Game Design Workshop – Fall, 2011 Syllabus

USC School of Cinematic Arts, CTIN 488

Instructors:

Jeremy Gibson
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Student Assistants:

Lab 1: Th 10a–11:50a	**Lab 2**: F 10a–11:50a	**Lab 3**: F 12p–1:50p	**Lab 4**: Tu 2p–3:50p
Michael Chu	Ed Lorenceau	Alex Beachum	Sam Farmer
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Course Description: CTIN 488 is the foundation course for game design education at USC. It is a required course for all students who are majoring or minoring in interactive entertainment and games from the School of Cinematic Arts or Viterbi School of Engineering. The foundation mentioned is constructed from a codified language for games and a set of design methodologies that collectively we call "playcentric design". Think of playcentric design as the USC school of thought for games. It is intended to provide flexible skills and knowledge that will enable you to create playable systems more efficiently and collaborate with others more effectively. Playcentric design strives to enable the student to:

1. <u>Understand Fundamental Theory</u> – You will learn about the Formal, Dynamic, and Dramatic elements of games and how the three interrelate.

2. <u>Learn the Core Development Process</u> – This process is independent of software tools (which change over time). It includes understanding iterative design, prototyping, playtesting, presentation, and collaboration.

3. <u>Make Many Games</u> – Everyone will design many games, hands-on, regardless of technical skills. Class assignments are designed to make good additions to a student's demo reel. In addition, everyone will gain considerable experience providing critiques and analyzing games as playable systems.

CTIN 488 is designed to provide the foundation of knowledge both for succeeding throughout the game program at USC and for becoming a professional game designer.

Lecture Information: (all students must attend)

When: **Tuesdays 7p - 9p**
Where: **SCA 112 - REMEMBER NO FOOD OR DRINK IN THIS ROOM!!!**

Labs: <u>All labs are in the XML lab in Zemeckis (RZC 119)</u>

#1 – Thursdays	10a – 11:50a	Jeremy Gibson	SA: Michael Chu	Section 18362
#2 – Fridays	10a – 11:50a	Vincent Diamante	SA: Ed Lorenceau	Section 18393
#3 – Fridays	12p – 1:50p	Vincent Diamante	SA: Alex Beachum	Section 18361
#4 – Tuesdays	2p – 3:50p	Jeremy Gibson	SA: Sam Farmer	Section 18360

Office Hours: You should generally call or email ahead of time to set an appointment

Jeremy Gibson – Tuesdays, 5-6pm (by appointment) @ SCA 211
Vincent Diamante – Fridays at 9-10am (by appointment)
Student Assistants – By appointment

Pre-requisites: N/A

Required Textbooks: (Both are available in the Book Store)
   Game Design Workshop, Second Edition, by Fullerton and Swain
   The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses, by Jesse Schell

Evaluation of student performance:

Design Projects	70%
Play Experiments	15%
Quizzes (3 @ 5% each)	15%
Total:	**100%**

Course Outline: (This material is subject to change)

Week 1 – 8/23: Overview of the Course — You are a Game Designer!
   NO TUESDAY LABS ON 8/23
 Lecture: Overview of the course. What is a game? Formal, dynamic, and dramatic elements of games. Prototyping, playtesting and iterative design.
  In-Class Assignment: Bartok (as played by Malcolm Ryan)
  Reading: GDW: Ch. 1-2 / AGD: xxiii-xxx, Ch. 1, Ch. 3
  Lab: Up the River: Re-design a simple game system
  Assignments: Play Experiment 1 (Due 8/30)
                    Refine Up the River redesigns (Due next lab)

Week 2 – 8/30: Formal Elements of Games: Objectives, Procedures, Systems and Rules
   PLAY EXPERIMENT #1 DUE
 Lecture: Discussion of elements that make up the formal structures of game systems. Analysis of game rules from classic games.
  Reading: GDW: Ch. 3 & 6 / AGD: Ch. 4, 6, & 10
  Lab: Conceptualizing and brainstorming game ideas / Playtest Up the River redesigns
  Begin Game Project 1
  Assignments: Play Experiment 2 (Due 9/6)
                    Game Project 1 (Due 9/27) – Create 1st Playable (Due next lab)

Week 3 – 9/6: Dynamic Elements of Games: Emergence
   PLAY EXPERIMENT #2 DUE
 Lecture: Complexity Theory, Conway's Game of Life, The Sims, Gearheads, SimCity, RollerCoaster Tycoon. Testing your game for functionality, completeness and balance.
  In-Class Assignment: Emergent Behavior
  Reading: GDW: Ch. 5 / AGD: Ch. 11
  Lab: Playtest 1st playable of GP1
  Assignments: Game Project 1 (Due 9/27) – Create 2nd Playable

