

MRTS 3250 Section 001 Intro to Game Design

Instructor: Cory Haltinner

University Of North Texas

Location:

RFTS room 135

Days: Monday/Wednesday

Time: 2pm - 3:20 pm

Cory Haltinner

Cory.Haltinner@unt.edu

Office Hours:

Wednesdays 11:30am-1:30pm

RFTS Room 225. Can meet with me before or after class as needed, or other times virtually by appointment.

Class will be notified via canvas of changes or updates to office hours times, or online office hours.

Course Description:

This course is intended to provide students with a solid practical foundation in game design, focusing on the development of concepts, design composition, and prototyping through the creation of non-digital games. Through the use of physical prototyping, playtesting, and iteration, students will learn how to translate game ideas into game pitches, design documents, and game designs. Additionally, students will analyze and recognize the play that exists in important games, stories, and other media. The course is structured with a combination of lectures and labs. As the content expert, the instructor will provide presentations and examples each week to introduce core concepts with supporting examples. In the lab, students will work individually and/or in groups to put the core concepts into practice.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental principles of game design, including the essential components of gameplay such as mechanics, rules, and objectives.
- Apply design principles to create and refine game prototypes, utilizing playtesting methods to evaluate and improve the quality of the game design.
- Critically evaluate and analyze existing video games and board games, as well as those created by peers, utilizing thoughtful critique to inform and improve game design concepts.
- Develop professional skills such as time management, public speaking, and collaborative teamwork, as they apply to the practice of game design and game development.

Communication Practices:

Connect with me through email and/or by attending office hours. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated.

Attendance Policy:

Because this course involves collaboration, participation is essential to learning. Our project-based activities require you to be actively engaged in discussions and group work. I understand tardiness and absences may occur. If you are late to class, please drop me an email to let me know the circumstances. If you must miss class, please let me know prior to your absence.

Evaluation Methods and Criteria Methods: Presentations, papers, production and public critiques.

Suggested Texts:

1. Fullerton, T. "Game Design Workshop 5th edition" – AK Peters/CRC Press, 2018.

(GDW)

<https://www.amazon.com/Game-Design-Workshop-Playcentric-Innovative/dp/1138098779>

2. Ralph Koster "Theory of Fun for Game Design" -- O'reilly Media, 2013.

<https://www.amazon.com/Theory-Game-Design-Raph-Koster/dp/1449363210>

[Links to an external site.](#)

3. "The Art of Game Design" by Jesse Schell

4. "Rules of Play" by Eric Zimmerman

Recommended Software

MS Word, Paint or Photoshop, Powerpoint, 2d Game Engine (only needed if doing digital final project)

Grade Scale:

90+ = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-60 = D

59-0 = F

Assignments:**Class Participation:**

Weekly Worksheets and Exercises 25%

Weekly Reading Journal 15%

Final Projects:

Game Design Document 20%

Final Game 20%

Post Mortem Document 20%

Weekly Schedule (to be adjusted as needed with notice)

Monday	Lecture	Submit	Wednesday	Workshop	Submit
Week 1 8/18	Intro to the class	Introduction Worksheet	Week 1 8/20	What is GDC Review of Journal Assignments GDC TALK and Discussions "A Survival Guide for Game Developers"	1st GDC writing assignment

Week 2 8/25	Intro to Game Design. History, MDA, Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics	GDW Reading	Week 2 8/27	Popular games break down workshops	Popular Game breakdown worksheet
Week 3 9/01	Labor Day/No Class		Week 3 9/03	Game Genres and Classification workshop	Game genre worksheet
Week 4 9/08	Game Mechanics. Concepts, goals, rules, feedback and balance	GDW Reading	Week 4 9/10	Mechanics Breakdown/study and Ideation	Mechanics Ideation worksheet
Week 5 9/15	Narrative Design. Structures and Techniques	GDW Reading	Week 5 9/17	Games worldbuilding and Ludonarrative Cohesion	Core mechanic quick sketch and presentation
Week 6 9/22	Game Documents	GDC Talk	Week 6 9/24	Design document workshop	Add goals to GDD

Week 7 9/29	Challenge, obstacles, rules	GDW Reading	Week 7 10/01	Challenge, obstacles, rules workshop	Add challenge to GDD and first rules draft GDW Reading
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Week 8 10/6	Prototyping and Playtesting	GDC Talk	Week 8 10/8	Playtesting practice	Work on playable
Week 9 10/13	User Experience Design	GDC Talk	Week 9 10/15	Game Feel	Add theme and narrative to GDD

Week 10 10/20	Game Engines and Tools	GDW Reading	Week 10 10/22	Pitch practice	Written pitch script
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Week 11 10/27	Sound and Music in Games	GDW Reading	Week 11 10/29	Prototype workshop	First playable
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Week 12 11/3	Development Practices	GDW Reading	Week 12 11/5	Playtest in class	Playtest report
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Week 13 11/10	Game Marketing and Distribution	GDC Talk	Week 13 11/12	Dev timeline workshop	Design diary draft
Week 14 11/17	Writing postmortems	GDW Reading	Week 14 11/19	Postmortem workshop	Postmortem draft
Week 15 11/24	Thanksgiving Break		Week 15 11/26	Thanksgiving Break	
Week 16 12/01	Critical/ alt design		Week 16 12/03	Final Review and Playtests	Final project submission

Other Relevant and Important Information:

Use of AI

in this course AI use is allowed, but not encouraged for final work. Game design requires critical thinking, and communication skills. We do not want to build bad habits of letting the AI do our thinking for us. Please take the time to do your assignments, think them out and write your own thoughts. I do not want to see copy/paste paragraphs from ChatGPT. I want to see students taking ownership over their work and learning and growing in their writing and skills. Use AI to help you generate some ideas and a starting point and work from there.

Inclusion Statement:

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and

welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

ADA Statement:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

website (<http://www.unt.edu/oda>)

[Links to an external site.](#)

). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.