



## MUAG 4200: Videogames—Behind the Screens

3 week Wintermester Spring 2026 |Instructor: Dr. David Schwarz| Email: david.schwarz@unt.edu

### Course Description

This course will be taught asynchronously. Your materials and assignments are all online on Canvas. Class takes place Mondays through Thursdays for three weeks (see “Modules” in Canvas for details). **On each of our class days you will have graded daily assignments due at 8 p.m. Central Standard Time. I shall have online zoom office hours every class day from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.** In the course we will focus on the game LIMBO from the PLAYDEAD. In case you have a visual condition that requires an adjustment to the requirement to play LIMBO, please email me at [david.schwarz@unt.edu](mailto:david.schwarz@unt.edu) Our work will bring together these perspectives to this game:

- 1) In depth explorations in readings of psychoanalysis, semiotics, and game theory to understand what is at stake for us in play in general, and in playing video games in particular
- 2) Sound design, making and / or downloading and manipulating sounds from the internet, understanding the basic music theory behind sound production and reception (download Sonic Visualizer and Audacity right away; they are both free and available on PC and Mac platforms)
- 3) Designing your own version of PONG using the Javascript, HTML and CSS platforms in addition to a FINAL PROJECT—a website introducing a video game of your choice. **All Pong and Final Projects will be hosted on GitHub.**

**Communication Expectations** Please communicate with me via the Canvas email feature.

### Course Structure

In each day of this course you will do three things:

- **first**, read articles provided as pdf files, taking notes on what you understand and writing down questions for

- what you don't;
- **second**, you'll watch my video lecture on that reading, taking notes on what you understand and writing;
  - NOTE: in some videos I refer to page numbers of texts that are different from the page numbers in the texts to which you have access.**
- **third**, you will complete written, graded discussion assignments by 8 p.m. My 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. office hour is meant to help you with questions; attendance is voluntary but encouraged.

## Course Requirements

There are no required prerequisites for this course. However, in order to be successful in this course you will need to:

- 1) Devote at least 5 hours of work to the course per class day.
- 2) Use a robust internet connection and computer to communicate with colleagues as well as study and upload assignments.
- 3) Network with your fellow students in the discussion boards.
- 4) Learn audio editing software for the sound design portion of the course.
- 5) Learn enough javascript programming language to adapt our generic “Pong” to your own, customized game.

## Course Objectives

### By the end of Week 1 you will have:

- 1) Participated in discussion on the role of Greek myth and German Expressionism in LIMBO and INSIDE
- 2) begun to make your soundtrack to PONG
- 3) set up your PONG and final web-paper in GitHub

### By the end of Week 2 you will have:

- 1) expanded your psychoanalytic study of LIMBO
- 2) made and studied various acoustic objects
- 3) begun to design your version of PONG

### By the end of Week 3 you will have

- 1) expanded your semiotic dimension of LIMBO and written a first draft of your final paper
- 2) worked with various aspects of sonic design for your PONG game
- 3) completed a final version of your design of PONG.

You can take and do well in the course with either a Mac or Pc; however, it would be ideal if you had two computers: one Mac + one Pc.; you will need robust internet connection; download the following (free) software: Sonic Visualizer, Audacity.

## Teaching Philosophy

I believe in making this course interesting, relevant, culturally sensitive and thorough in terms of teaching you professional level mastery of the techniques of audio design and computational editing of videogames.

It is my responsibility to provide you with clear, concise, and competent materials for each day's work within each module; these include pdf scores (where appropriate), videos (that are single shots with no internal editing, perfect audio and visual assets, and captioning), audio and video assets of the relevant works, and perfectly clear written assignments that I will return via Canvas graded with comments within one week of submission.

It is your responsibility to do each day's work thoroughly, to communicate concerns that you have via the Canvas email feature, to participate actively in discussion boards, to submit assignments on time, to consider my written comments on papers, and to respond to them following the return of each written assignment.

