USC School of Cinematic Arts

Interactive Media & Games Division

CTIN 464 Game Studies Seminar: Physical Interactivity, Immersion and Play
Units: 2.0
Spring 2016—Tuesdays, 14:00-16:50
Location: SCA 110

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Course Description
This course focuses on creative, interactive spaces and physical objects. We will be covering all sorts of work from installation art to interactive theater to escape rooms and more. Adhering to a theory-practice model of research and making, we will explore a set of critical texts alongside our production and design work. Drawing upon writings by theorists such as de Certeau, Flanagan, Lonsway, and Dunne and Raby, we will consider how design practices in tangible immersion and interactivity intersect with broader cultural conversations about community, technology, and entertainment. These considerations inform our creative itinerary, which consists of a series of small works that address several important aspects of immersive design—themed space, object modification, puzzle design, environmental curation—and a final project that brings together tools and skills developed over the semester to create an interactive space that we will experience together on the last day of class. Students will keep a journal to document their progress in the course by responding to readings and assignments.

Learning Objectives
- enhanced understanding of discourses in spatial theory, interactive media, physical storytelling, themed environments, and experience design
- expanded skills in fabrication, modification, and the staging of interactive elements and physical environments
- practical understanding of puzzle design and multi-puzzle systems
- experience presenting and demonstrating creative work, as well as providing and receiving critique
- increase familiarity with relevant ventures in Los Angeles and beyond—in particular, immersive theatre productions, escape rooms, and theme parks

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
There are no books for this class, but you will be expected to acquire materials for the design assignments. Creating interactive spaces can be very expensive; the goal of this class is to understand the underpinning concepts without breaking the bank. We will do our best to help you find resources and options to help construct your work to accommodate your budget, but please expect to spend some money (up to about $200) on materials. There will likely also be expenses (about $40) for admission/tickets/travel to a group activity off campus.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Grades will be based on individual projects, class participation and assigned reading. Criteria for will include conceptual clarity, creative range, execution, and the application of concepts discussed in class to assigned projects.

Critical responses (15%)
Students will write at least five responses to the assigned readings (3% each). These responses (200-300 words, submitted to the student's Google Drive folder before 5pm on Mondays) should identify and reflect upon one or two ideas or arguments advanced in the readings. Responses will be evaluated in terms of their clarity, accuracy, critical engagement, and intellectual verve.

Space Recreation Assignment (5%)
The first assignment is about how to do a lot with a little. Using minimal elements and engaging multiple senses, you will be asked to recreate the 'feeling' of a favorite space.

Puzzle Exploration Assignment (10%)
This is a two part project. In the first week you will present to the class two puzzles that you have studied. In the second part, taking from any of the puzzles presented in the report, you will create a new puzzle that combines two of them. These puzzles must have a theme, targeted audience and an expected solve time.

Narrative Still Life Assignment (10%)
For this assignment you will create a simple instance of environmental storytelling, where we can look at a series of objects or a space and understand a story. (You can document it somewhere else and show the class through video and photo documentation.)

"Toy" Modification Assignment (15%)
For this assignment you will be asked to modify an object (recommended a toy) so that it will reveal a secret when it is explored. You will also be asked to describe the space and context that the object would be found in.

Commercial Assignment (5%)
This will be a presentation on how you would adapt an aspect of a pre-existing experience.

Final Group Project (30%)

This constitutes the major deliverable for the course, and will require a good deal of creative and collaborative energy. You will be assigned to a group of peers, with whom you will imagine, plot, theorize, design, document, and build an interactive experience (based one on of three fairy tales) to be staged on campus on the last day of class.

Participation (10%) is an important component of this course, as students will discuss readings, share design experience, and provide feedback on presentations and creative work. Participation will be based on the student's level of engagement with ideas and themes in the course, as demonstrated by thoughtful and constructive contributions to class discussion and questions posed to presenters and guest speakers.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	**% of Grade**
critical responses	15
space recreation	5
puzzle exploration	10
narrative still life	10
modification assignment	15
commercial space assignment	5
group project	30
participation	10
TOTAL	**100**

Assignment Submission Policy
This course is about both design and production. As such, projects are expected to be submitted in a professional, on-time, no-excuses manner.

