



School of Computing and Information Systems Unit Outline

KXH242 & KXH544: Fundamentals of Interactive Entertainment

Semester 2, 2012
Newnham Campus, Launceston

Unit Coordinator

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Course Description:

Video games and virtual worlds are an ever-growing presence that is reshaping society and creating a cultural phenomenon bringing real-time interactive computer simulations to the forefront of people's lives. The massively multiplayer game (MMO) World of Warcraft sold 250,000 copies in November of 2004—the most successful PC game launch in history. This game continues to grow with over 11 million subscribers. Today we have players spending thousands of dollars on virtual characters and digital items on eBay and sweatshops have been established in developing nations to service this micro-economy. Games have and will continue to become a major part of our culture today and a key component of the ever-growing digital entertainment industry.

Drawing on a wide variety of examples and disciplines, this class will look at the video game industry. Topics include: historical overview of video games and virtual worlds, game genres, aesthetics and environmental design, narrative and character development, game theory and design, as well as sociological and psychological dimensions of games. We will also look at other types of real time interactive simulations being developed today for information visualizations, entertainment, health, education, and work.

The course will include guest speakers, lectures, readings, case studies, online demos, exploration of game genres, and time applied to both creating, analyzing and playing games. Additional emphasis will also be placed on the importance of Internet-based communications and collaboration through participation in team projects.

Aims of the Course:

- Differentiate and describe categories of games by genre, technology, and player interaction.
- Play and analyze games in terms of topics explored in the readings and online presentations
- Identify the principles of narrative and story structure as they apply to interactive games
- Create a interactive game using a development platform with a graphical user interface
- Explain the psychological motivations and incentives of game players.
- Describe stages of the *game design cycle*
- Develop an understanding of how game design documents are constructed and used in the game development industry.

- Describe the social design considerations in the creation of online multi-participant worlds.

- Develop a critical vocabulary for analyzing all types of videogames

- Identify and discuss game-related social, economic, and ethical issues

Assignments

Overview

- Course Journal
- 2 game analysis papers (4-8 pages)
- Group online project based on a game-related topic
- A variety of lab activities and related mini-assignments will be offered during the course of the quarter to augment live online course presentations and required reading, such as the following:
 - Students will participate and record their experiences in a multiplayer space (e.g., MMORPG, Xbox Live, FreeRealms, Second Life, etc.)
 - Game Creation Project (using Kodu, Jumala, Portal level design, Stencyl)
- Identify and discuss game-related social, economic, and ethical issues

Course Team Blog

Students will be required to maintain a team-based blog, documenting and commenting on various experiences in the course throughout the quarter. The purpose of the blog is to

practice critical thinking skills in relation to games and other real-time interactive computer simulations, their structure and content, and to develop ideas from which to draw inspiration for other assignments in the class.

The team blog site will contain 1) biographical and personal interest information 2) Weekly written assignments completed by individual team members 3) Comments on other student sites and ideas.

Example aspects to discuss: a. Responses to online interviews, discussions, or videos. b. Player experience and game play accounts of a particular game. What were the underlying mechanics that made it work? c. Narrative, character, and dramatic aspects of interactive storytelling. d. Course-related Internet links and commentary.

3D GameLab: Assessments

Students will be required to engage weekly with the 3D GameLab in order to a) Keep up with class assignments b) Assess and track academic performance c) Gain achievement awards and corresponding grade points.

Response Papers

Two short papers (4-5 pages)

This first paper will involve an analysis and evaluation of a classic game from a list of provided "Golden Age" video game links. The analysis will include the following: History, story premise, gameplay features, navigation, goals, path of pattern discovery, and subjective evaluation.

This second response paper will involve an analysis and evaluation of 1) a video game that is enjoyable and you want to play again and again, or 2) a video game that is frustrating or otherwise unsatisfying. The analysis will consist of game theory principles discussed in class and in reading assignments. In part these include, history, genre, boundaries, rules, balance, interactivity, navigation, victory conditions, immersion, and motivating factors.

