

Class Description

In this class, students will learn the fundamentals of game design, how to integrate games into digital storytelling on behalf of media communication disciplines like journalism, advertising, and public relations. Students explore and evaluate game mechanics to engage audiences with news events, social issues, or on behalf of a client or product. The course begins with a survey of video games history and culture and by playing and analyzing existing games (commercial, learning, news, advertising and serious games) to develop an understanding of the methods and approaches for designing games. Students will design interactions that seek to open dialogue with audiences and explore issues of balance and perspective. Following the design studio model, we will organize into teams and apply the design process, rapid content generation, iteration and prototyping, with an emphasis on designs that enhance audience engagement.

Objectives

Operating as digital design studio, studio teams will work together to develop skills as game/interactive media critics, storytellers, data communicators, and ultimately as game designers. Throughout the journey, students will develop an understanding of games, their design, and potential for impact. Expect to have fun and work hard!

In this course, you will...

- Understand what games as a storytelling tool offer journalism, advertising, and public relations
- Grapple with impact and advocacy in your respective communications disciplines
- Address perspective and bias when using designing persuasive games
- Apply key ideas in game design, interactive storytelling, and interactive data to the practice of journalism, advertising, and public relations
- Consider games and media communications from an impact perspective: how interactive media and their surrounding cultures shape each other
- Continue to develop research, reporting, writing, critical reading and analytical skills

Projects

Intro and Impact: Set up studio sites and blogs. Intro to games, impact and design. Play commercial, news, advertising, and impact games. Write critical responses evaluating game play (content and mechanics).

The Mechanic is the Massage

- Table Top Game Unit: Investigate a topic, apply what you've learned about game design and development and create a table top game prototype.
- Digital Game Unit: Investigate a topic, and design a digital game prototype idea that engages the audience with the topic.

Texts

Macklin, Colleen, and John Sharp. *Games, design and play: a detailed approach to iterative game design*. 1st ed. Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley, 2016. Print.

Materials

Table top prototyping materials as needed (paper, pens, post-its, 3x5 cards, dice, playing cards, tokens, etc)

Studio Tasks (Assignments)

Play Reflections and Game Analyses: Games, Impact and Design. You will write play reflections and game analyses for your studio team’s blog. The games can be commercial but the reflection/deconstruction should consider the mechanics’ applications for interactive media (journalism, advertising, pr, etc). Details will be provided in class.

Project 1: Table Top: Context and Current Events

Each studio will deliver a game design prototype and corresponding report on a topic. This will be a role-playing based game that positions the player (reader) as an actor in the story. Details will be provided but requirements include:

- A story to contextualize the topic and frame the game
- Instructions and rules
- A playable prototype of the game’s core mechanic
- A postmortem on the design’s intention and outcomes, and user testing experiences

Project 2: Digital - Digging Deeper into Narrative, and Playing with Data

Each studio will design a game focused on engaging audiences with a digital narrative game prototype, or by using relevant data from game topics as the primary mode of play. Details will be provided but requirements include:

- A story to contextualize the topic and frame the game
- Instructions and rules
- A playable prototype of the game’s core mechanic
- A digital mockup to illustrate the game, or as a way to provide digital assets for playing the game
- A postmortem on the design’s intention and outcomes, and user testing experiences

Game Studio Schedule

WEEK OF	TASKS
1 JAN 17	Intro to Games
2 JAN 24	Serious and Persuasive Games
3 JAN 31	Considerations: Designing Games for Journalism, Advertising, and PR
4 FEB 7	Iterative design, design models, and table top prototyping
5 FEB 14	Research – Topics/News Issues for table top game designs
6 FEB 21	Design & Iteration, Discussion of playtesting and gathering feedback
7 FEB 28	Playtesting & Iteration, Discussion of design postmortems
8 MAR 7	Table Top Games: Show & Play
9 MAR 14	SPRING BREAK
10 MAR 21	Tools for digital development
11 MAR 28	Tools for digital development
12 APR 4	Research, Topics & News for digital game design
13 APR 11	Interviews, story development
14 APR 18	Design & Iteration
15 APR 28	Playtesting & Iteration
16 MAY 1	Digital Games: Show & Play
17 MAY 6-11, 2016	FINALS No Class - Final project due via Blackboard