

NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY

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ONE-YEAR GAME DESIGN

Game Analysis: Playable Systems

Course Number:

GDSN120

Instructor:

Simon Ferrari, chungking.espresso@gmail.com

Original syllabus developed by Noah Sasso

Office Hours: By Appointment

Credits:

3

Course Length:

1 class per week (3 hrs total) for the 15-week semester.

Course Description:

The focus of this course is the study and deconstruction of video games. Students learn how to break any game down into Formal Elements, Dramatic Elements, and Dynamic Elements and become versed in the language of Playcentric Design. Students are exposed to the video game canon via study of both seminal games as well as contemporary masterpieces. Deliverables are game deconstruction presentations suitable for a student portfolio.

Prerequisites: None

Student Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

1. Deconstruct games using the Playcentric Design framework and language – e.g. Formal Systems, Dramatic Systems, and Dynamic Systems.
2. Prepare game deconstruction presentations in a Playcentric Design format provided by the instructor
3. Critique classmate game deconstructions using Playcentric Design language
4. Speak and write competently about Meaningful Choice, Play Mechanics, and Engagement Loops
5. Compare and contrast seminal games from different genres to gain new insight on successful games

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6. Demonstrate competent understanding of the history of multiple games and game systems from the canon of video games
7. Demonstrate competent understanding of the role of games on culture

Instructional Methods:

This course is taught using a variety of instructional methods, including lecture, class discussions, class exercises, playtest sessions, small group work, project creation, and electronic discussion (email and Confluence wiki.)

Reference Materials & Supplies:

Textbook Title: *Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games* (by Tracy Fullerton)

ISBN: 978-0240809748

Publisher: CRC Press

Attendance & Electronic Device Policy

All students will come to class prepared to work. This includes not only the completion of homework assignments but also the bringing of any and all outside materials required for the completion of said assignment. 2) Students may be disallowed entry to the classroom after five minutes from scheduled start of class. Students will arrive to class on time. If a student comes in to class more than five minutes late, the instructor may mark the student as absent. 3) All students will give the instructor and their fellow students the courtesy of their full attention for the duration of each class.

Immediately following the second unexcused absence: the instructor will notify the student by email (and cc the Department Chair) that the student must meet with the Department Chair before the next class meeting. The student is not to be readmitted to class without proof of having met with the Chair.

Should the student, following advisement and re-admittance to class, have a 3rd unexcused absence (5th in a 30 session class), that student's grade shall be immediately dropped by one full letter grade. The instructor may require the missing work to be made up, to apply to the student's grade. For each subsequent absence following the 3rd unexcused absence, the student's grade will be permanently lowered one additional full grade. While the instructor may require the missing work to be made up, it will not apply to the student's grade.

This policy is enforceable for all classes and all instructors.

Cell Phone Policy

The use of cell phones/smart phones/iPads/tablets is expressly forbidden, unless used for research or other class-related work, under the direct supervision of the instructor.

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Phones, etc, should be turned off and kept out of sight during class. The first violation will result in a warning. Second and subsequent violations of cell phone policy will result in immediate expulsion from class. The student will be marked absent for the day. The absentee policy will be applied as outlined above.

This policy is enforceable for all classes and all instructors.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is the attempt, successful or not, to pass off someone else's words or ideas as your own. Any copying from another student, or lifting/paraphrasing passages from the internet, books or any other source, without giving proper credit, is considered dishonest.

The New York Film Academy expects all students to be responsible individuals who insist on high standards of honesty, personal conduct and creative integrity. All assignments and exams must represent the student's own work, and all quotes and other external sources used in research papers must be properly cited.

All incidences of plagiarism, cheating, deliberate hindrance in other students' work and other forms of dishonesty and misconduct are considered serious offenses and will result in a failing grade "F" for the course. The student will be subject to a Disciplinary Review Hearing at which further penalties will be imposed.