Online Knowledgebase Team Project:

The online Knowledgebase Project will explore a particular topic regarding interactive entertainment. Students will work in teams to create an article in their Knowledgebase Project that will include a presentation of their ideas supported by images, video (if appropriate), and a bibliography. Teams will be formed in week 4 and will turn in a contract proposal for instructor review and suggestions. The team Knowledgebase Project presentation will be due by week 12 in-class, **and a summarizing article published in the team blog.**

Group Projects:

Students will participate in a variety of team projects. These projects will be graded based

on presentations and completeness. Teams will be comprised of 3-4 participants and in some cases each will take on a particular role (e.g., project manager, development, player experience/game designer, artist and marketer).

Class Participation

Class discussion and participation is an important part of the course. A key aspect of games is engagement and interaction with other players. It should be the same in a class about games.

Credit for Assignments

Labs, class participation, and blog entries (14%)

Papers (20%)

Knowledgebase Research project (16%)

Final Written Examination (50%)

Course Textbooks and Reading Assignments:

Course Textbooks

- 1) The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses
by Jesse Schell
Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, 2008
ISBN: 9780123694966

Other Reading Requirements (excerpts available in the class reader)

Richard Bartle, (2003) *Designing Virtual Worlds*. Berkeley: New Riders Games.

Chris Bateman, (2009) *Beyond Game Design: Nine Steps towards Creating Better Videogames*, Charles River Media.

Chris Crawford, (2003) *Chris Crawford on Game Design*, New Riders Games

Raph Koster, (2005) *Theory of Fun for Game Design*, Paraglyph Press

Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams, (2003) *Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams on Game Design*, New Riders Games

Eric Zimmerman and Katie Salen, (2003) *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*.

Boston: MIT Press.

Eric Zimmerman and Katie Salen, (2005) *The Game Design Reader: Rules of Play Anthology*. Boston: MIT Press.

Useful Web Sites: (Links available at <http://delicious.com/bcweb20class/kxh242>)

Terra Nova

The Escapist Magazine

Nick Yee/Daedalus gateway

Water Cooler Games

Gamasutra

Worlds in Motion

Penny Arcade

Joystiq

Kotaku

Slashdot Games

MMORPG.com

KXH242 - Online Components:

There are several online components to this class. These include: 1) a synchronous lecture and presentation delivered weekly via a high bandwidth connection from the Human Interface Technology Lab media studio in Seattle, Washington. 2) MyLo - a learning management system which will be used as a supplemental information resource outside of regular classroom hours. On the MyLo site, students can contact the instructor, find class-related resources, and check the calendar for classroom assignments and deadlines. 3) A *Weebly* blog team site for posting articles, comments, and project assignments and 4) The 3D GameLab, where students can access assignment information and track their achievement status. Students will be responsible for keeping themselves up to date during the semester with these online class resource sites.

PLEASE NOTE: Other Web 2.0 social networking tools may also be introduced as needed during the semester to enhance course collaboration.

Course Schedule:

The course sections listed below approximately correspond to the weeks of the quarter, but are subject to modification in order to flexibly meet the scheduling requirements of this synchronous distance learning class. Consequently, this schedule may need to be adjusted or modified as the quarter progresses.

Section 1

TOPICS:

Class Introductions and Course Overview
Introduction to Video Games and Real-Time Interactive Computer Simulations

READINGS:

Crawford, C. *On Game Design*. Chapters 1,2,3.

Week 1 ACTIVITY

- Familiarize yourself with MyLo, the UTAS course delivery system
- Familiarize yourself with Weebly and your team blog site. Complete an information survey and knowledgebase project preference questionnaire and post it in Weebly.
- View and respond to video assignments as specified in class
- Familiarize yourself with the 3D GameLab
- Class cohort team selection.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Obtain required textbook and course reader.
- Sign up for an account in Google Gmail (details in class) -
- Review Google Apps tutorials as needed (available online)

MISSION:

Post survey and biographical information to the Weebly blog per instructions.