### Course Technology & Skills

To successfully engage with the materials of this course you will need:

- 1) Computer
- 2) Reliable internet access
- 3) Speakers
- 4) Microphone
- 5) (free) Sonic Visualizer
- 6) (free) Audacity
- 7) (around \$10) Limbo from Playdead

### Computer Skills & Digital Literacy

You will also need to be familiar and comfortable with:

- 1) Using Canvas
- 2) Using email with attachments
- 3) Downloading and installing software
- 4) Using presentation and graphics programs

### Technical Assistance

**UIT Help Desk:** [UIT Student Help Desk site](http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm) (<http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm>)

### Rules of Engagement

Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each

other and with their instructors. Here are some general guidelines:

- 1) While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law will not be tolerated.
- 2) Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in any communication2) online or face-to- face, even when their opinion differs from your own.
- 3) Ask for and use the correct name and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
- 4) Speak from personal experiences. Use “I” statements to share thoughts and feelings. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or other individual’s experiences.
- 5) Use your critical thinking skills to challenge other people’s ideas, instead of attacking individuals.
- 6) Avoid using all caps while communicating digitally. This may be interpreted as “YELLING!”
- 7) Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm in emails or discussion posts as tone can be difficult to interpret digitally.
- 8) Avoid using “text-talk” unless explicitly permitted by your instructor.
- 9) Proofread and fact-check your sources.
- 10) Keep in mind that online posts can be permanent, so think first before you type.

## Course Requirements

Module	Points	
Week 1, 2, and 3	10 discussions = 3 points each	30 points
	Media Rich Website = 36 points	36 points
	Pong = 34 points	34 points
		Total = 100 points

### Grading:

**Discussion Posts:** 3 points each

**3 points:** you have thoroughly and precisely addressed the discussion question in relationship to the readings and other requirements

**2 points:** your engagement with the discussion question and its relation to the reading is adequate and correct but not precise, and aspects of the

assignment are missing

**1 point:** your engagement with the discussion question bears little resemblance to the reading which suggests that you have not engaged with the content of the reading; and aspects of the assignment are missing

**0 points:** no discussion posted or response that is cursory or contains major mistakes in terms of the meaning of the reading

## Final Projects

### Full credit:

**website:** your web-based paper accurately incorporates citations from the reading into your response;

**sound design:** your work skillfully incorporates all aspects of the sonic assignment;

**pong:** your work with pong is accurate, robust, and effective.

### Half credit:

**website:** your work incorporates citations from the reading on a correct but elementary level into your response;

**sound design:** your work incorporates all aspects of the sonic assignment with one or two small glitches;

**pong:** your work with pong is accurate, not entirely robust, and of questionable effectivity

### No Credit

**website:** your work incorporates citations from the reading that are either superficial or incorrect into your response;

**sound design:** your work does not incorporate all aspects of the sonic assignment; **pong:** your work with pong is seriously flawed.

## Course Evaluation

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is the student evaluation system for UNT and allows students the ability to confidentially provide constructive feedback to their instructor and department to improve the quality of student experiences in the course.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

See: [Academic Integrity](#)

LINK: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>

## STUDENT BEHAVIOR

See: [Student Code of Conduct](#)

Link: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION – EAGLE CONNECT

Your access point for business and academic services at UNT occurs at [my.unt.edu](http://my.unt.edu).

See: [Eagle Connect](#)

LINK: [eagleconnect.unt.edu](http://eagleconnect.unt.edu)

**ODA STATEMENT**

See: [ODA](#)

LINK: [disability.unt.edu](http://disability.unt.edu). (Phone: (940) 565-4323)

**Health and Safety Information**

Students can access information about health and safety at: <https://music.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness>

**Registration Information for Students**

See: [Registration Information](#)

Link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/students>

**Academic Calendar, Summer 2025**

See: <https://catalog.unt.edu/content.php?catoid=35&navoid=3982#summer>  
<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-registration-guide.html>

**Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress****Undergraduates**

See: [Financial Aid](#)

LINK: <http://financialaid.unt.edu/sap>

**RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS**

See: [FERPA](#)

Link: <http://ferpa.unt.edu/>

**COUNSELING AND TESTING**

See: [Counseling and Testing](#)

Link: <http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>.

For more information on mental health issues, please visit:

See: [Mental Health Issues](#)

Link: <https://speakout.unt.edu>.

**ADD/DROP POLICY**

Drop Information: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-registration-guide.html>

**STUDENT RESOURCES**

The University of North Texas has many resources available to students. For a complete list, go to:

See: [Student Resources](#)

Link: <https://success.unt.edu/aa-sa-resources>

(Note: A printer-friendly PDF version is available by clicking the green button on the home page)

### **CARE TEAM**

See: [Care Team](#)

Link: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care-team>