Freedom of Speech:

The New York Film Academy is an open, artistic environment. While we embrace the artist's right to free speech and expression, any form of discrimination (whether based on age, race, religion, gender, or sexual preference, etc.) will not be tolerated. Libel and slander are strictly prohibited. Any student found guilty of defamation against New York Film Academy students or staff is subject to suspension or expulsion. Any student who fails to respect these terms is subject to suspension or expulsion by the Director and the Academic Dean.

Satisfactory Academic Progress:

NYFA Students are required to meet both qualitative and quantitative academic standards. This policy insures that students are progressing through their programs of study and identifies students who may be at risk of failing.

SAP Defined:

Students in the 1-Year and 2-Year certificate, AFA or BFA programs must maintain a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher, while MFA and MA students must maintain a maximum GPA of 3.0 or higher. Students who have completed less than 66.66 % of their cumulative attempted units in their current program of study have not

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met the minimum requirements for SAP for that program. All failed or repeated courses will be included as attempted units in the determination of the student's completion status.

1-Year, 2-Year certificate programs and degree programs failing to meet NYFA academic progress policies may be subject to the following disciplinary statuses:

Warning Status:

Students receiving two grades of "D" or lower in any assignment or accruing two absences will be verbally advised and enter Warning Status. There will be no immediate consequences other than the assignment of an academic support plan.

Monitored Status:

Following mid-term evaluation, students on Warning Status who fail to make satisfactory academic progress will be placed on Monitored Status. These students will receive academic support to improve their grades and overall academic performance.

Probation Status:

Students in Monitored Status who fail a course despite receiving academic support may be placed on Academic Probation for the remainder of the semester, as well as the subsequent semester. Students receiving a failing grade in a Community Education program will be placed on Academic Probation for the remainder of their program.

Academic Probation is a contractual agreement between the Registrar's Office and the student which mandates that a student cannot acquire more than three absences or fail to complete one assignment or production workshop during the probationary period.

In order to remain enrolled in their program, students on Academic Probation must earn a grade of "C" or higher in all subsequent courses. Students may be given the opportunity to complete additional coursework in order to achieve a passing grade and to earn credit for the course. All additional coursework must meet all requirements set forth by the instructor, including established deadlines.

If a student does not make up a failing course grade, he/she must retake the course at a later time. For this make-up course, the student will be charged a per-credit value.

Grading Criteria:

General Grading Breakdown:

- ! In-class Participation and Graded Presentations: 25%
- ! In-class Exercises: 15%
- ! Assignments: 40%

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! Final Deconstruction Project: 20%

Students will have NO MORE than one week following the final grade posted to submit any makeup work. When allowed, the Add/Drop period is limited to the first TWO WEEKS of the semester.

The instructor shall exercise his or her discretion in determining whether or not to allow a student to make up a failing grade. If given make up assignments, a student may only make up a maximum of 15% of the final semester grade.

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Course Outline:

Date	Topic	Assignment
Week 1	Games and Culture <i>Introductions / Overview of the course</i> <i>What is Analysis? Why?</i> <i>Playcentric design: The Formal, Dramatic and Dynamic elements of a game</i>	Games covered: Tic-Tac-Toe September 12th Readings: <i>How I Analyze a Game</i> - Koster, Raph - http://www.raphkoster.com/2014/01/06/how-i-analyze-a-game/
Week 2	<i>What is Play?</i> <i>Types of Play, types of Players</i>	Games covered: Progress Quest - http://progressquest.com This is Sand - http://www.thisissand.com Katamari Damacy (any version) Readings: <i>Rules of Play</i> - Salen & Zimmerman - chapter 3 Bartle, Richard - "HEARTS, CLUBS, DIAMONDS, SPADES: PLAYERS WHO SUIT MUDS." http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm Assignment 1 Due: Start a Game Journal, as described in The Game Design Workshop, exercise 1.4, and turn in your first two (or favorite two!) entries. Student presentations scheduled
Week 3	<i>What is a game?</i>	Games covered: SimCity (any version) Howling Dogs - http://aliendovecote.com/uploads/twine/howling%20dogs.html#2m Readings: "What is a game?" - Bernard Suits "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" – Clifford Geertz
Week 4	<i>Play Communities</i> <i>Contexts for play, Contexts for design</i>	Games covered: Space Invaders League of Legends Wii Sports JS Joust Hokra Readings <i>The Implicit Rules of Board Games</i> - Bergstrom, Karl <i>Playing with the Rules</i> - Jakobsson, Mikael Assignment 2 Due: Choose a game that you find interesting. Write half a page about either the formal, dramatic or dynamic elements of the game and explain how they contribute to the game's appeal.
Week 5	<i>Cheaters and Spoilsports</i> <i>Breaking Games</i>	Readings: <i>Rules of Play</i> - Salen & Zimmerman - chapter 21 <i>Cheesers, Pullers & Glitchers</i> - Moeller, Espen & Conway - http://gamestudies.org/0902/articles/moeller_esplin_conway Super Mario Bros Speedrun - Andrew Gardikis - http://www.youtube.com/watch?src_vid=kcmKPmj9yeE&v=m_G-ErpZaFU Super Mario World Glitch compilation - Xenomic - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a53bZmFpOf0

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		<p>Super Mario 64 Zero-Star Speedrun - Swordless Link - http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=V16ld_n9sB8 Kaizo Mario - T. Takemoto - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teAqRZX4hbY</p>
Week 6	<p><i>Stories & Games</i> <i>Dramatic Elements of games</i></p>	<p>Readings: <i>Hamlet on the Holodeck</i> - Murray, Janet - Chapter 2 "Game design as narrative architecture." - Henry Jenkins - http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/firstperson/lazzi-fair</p> <p>Games covered: Dungeons & Dragons / Pathfinder Facade Left 4 Dead Spelunky</p> <p>Assignment 3 due: Find and watch a player-created video for a game you're very familiar with, and another that you've never played before (for example, a "Let's Play", a speedrun, a walkthrough or machinima). Write about something you've learned from each.</p>
Week 7	<p><i>Uncertainty</i> <i>Games of Chance</i></p>	<p>Readings: <i>Games of Fate</i> - Sutton Smith, Brian - The Ambiguity of Play <i>Luck vs Skill</i> - Garfield, Richard - http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=dSg408i-eKw</p> <p>Games covered: Zynga Slots King of Tokyo Rogue(likes)</p>
Week 8	<p><i>Games of Skill</i></p>	<p>Readings: <i>The Beast is Unleashed</i> - Kuchera, Ben - https://web.archive.org/web/20120229191324/http://penny-arcade.com/report/editorial-article/the-beast-is-unleashed-capcoms-seth-killian-explains-the-most-famous-minute Hickey, Dave. "The Heresy of Zone Defense." http://thomascummins.com/the-heresy-of-zone-defense/ Excerpt from <i>A Theory of Fun</i>. - Koster, Raph. http://www.gamasutra.com/features/20041203/koster_01_shtml</p> <p>Games covered: Street Fighter (any) Starcraft (any) DoDonPachi</p> <p>Assignment 4 Due: By this point, we've identified and discussed a huge variety of aspects of games. Deconstruct the formal, dynamic and dramatic elements of a game of your choice in a thorough, two to three page written analysis.</p>
Week 9	<p><i>Multiplayer games</i> <i>The New Games movement</i></p>	<p>Readings: <i>Player Interaction Patterns</i> - Fullerton, Swain - Game Design Workshop (page 51-56) <i>Multiplayer Games</i> - Elias, Garfield, Gutschera - Characteristics of Games chapter 2 <i>Multiplayer Logistics</i> - Cook, Dan - http://www.lostgarden.com/2013/12/multiplayer-logistics.html</p> <p>Games Covered: Halo (any) CounterStrike (any)</p>

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		<p>Worms (any, besides Worms Facebook) Gauntlet - Arcade, play in class or watch here - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mMJio2MO6w World of Warcraft SpaceTeam</p>
Week 10	<p>Games and Systems <i>Formal Elements of Games</i> <i>Analysis of Rules</i></p>	<p>Readings: <i>Game Design Workshop</i> - Fullerton & Swain - Improving Player Choices (page 318-324) <i>Drop 7 Strategies</i> - Killingsworth, Jason - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvMozPKINDA <i>Break Pac-Man</i> - Zaviska & Beltowski - chapter 2</p> <p>Games Covered: Rock Paper Scissors Drop 7 Pac Man</p> <p>Assignment 4 Due Visit GameFAQs and find a FAQ about a game that you're very familiar with. Write a page about the author's analysis and how it touches on the subjects we've covered so far in class. What does the FAQ reveal about what players struggle with or want to understand about the game? What did you learn? What did the author do right or wrong?</p>
Week 11	<p><i>Games as Systems</i></p>	<p>Readings: Chapter 1 - Bogost, Ian. <i>Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames</i>. http://www.hfg- karlsruhe.de/~arafinski/gamestudies/txt/Bogost_PersuasiveGames.pdf Flanagan, Mary, Helen Nissenbaum, Jonathan Belman, and Jim Diamond. "A Method For Discovering Values in Digital Games." http://www.digra.org/dl/db/07311.46300.pdf</p> <p>Games covered: McDonald's Game Mario Kart Set</p> <p>In-class Exercise: Rhetoric of games example</p>
Week 12	<p><i>Games & Computers - Are videogames special?</i> <i>Game feel</i></p>	<p>Readings: Swink, Steve. "Game Feel: The Secret Ingredient." http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/2322/game_feel_the_secret_ingredient.php Juul, Jesper. "Swap adjacent gems to make sets of three: A history of matching tile games." http://www.jesperjuul.net/text/swapadjacent/</p> <p>Games Covered: Spacewar! Candy Crush Super Mario Crossover</p> <p>In-class Exercise: Platformer tuning example</p> <p>Assignment 5 Due: Choose a genre of games that you're familiar with (for example, first person shooters, platformers or match-3 games). Prepare a family tree, beginning with the first known example of the genre. Do research and demonstrate your knowledge of the similarities and differences of each game as the genre evolves.</p> <p>For extra credit, include a one page written analysis of the cultural or formal reasons you think the genre changed over time.</p>

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<p>Week 13</p>	<p><i>Level design</i></p>	<p>Readings: <i>Mario Melodies - Variation, part 2</i> - Terrell, Richard - http://critical-gaming.com/blog/2008/6/21/mario-melodies-variation-part2.html <i>The Measure of Mario, part 2 & part 5</i> - Terrell, Richard - http://critical-gaming.com/blog/2009/11/22/the-measure-of-mario-pt2.html http://critical-gaming.com/blog/2009/11/30/the-measure-of-mario-pt5.html <i>To the Right, Hold on Tight</i> - Anthropy, Anna - http://auntiepixelante.com/?p=465</p> <p>Games Covered: Super Mario Bros series Portal</p> <p>In-class Exercise: Platformer level design example Shmup level design example</p>
<p>Week 14</p>	<p><i>Expressive game criticism</i></p>	<p>Readings: Alexander, Leigh. "Gaming Made Me: Colossal Cave Adventure" on <i>Rock Paper Shotgun</i> http://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2011/06/04/colossal-cave-review/ Rogers, Tim. "Life, Nonwarp" on <i>Insert Credit</i>, https://web.archive.org/web/20101124200218/http://insertcredit.com/features/lifenonwarp/index.html</p> <p>Bissell, Tom. "Video games: the addiction" on <i>The Guardian</i> http://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2010/mar/21/tom-bissell-video-game-cocaine-addiction</p> <p>Games covered: GTA4 Colossal Cave Adventure</p>
<p>Week 15</p>	<p><i>Wrap-up, miscellaneous</i></p>	<p>Final Assignment Due</p>