Section 2

TOPICS:

History of Video Games: From Atari arcades to massively multiplayer online games.
Middleware overview: Newly available game and level creation tools

READINGS:

Steven Kent. *Trend Setters: The 10 Most Significant Games* - available in the courser reader.

LAB ACTIVITY:

View and respond to reading and/or video assignments as specified in class
Explore classic games from provided links and select one for your response paper.

MISSION:

Each team selects one of the weekly missions and writes about it on the their Weebly blog. Post an insightful comment to another team's blog.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Response paper 1 assigned: Golden Age video game review (games available online)

Knowledgebase Project teams selected and posted for developing a knowledgebase project contract

Section 3

TOPICS:

- Game Taxonomy: classification based on delivery platforms, genres, player interaction. - -
- Games, simulations, puzzles.
- The great convergence: Current directions in video games and entertainment. Consoles, PCs, handheld devices, and social networks.

READINGS:

Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams on Game Design - Game Genres in KXH242 class reader

LAB ACTIVITY:

View and respond to reading and/or video assignments as specified in class

Play and review two genres of games: (Demo game versions available online).

ASSIGNMENT:

Knowledgebase Team project contract finalized for completion by Week 12. Requires team participation and decision-making.

MISSION:

Each team selects one of the weekly missions and writes about it on the their Weebly blog. Post an insightful comment to another team's blog.

Section 4

TOPICS:

- The Attention Economy ("Attention is the currency of the Internet.")
- Game Theory: Fundamental Concepts
- Psychology of the Player

- Player Types
- Motivational strategies
- Ingredients of compelling gameplay

READINGS:

The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses by Jesse Schell - Chapters 6 to 9

Costikyan, Greg, *I Have No Words & I Must Design*, Greg Kostikyan - KXH242 class reader
(online source) http://www.costik.com/nowords.html#What_is

Koster, Raph (2005) *A Theory of Fun, Chapters 1 & 2* - KXH242 class reader

LAB ACTIVITY:

View and respond to reading and/or video assignments as specified in class

Play and review two indie titles selected from a du jour list of online titles, applying game design principles.

MISSION:

Each team selects one of the weekly missions and writes about it on their Weebly blog. Post an insightful comment to another team's blog.

Section 5

TOPICS:

- How do you Create a Game?
- Game Design 101
- Game Play – Fun and Play

READINGS:

The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses by Jesse Schell - Chapters 10 to 13

Chris Bateman, (2009) *Beyond Game Design: Nine Steps Towards Creating Better Videogames*, Charles River Media, pp. 3-22.

Eric Zimmerman & Katie Salen, (2003) *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, MIT Press, pp. 301-311.

LAB ACTIVITY:

Team organization and planning process for the Knowledgebase Project, due in Week 12

ASSIGNMENTS:

Response paper 2 assigned: Provide an analysis of a favorite game based on assigned evaluation criteria.

Section 6

TOPICS:

- Game Rules
- Cheating
- Player Experience
- Game Playtesting

READINGS:

The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses by Jesse Schell - Chapter 25, play testing

Richard Bartle, (2004) *Designing Virtual Worlds*, pp.81-123.

LAB ACTIVITY:

Introduction to Stencylworks. Use Stencylworks to create a simple game.

MISSION:

Each team selects one of the weekly missions and writes about it on their Weebly blog. Post an insightful comment to another team's blog.

Section 7

TOPICS:

Use of visual programming environments for creating games

READINGS:

Randall Farmer & Chip Morningstar, (1990) *The Lessons of LucasFilms Habitat*.

LAB ACTIVITY:

Introduction to the Portal level editor. Use the Portal editor to create your own level.

MISSION:

Each team selects one of the weekly missions and writes about it on their Weebly blog. Post an insightful comment to another team's blog.

