presentations.

- What is the playing field? How is the "sacred space" delimited?
- How is chance involved?
- What is the contest?
- How is the winner determined?
- What are the goals?
- Are the rules complex? How steep is the learning curve?
- How is the self represented?
- How much creativity/fluidity is available for self-representation?
- Are there issues with representations of diversity?
- What are the "values" of the game? What behaviour is rewarded and what is punished?
- Can you play against the intentions of the game?
- How do you develop your skills in the game?
- Is the game fun to play many times or just once?
- How effectively does the game take us away from "ordinary" life?
- Would this game be equally appealing to both genders? Why or why not?
- What part of the player's organic body is active in the game?
- Is it fun?
- Does it appeal to you? Do you want to play?
- Would you spend money for the game?

### **GAME ANALYSIS PAPER**

Analysis of a game which incorporates discussion of interface, usability, symbolism, content, fun, suspension of space/time, and other aspects from the readings. The paper should be an analysis of your play experience with the game. Why is it compelling/important/interesting to play this game? How does it affect you socially? Which elements of the game have been mentioned in the readings and have we discussed in class? Do not spend more than one or two paragraphs describing the game. The paper is not a report about the game. It is an analysis of play. (5-7 pages)

### **FINAL PROJECT**

Game Treatment Paper: Design a new digital game. You can do this individually or as part of a group. Your paper document should include a complete description of the game, discussion of why this game will be fun (and for whom), rules, scoring, etc.

### **GRADED ACTIVITIES**

There will be 8 graded activities in this class:

- Blog Reading Responses (10%)
- In-class Presentations (10%)
- Class Participation (5%)
- Childhood Game Assignment (10%)
- Dice Game Assignment (10%)
- Card Game Assignment (15%)
- Game Analysis Paper (20%)
- Final Project - Game Treatment Paper and Presentation (20%)

### **QUINNIPIAC GRADING SCALE**

A 96-100	B+ 88-90	B- 80-83	C 73-76	D 60-69
A- 91-95	B 84-87	C+ 77-79	C- 70-72	F 0-59

NOTE: A C- or better is required in all departmental prerequisites.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

See <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/x1046.xml>

## QU GRADING CRITERIA

- A Excellent—the student’s work shows active mastery of the subject. Not only does the student understand the concepts and information in various readings but she/he can also integrate information and concepts across areas. The work shows creativity and original thinking.
- B Good—the student’s work shows basic master of the subject. She/he understands the concepts and information presented and communicates them in her/his own words. The work is solid, but not original or creative.
- C Satisfactory—the student’s work in general shows understanding of basic concepts and information, but has occasional lapses. The work shows satisfactory, but incomplete mastery of the subject.
- D Poor—the student’s work shows enough understanding of the subject to be just barely adequate. The work shows major gaps in understanding.
- F Unsatisfactory—the student’s work is unacceptable. Although there may be some understanding of the subject, her/his understanding is so incomplete that she/he does not satisfy the learning requirements of the assignment.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Contact John Jarvis in the Learning Center for answers to specific questions. 203-582-5390.

[john.jarvis@quinnipiac.edu](mailto:john.jarvis@quinnipiac.edu) For further information: <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/x2773.xml>

## OTHER CLASS POLICIES

As discussed earlier attendance is important because we will be doing a lot of projects together in class, discussing options and providing feedback. Everybody’s contribution counts. So try to arrive on time and stay until the end of class. If you have an extraordinary reason for leaving class early or arriving late, including inter-collegiate athletic contests or a religious observance let me know ahead of time. In those circumstances we can make arrangements for making up work. Take advantage of my office hours. You are encouraged to come by or make an appointment to talk about work, your professional aspirations, or other concerns related to the course.

## MATERIALS

External portable drives are recommended for backing up work. You may wish to also use a thumb or flash drive for convenience.

## ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED TEXTS FOR GDD MAJORS AND MINORS

“Reality is Broken,” by Jane McGonigal

“Ready Player One,” by Ernest Cline

“Daemon,” by Daniel Suarez

“The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses,” by Jesse Schell. Comes with a companion deck of cards.

“A Theory of Fun for Game Design,” by Ralph Koster