

TABLETOP GAME DESIGN

(GMAP ### # Credits/Elective)

A Holistic Exploration of Physical Game Publishing

Fall 2024

Class: [Timeslot Days and Times] [Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts Room/Floor]

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Course Objectives & Outcomes

The goal of this course is to provide students an introduction to physical game design and the cross disciplinary value of tabletop game design and publishing. Students will pull from unlikely sources to help expand their skill set. Course includes various styles of approach to game development, common pitfalls, marketability, and abstract strategies. Students will be utilizing available resources, developing research skills and iterating into complete projects. Time in class includes lectures, open discussion for questions, in-class exercises and assignments, and critiques. Outside of class students will be expected to work on assignments, group and individual projects, independent research, and playtesting.

On completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Expand and develop their critical thinking skills
2. Complete a playable tabletop game
3. Apply resources to publish a completed game project
4. Use learned skills to further develop future multimedia games

Prerequisites

[If applicable, likely none]

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend 3 hours per week in class, where they will take notes and remain attentive during lectures, participate in class discussions and assignments.

Lectures may contain reading material and video content to review, and are always followed by a discussion with the opportunity to ask questions.

Assignments will always reflect the material or subject discussed in class and are always hands-on exploration of the content.

Critiques are open discussion, and will be conducted during class time.

Students will need to spend 3-5 hours outside of class, which includes class assignments, research, group tests and their final projects. The final projects are a representation of everything learned throughout the full course.

Grading

- 20% Class participation, with an emphasis on experimentation and a solid grasp of course concepts.
- 20% Written notes, documentation and critiques. Students must write notes during lectures, with a log documenting all changes for their design skeletons. Students will also be required to write critically on other games.
- 20% game jams 1 & 2.*
Each project will adhere to specific themes and will be graded.
- 30% final project. The final project should express everything learned in class, and use every tool available from the previous jams.

*a “game jam” is a themed project completed over a short period of time. Students will work independently or in teams depending on theme and time constraints. Students will potentially be judged by a volunteer group panel outside of class to playtest and rank projects as an additional opportunity for feedback and constructive criticism.

Note on Attendance: Missed classes count directly towards the “class participation” grade and each missed class removes 5% from the total. Making up class work must be discussed in person during office hours or via email.

Note on grading: Students will always have reasonable access to their current grade in class; they are expected to take appropriate and repeated measures to modify the overall grade. By the end of the course or when no other actions are taken, it is implied that they are satisfied with the end result.

Required Media and Materials

Adobe Suite (InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator specifically)
or equivalents (Clip Studio Paint, Affinity, Krita, Paint.net, or Gimp,
AND Dextrous, NanDeck, or Component Studio)
Tabletop Simulator (*preferred*), Untap, or Screentop (*as backups only.*)
2 notebooks (1 for lectures, 1 for game dev logs)

Engelstein, Geoffrey. (2022). *Building Blocks of Tabletop Game Design: An Encyclopedia of Mechanisms*. CRC Press.

Recommended Media (excerpts will be provided)

Schott, Ben. (2004). *Schott’s Sporting, Gaming and Idling Miscellany*. Bloomsbury Pub Plc USA.
Barry, Lynda. (2019). *Making Comics*. Drawn and Quarterly Illustrated.
Sandercock, Jenn. (2018). *Edible Games Cookbook: Play With Your Food*. Inquisiment, Incorporated.
[GDC talks Quirkle, flavors of randomness, Nathan for you “Shipping Logistics Company”]

Course Schedule

	Course Topic	Media and Text Sources	Date
1	Course Overview -Syllabus, Guidelines, Expectations -micro-Lecture: <i>The Importance of Paper</i>		
2	What Defines a Game? -Lecture -Discuss Semester Project, (prelim-planning stage)	Sandercock, Barry, Schott	Tbd
3	The Hooks, Fun and Fiero -Lecture (log:) What makes an idea worthy of iterating? -Prepare for Jam	Engelstein, Assorted selection of tabletop components	
4	Game Jam 1: The Short One -Card Game Warm Up Assignment -Assign groups	Engelstein, <i>Card Game</i>	
5	Playtesting: (Solitaire, Peers, Blind) -How to prototype, playtest and critique well -Review and Crit Jam Games	Assorted selection of tabletop components	
6	Scope Creep and MVP -Trim pre-existing bloat using example game project into MVP -discuss application to main project	<i>Lemons, Kohdok's Box o' Junk, Cervantes</i>	
7	Starting Over, Heuristics and Aphorisms -Lecture (log:) Ciment Style -Apply to main project or previous jam		
8	Game Jam 2: The Longer One -Discuss theme and rapid prototyping -Semester Project Review and Crit		
9	Aesthetics and "Polish" -Review and Crit James Games -Lecture, including accessibility, good UI	<i>GDC Design Epiphanies from Quirkle and other Games 2017.</i>	
10	Everything Goes Wrong; the Class about Logistics [meta-lesson plan, intentionally left out of	<i>Nathan for You: Shipping Logistics Company Comedy Central. 2017.</i>	

	syllabus] -best practices for logistics		
11	Reaching Out -Lecture on obtaining resources, building networks, filling experience gaps		
12	Final Review -Final Projects Due, group crit		
13*	(Wedges**) Playtest and critique day -free classes spent on group playtests and critiques		
14*	Philly Game Makers Guild “field trip”		

Other Supplementary Classes*:

- “Card Game the class”: Using the pre-existing framework for *Card Game*, students will attempt to create new rulesets using pre-existing cards, then design new cards for the new game. (works well anywhere between Classes 2-5.)
- “JamesJelly”: Students intentionally design the “worst” game possible crits + breakdown (works reasonably well before Class 6.)
- Accessibility: Currently part of Class 9, expandable to a full class.
- “Budgeting, cutting every corner and brutality” Students are advised where to never make cuts, where to compromise, and where to always cut costs first. (anytime after class 5.)

*Classes can be added as part of the weekly course, or held as optional free study outside of regular scheduled classes, additionally can be offered during office hours.

**Wedges are full supplementary classes. They can be ‘wedged’ in between multiple classes, and are planned as further work time outside of normal classes in a space with other students and instructor.

University policy on observance of religious holidays

Academic Integrity

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Mental Health Services

Safety and Security