Section 8

TOPICS:

- The role of stories in interactive entertainment
- Joseph Campbell, Christopher Vogler, and the Hero's Journey story cycle
- Storytelling devices
- The central story issue in games: freedom of choice versus narrative control
- Integrating story and game structures

READINGS:

The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses by Jesse Schell - Chapters 15, 16, 17

Interaction and Narrative, Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern (KXH242 class reader)

LAB ACTIVITY:

Introduction to FAÇADE and AI-directed storytelling in games.

MISSION:

Each team selects one of the weekly missions and writes about it on their Weebly blog. Post an insightful comment to another team's blog.

Section 9

TOPICS:

- World Building: Environments, architecture, and characters
- World creation at Blizzard Entertainment and Pixar
- Online Games and Virtual Worlds : World of Warcraft versus Second Life
- The Game Design Cycle

READINGS:

The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses by Jesse Schell – Transmedia, Chapter 17

LAB ACTIVITY AND ASSIGNMENT:

Sign up for Second Life account and character, learn basic 3D navigation skills.

Write up a 2-3-page summary of your experience in SL.

Group write up and checkpoint on the current team knowledgebase project direction, for discussion/review.

Section 10

TOPICS:

Character Development and Identity

READINGS:

Richard Bartle, (1996) Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: People Who Suit MUDs.

Nicolas Ducheneaut et. al., (2006) "Alone Together?" Exploring the Social Dynamics of Massively Multiplayer Online Games.

LAB ACTIVITY AND ASSIGNMENT:

Introduction to Second Life – online tour.

MISSION:

Each team selects one of the weekly missions and writes about it on the their Weebly blog. Post an insightful comment to another team's blog.

Section 11

TOPICS:

Social Issues and Games

- Ethical issues in games
- Censorship
- Violence, Warfare and Sexual Connotations
- Game and Interactive Device addiction

READINGS:

WoW.com site interviews Dr. Hilarie Cash on game addiction.

<http://www.wow.com/2009/09/09/wow-com-interview-dr-hilarie-cash-of-restart-internet-addictio/>

LAB ACTIVITY AND ASSIGNMENT:

Watching and discussing Tropes vs. Women in Videogames, Game Violence, or Internet and Game Addictions. Review video interviews with Mara Adelman PhD and Hilarie Cash PhD regarding Internet and video game addictions and use.

MISSION:

Each team selects one of the weekly missions and writes about it on the their Weebly blog. Post an insightful comment to another team's blog.

Section 12

TOPICS:

Serious Games (health, learning, social change)

READINGS:

Gee, "Semiotic Domains: Is Playing Video Games a "Waste of Time?" *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*.

<http://williamwolff.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/gee-video-games-2007.pdf>

Reference Sites:

www.seriousgames.org

www.gamesforchange.org

www.watercoolergames.com

ASSIGNMENTS:

Play Metagame

Playing and critiquing serious games, ad games and art games.

Create a team-based game design document for a serious game (fitness, learning, game for change) for a PC or console platform (WII, Xbox, PS2/3, DS, iphone)

MISSION:

Each team selects one of the weekly missions and writes about it on their Weebly blog. Post an insightful comment to another team's blog.

Section 13

Knowledgebase Team Projects due

Final written exam

SYLLABUS CHANGES:

Contents of this syllabus as well as course policies and procedures may be changed at anytime during the quarter at the instructor's discretion.

ONLINE AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Just as in any public environment, disruptions and impoliteness are not tolerated, neither will they be tolerated within the confines of our online "classroom." Students are to show respect towards each other and their instructor, which includes respect and tolerance for each others ideas. Any sort of disrespect will, at the very least, impact negatively on your class participation grade.

Unless you are working on class-related projects or taking notes, classroom computer monitors are to be turned off. Also leave cell phones and music players turned off during class periods.

This course adheres to the following policy guidelines:

Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the student code of conduct. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pages to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates.