Spring 2026 - MRTS 3800.001: *Game Production Pipeline*

Dr. Stephen Mandiberg (he/him) – Stephen.Mandiberg@unt.edu
Wednesday 2:00-4:50pm in RTFP 264
Office Hours: Wednesday 11:00am-1:00pm in RTFP 224, or by appointment; remote meetings by request

Course Description:
This course leads students through the fundamental steps of the game production pipeline, from ideation to prototype. We will explore the fundamentals of game development through lectures, readings, and hands-on game development. Students' groups will create games informed by their own ideas, a careful consideration of market norms, and critical playtesting.

By the end of this course students will be able to:
- Create a vertical slice of a game in a small team of 4-6 members utilizing agile development methods.
- Demonstrate competence in game development utilizing an industry standard game engine.
- Demonstrate collaborative abilities by working independently on a team to complete a game.
- Pitch an original game idea to a general audience.
- Implement traditional game design techniques and genre-defining mechanics.
- Demonstrate understanding of agile development, SCRUM, and other industry project management techniques through participating in team meetings and milestone presentations and through SCRUM notes.
- Evaluate a game development team's production efficiency and workflow methodology by writing self-reflexive postmortems.
- Present on video game development to a professional audience

Required Materials:
- All readings available free online:
  - Heather Chandler. 2013. *The Game Production Handbook*, 3rd edition [eLibrary – https://discover.library.unt.edu/catalog/b5008970]
  - All additional readings and watchings can be found online or through Canvas
- All required game development software is available for free in the computer labs on campus. Students working off campus are responsible for obtaining the necessary licensed software and hardware.

Assignments:
Individual Assignments (IA)
- ***Personal Experience***: About yourself and your game dev experience.
- ***One-Page Pitch Doc + In-Class Idea Pitch***: Write up, and then pitch to the class a game that will potentially be made by the group.
- ***Reading/Watching/Playing Responses*** (x4): A 200-300 word response to readings from Chandler, GDC Talks (Game Developer Association), and games you play for inspiration.

- ***Sprint Evaluations*** (x5): To encourage professional development, students will evaluate the sprint, themselves, and their peers. Using a set form, students must provide constructive feedback using clear evidence. These evaluations include challenges faced and plans to ensure accountability and alignment for future sprints.
- ***Reflection*** (x2): Mid- and end of term as an individual and member of a team. written self-reflections about your contributions and progress

Group Assignments (GA):

- ***Playtest Plan***: Generate a playtest plan and survey to use to improve their game.
- ***Playtest Observations/Data***: Using the Playtest Plan, teams conduct an in-class playtest and submit your observations, results, and planned next steps.
- ***Sprint Presentations*** (x5): Every other week groups present the current state of their game, what tasks were worked on and by whom, and share their next steps. Presentations are under 10 minutes.
- ***Postmortem***: Conduct a timeline postmortem and submit a picture of it, plus a general summary reflection.

- ***Wrap Kit***: A wrap kit includes a final 'Build' and your team's 'Design Documents.' The final build will be assessed on design, programming, art, overall progress, and scope. The 'Design Document' will document the game's development and be a tool for communicating and discussing the game's design.

Formula for Final Grade:

- Attendance and Participation (20%)
- Individual Assignments (35%)
- Group Assignments (20%)
- Final Game & Publishing Materials (Wrap Kit) (25%)

General Grading Criteria:

A. The student demonstrated an excellent understanding of course material, and presented clear, well-articulated analysis in communicated works. The student is able to intelligently employ terms and concepts introduced in class in proving their thesis. The student was highly motivated and nearly always participated in discussions. [90-100 = A]

B. The student demonstrated accurate comprehension of course material, but the student's understanding did not go beyond the basic requirements. Ideas are presented in clear and direct manner with few errors. Analysis was incomplete, the thesis was unclear, or there was a gap between the thesis and argument. The student was attentive in class, but often did not participate. [80-89.99 = B]

C. The student demonstrated an incomplete understanding of course material. Written ideas and arguments were incomplete, unclear, often inaccurate, and generally needed editing. The student was often distracted in class, and rarely participated. [70-79.99 = C]

D. The student showed inadequate comprehension of the basic premise, and core concepts of the course. Writing did not fulfill the assignment, and was constructed poorly. The student often failed to attend class, or inattentively attended class while on a device. [60-69.99 = D]

F. Work not submitted; or submitted in a way that fails to fulfill requirements. [0-59.99 = F]

Late or Missed Assignments:
Most late work is accepted for one week after the original deadline (group work and end of term work not accepted late), but will be marked down by one grade point (A→B, etc). Work submitted after the one-week grace period will be marked down by two grade points (A→C, etc). Unsubmitted work will receive a 0. Exceptions may be granted for religious holy days, for active military service, for official university functions, for pregnancy/parenting under Title IX, and for medical or family emergencies. In the event of emergencies, documentation (e.g., doctor's note) must be provide within 1 week following the absence. Upon returning to class you have 1 week to reschedule the exam and/or submit the assignment

Attendance and Participation:
Attendance is mandatory; your team will need you! Attendance may be taken at the beginning and/or end of each class. *Four or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course*. Absences must be excused through email before the class, or through documentation of an emergent situation. In addition to being in a seat, your grade depends on active participation during class. If you are unable to participate during class please talk to me to work out alternate strategies for participation. Discussing theories during office hours can count as participation!

Questions:
If you have any questions, ask them! Short/simple questions are best through email; long/complex questions are best through office hours. Grades may only be disputed in person during office hours.

Problems:
Please talk to me if you have any problems. Email me immediately if readings are no longer available through the eLibrary, or if the links provided are dead. That said, searching for the text through the library portal (or scholar.google.com) will often solve any broken link problems.

VPN:
The readings are available digitally, but they often require you to be on campus, or to sign in as if you were on campus so that you do not have to pay for the materials. The most common way this happens is through using a VPN (virtual private network). Detailed instructions on setting up a VPN on your computer, tablet, or phone can be found here: https://itss.untsystem.edu/sites/default/files/campus_vpn.pdf.

TurnItIn:
By taking this course students agree that certain required assignments will be subject to submission for textual similarity and AI review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Academic Integrity:

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. Using Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, Sora and other forms of AI writing and image creation tools is a similar form of academic integrity violation. While some classes utilize AI writing, this class does not. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated. As a minimum, plagiarizing will result in failure for the assignment. It might also result in further sanctions at the university level. Familiarize yourself with the UNT policy at: https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003.

AI Usage:
As stated in the Academic Integrity policy above, this class does not allow the use of Generative AI tools like Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, etc. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. However, some AI adjacent writing tools like Grammarly are allowed with provisions. As noted above in the TurnItIn policy, all work is subject to submission for textual similarity and AI review. In accordance with the UNT Honor Code, if you use Grammarly or a similar writing assistance tool you must disclose your use and submit a clean, initial draft of your paper. Both your initial draft and your final, Grammarly assisted draft must be submitted to TurnItIn. It is mandatory that you disclose your use and that TurnItIn not detect any use of AI in your initial draft.

Disability Accommodations:
UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of 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 accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class.

If you require or think you may require accommodations for disabilities, please register with UNT's Office of Disability Accommodation at 940-565-4323, Sage Hall Suite 167, or https://disability.unt.edu/. If you do not register and request we cannot make arrangements to fit your needs.

Emergency Notification and Procedures:
UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Schedule *(subject to change based on class needs):*

Pre-Production

January 14 - Class 1 - Course Intro & Game Pitch Prep
- Chandler – Chapter 1-2, 8 [Library eBook]
- IA: In-Class Activity: Personal Experience (*due by noon on Monday Jan 19, you should read everybody's submissions before class*)
- IA: In-Class Activity: One-Page Pitch Doc (*due by noon on Monday Jan 19; you should read everybody's submissions before class*)

January 21 - Class 2 - Game Pitch Presentations & Ideation
- Chandler – Chapter 9-10 [Library eBook]
- IA: In-Class Activity: Pitch Presentations
- (Initial Team Formation)

January 28 - Class 3 - Prototyping & Refinement
- Chandler – Chapter 11, Appendix A [Library eBook]

February 4 - Class 4 - Pre-Production Sprint Review
- Chandler – Chapter 12-13 [Library eBook]
- IA: Reading/Watching/Playing Response 1
- GA: Sprint Presentation 1
- (Teams and Games Finalized)

Production

February 11 - Class 5 - Production Kickoff
- IA: Sprint Evaluation 1

February 18 - Class 6 - Iteration & Development
- Chandler – Chapter 14 [Library eBook]
- IA: Reading/Watching/Playing Response 2

February 25 - Class 7 - Sprint 2 Review & Playtest
- GA: Sprint Presentation 2

March 4 - Class 8 - Mid-Semester Discussion & Prototyping Updates
- IA: Sprint Evaluation 2
- IA: Reflection 1

Spring Break - March 9-15

March 18 - Class 9 - Sprint 3 Review & Playtest
- Chandler – Chapter 15-16 [Library eBook]

- GA: Sprint Presentation 3
- GA: Playtest Plan

March 25 - Class 10 - Iteration & Feature Development
- IA: Sprint Evaluation 3
- GA: Playtest Observations/Data

April 1 - Class 11 - Sprint 4 Review & Playtest
- IA: Reading/Watching/Playing Response 3
- GA: Sprint Presentation 4

April 8 - Class 12 - Final Development Week
- IA: Sprint Evaluation 4

Post-Production

April 15 - Class 13 - Polish & Final Touches
- Chandler – Chapter 17-18 [Library eBook]
- IA: Reading/Watching/Playing Response 4

April 22 - Class 14 - Playtesting & Final Wrap Kit Presentation
- GA: Sprint Presentation 5
- GA: Wrap Kit

April 29 - Class 15 - Final Discussion & Postmortem
- GA: Postmortem
- IA: Sprint Evaluation 5

Finals Week (May 4-8)
- IA: Reflection 2