Week 4 – 9/13: Dramatic Elements of Games: Metaphor, Characters, Roles, and Story
   Lecture: Applying traditional tools of drama to game design. Analysis of character, plot, story and metaphor in well-known games. Interest Curves.
   Reading: GDW: Ch. 4 / AGD: Ch. 5, 14, & 15
   Lab: Playtest 2nd playable of GP1
   Assignments: Game Project 1 (Due 9/27) – Create 3rd Playable

Week 5 – 9/20: Creating Interesting Choices
   QUIZ #1
   Lecture: Game theory, Minimax theory, strategy games. Tic-tac-toe, Connect Four, Chess, Warcraft III, many others.
   Reading: GDW: Ch. 7 / AGD: Ch. 2, 7
   Lab: Playtest 3rd playable of GP1
   Assignments: Game Project 1 (Due 9/27) – Finalize!

Week 6 – 9/27: Role-Playing Games & Online Communities
   GAME PROJECT 1 DUE!!!
   Lecture: Roleplaying Games: Dungeons & Dragons, Hack, Diablo, Ultima Online, M.U.L.E., Habitat. Online Communities – The 9 Principles of Community Design
   Reading: AGD: Ch. 30 & 31
   Lab: Play an example RPG / Make RPG Project groups
   Assignments: Role-Playing Game Project (Two are Due 10/11 & Two are due on 10/18)

Week 7 – 10/4: Social Play   /   Networking with Professionals in the Game Industry
   Lecture: Social roles and player interaction. Bartle's 4 player types. Killer, Pictionary, You Don't Know Jack, Acrophobia, NetWits.
   In-Class Assignment: Designing for 4 types of players
   Reading: GDW: Ch. 11 / AGD: Ch. 21 & 22
   Lab: Play one of your group's RPGs
   Assignments: Role-Playing Game Project (Two are Due 10/11 & Two are due on 10/18)

Week 8 – 10/11: Narrative Play
   TWO OF FOUR RPG PROJECTS DUE THIS WEEK!!!
   Lecture: Narrative Play: Embedded Narrative versus Emergent Narrative. Development of interactive drama. Planetfall, Collosal Cave Adventure, Myst, Ico, Majestic, ARGs, The Sims, Jade Empire.
   Reading: GDW: Ch. 13 & 16 / AGD: Ch. 28
   Lab: Play one of your group's RPGs
   Assignments: Role-Playing Game Project (Remaining RPGPs are due on 10/18)

Week 9 – 10/18: Managing Resources
   REMAINING RPG PROJECTS DUE THIS WEEK!!!
   Lecture: Types of resources, information structures, game economies. Magic: The Gathering, Settlers of Catan, Pit.
   In-Class Assignment: Resources
   Lab: Begin Game Project 2
   Assignments: Game Project 2 (Due 11/15) – Create 1st Playable (Due next lab)
                     Play Experiment 3 (Due 10/25)

Week 10 - 10/25: Puzzle Games
    PLAY EXPERIMENT #3 DUE
  Lecture: Puzzle Design: Set, Tetris, Smart Games, Hexic, Incredible Machine, Myst.
   In-Class Assignment: Puzzle Games
   Reading: AGD: Ch. 12
   Lab: Playtest 1st playable of GP2
   Assignments: Game Project 2 (Due 11/15) – Create 2nd Playable

Week 11 – 11/1: Guest Speaker
    QUIZ #2
  Lecture: Guest Speaker
   Reading: GDW: Ch. 9, & 10 / AGD:
   Lab: Playtest 2nd playable of GP2
   Assignments: Game Project 2 (Due 11/15) – Create 3rd Playable

Week 12 – 11/8: Concept through Delivery
   Lecture: Concept through Delivery - Discussion of teams, process and documentation. Design
   and planning documents from actual products will be distributed.
    Lab: Playtest 3rd playable of GP2
   Assignments: Game Project 2 (Due 11/15) – Finalize!

Week 13 – 11/15: Business of Games / Pitching Games
    GAME PROJECT 2 DUE
  Lecture: Business of Games - Game market statistics, publisher/developer relationships,
  royalties & deal structures. How to Pitch a Game Concept
   In-Class Assignment: Quick Pitches – 30-minute Heroes
   Reading: GDW: Ch. 15 / AGD: Ch. 27 & 29
   Lab: Pick teams for Game Project 3 (the pitch project)
   Assignments: Game Project 3 (Due 12/13) – Create 1st Version of Pitch

Week 14 – 11/22: In-Class Pitches
   Lecture: Due to the Thanksgiving holiday this week, we'll be splitting up the Thursday and
   Friday labs into two groups and doing pitches in class, just like in lab.
   Lab: Only the Tuesday (11/22) lab will meet this week
   Assignments: Game Project 3 (Due 12/13) – Create 2nd Version of Pitch

Week 15 – 11/29: Final Lecture & Dress Rehearsal
    QUIZ #3
  Lecture: Final Lecture
   Lab: Pitch Project – Present 3rd version of pitches

Study Days – 12/6: No Class
   VIDEO OF PRESENTATION DUE

Final Exam – 12/13: Game Project 3 – Pitches for Guest Judges
   GAME PROJECT 3 DUE – PRESENT IN CLASS TO INDUSTRY JUDGES
  Final Exam Time: Present pitches to guest judges

Design Assignment Playtest / Critique Requirements:
Participating in in-lab playtests is a requirement of the class. During each playtest session, the class will break into four groups. Designers must quickly and clearly explain their game system to the play testers and lead them through a 25-minute play session.

After the group has played the game, the designers must lead a critique of their own game, eliciting as much feedback as possible from their play testers. At the end of the session, the designers must submit:
   A) A copy of the game description and rules
   B) An analysis of the critique received as well as plans for how to respond

Both of these documents will be evaluated as part of the assignment grade. Additionally, at the end of each lab session, we will hold a brief SCRUM in which each group will describe their accomplishments that week, the critique they received, and their plans for next week.

In-Class Design Exercises:
The In-Class Design exercises will consist of short, focused assignments that can be completed and playtested during class time. These exercises will give students hands-on experience with core concepts in game design, including breaking and balancing systems, changing game variables and system scope, designing for meaningful choice, brainstorming, conceptualization, and responding to player feedback.

Course Website:
Available on USC Blackboard.

Play Experiments:
As part of this class each student will conduct three play experiments. Play Experiments are done in groups of 3-5 using the 488 collection of board games. Each Play Experiment will be discussed by the class. The deliverable for each experiment will be a photo essay that shows the students playing the game and breaks down the formal, dramatic, and dynamic elements. Each student will be responsible for completing the three experiments across 15 weeks of the class.

Missing a Quiz / Late Assignments / Incompletes:
The only acceptable excuses for missing a quiz, turning an assignment in late, or taking an incomplete in the course are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform the professor before the date of the assignment or exam and present verifiable evidence in order for a make-up to be scheduled. Students who wish to take incompletes must also present documentation of the problem to the instructor before final grades are due.

Note for students with disabilities:
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to us as early

in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open 8:30a - 5:00p Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Academic Integrity:
The School of Cinema-Television expects the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical performance from USC students. It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one instructor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade band be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. If you have any doubts or questions about these policies, consult "SCAMPUS" and/or confer with the instructor.

Instructor Bios:

Jeremy Gibson, M.E.T.

Jeremy has been an Instructor of Cinema Practice at USC since 2009. He specializes in game design and digital prototyping and has spoken at the Game Developers Conference about topics such as Designing for Sporadic Play, Digital Game prototyping, and Networking with Professionals in the Game Industry.

Prior to joining the faculty of USC, Jeremy was a faculty member at the Masters of Digital Media Program at Great Northern Way Campus in Vancouver, BC and an Associate Producer and Designer at Electronic Arts / Pogo.com, where he designed and produced the game Crazy Cakes. He served as President of Digital Mercenaries, Inc. from 2001-2003 and is currently the Vice President of Airship Studios Corp. In addition to his recent teaching, he has also created and taught game design and new media courses for Texas State University in San Marcos, Austin Community College, and the University of Texas at Austin.

Jeremy Gibson received a Masters of Entertainment Technology from Carnegie Mellon University and a B.S. in Radio, Television, and Film from the University of Texas at Austin. While at Carnegie Mellon, his team of students created the multiplayer game Skyrates, that won the Silver Gleemax Award for Strategic Gaming at the 2008 Independent Games Festival and the Best Simulation Game of 2008 from JayIsGames.com. He has worked as a lead programmer and prototyper for companies such as frog design and Human Code and, while in graduate school, worked as an intern for both Walt Disney Imagineering and the Spore team at Maxis.

Vincent Diamante, M.F.A.

Vincent Diamante is a music composer, video game design consultant, writer, and artist living in Los Angeles. As a musician, he has provided sound effects and music for projects ranging from mobile versions of Castlevania and Metal Gear to original console games. He recently garnered BAFTA and AIAS nominations for both best music and best sound design for ThatGameCompany's Flower for PS3. In addition to working as a freelance musician, Vincent also works as a video game production and design consultant, using his experience games journalist to help individual game productions. He continues to work as a contributing editor, technical writer, and photographer for publications ranging from Game Developer Magazine and Wired to Fox News.

Vincent holds a BM in Electroacoustic Media from USC's Thornton School of Music and an MFA in Interactive Media from the USC School of Cinematic Arts.