Missing an Assignment Deadline, Incompletes
The only acceptable excuses for missing an assignment deadline or taking an incomplete in the course are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform the instructor before the assignment due date and present verifiable evidence in order for a deadline extension to be granted. Students who wish to take incompletes must also present documentation of the problem to the instructor or student assistant before final grades are due.

For assignments turned in after the assignment deadline without prior permission from the instructor, a penalty will be imposed equal to 10% of the total available points for the assignment, for each day or part of a day that the assignment is late, up to a maximum of seven days.

Attendance Policy
Punctual attendance at all classes is mandatory. Students arriving more than five minutes late to three classes, more than ten minutes late to a single class, or leaving early, will be marked as having an unexcused absence from class, unless prior permission has been obtained from the instructor. The following guidelines are from the Interactive Media & Games Division handbook regarding absences and grading and apply to all students.

Guidelines for absences affecting grading

- Two unexcused absences: lowers grade one full grade point (e.g. from A to B)
- Three unexcused absences: lowers grade two full grade points
- Four or more unexcused absences: request to withdraw from course (instructor's discretion)

Excused absences are:

- Illness (with a doctor's verification)
- Family or personal emergency (with verification)

Social media, including text messaging and internet messaging, are excluded from class unless explicitly permitted by the instructor. A 0.5% grade reduction will result from each occurrence of a student being found using them.

Diversity

In making games and interactive media in a professional and ethical way, it is important that you consider diversity. When looking at your projects, you should consider who is depicted and how this work will impact others. What kinds of individuals and communities are represented in your work? What point of view does your work express? This class my assist you in learning how to make work that includes diverse viewpoints, and may discuss racial, religious, gender and sexual orientation issues in the context of games and interactive media.

Additional Policies

Due to the nature of critique, it is possible that class time may require occasional flexibility.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week 1: August 21

Topics	introduction to the course / space

Week 2: August 28

Topics	creating and experiencing spaces
Assignments Due	**space recreation (5%)**
Prepare	De Certeau, Michel. "Spatial Stories." *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). Flanagan, Mary. "Locating Play and Politics: Real World Games & Activism" (2007).
Activities	space recreation and critique

Week 3: September 4

Topics	puzzle design and applications 1: physical and multimedia
Assignment Due	**report on 2 puzzles (5%)**
Prepare	"Hand-Picked Escape Room Puzzle Ideas that Create Joy & Terror" *Lock Paper Scissors*. https://lockpaperscissors.co/escape-room-puzzles

	Slocum, Jerry. "Mechanical Puzzles: Their History and Their Challenge." *The Art of the Puzzle: Astounding and Confounding*. (2001)
Activities	demonstration and critique

Week 4: September 11

Topics	puzzle design and applications 2: systems and stories
Assignment Due	**puzzle combination (5%)**
Prepare	Michelsen, Jacob and Steffan Bjork. "The Rooms: Creating immersive experiences through projected augmented reality." Foundations of Digital Games Conference, 2014. Nakevska, Marija. Et al. "Interactive storytelling in a mixed reality environment: The effects of interactivity on user experiences." *Entertainment Computing*. 21. (2017): 97–104.
Activities	demonstration and critique

Week 5: September 18

Topics	storytelling in interactive environments
Assignment Due	**narrative still life (10%)**
Prepare	Lemle, Elise. et al. "Story Room: The Computer as Live-Action Storyteller for Adaptive Game Play" Chapter 3. *Two Bit Circus and the Future of Entertainment*. Springer, 2015. 17-24. Lonswav, Brian. "Stories About Our Themed Environments." *Making Leisure Work: Architecture and the Experience Economy*. Routledge, 2013.
Activities	demonstration and critique

Week 6: September 25

Topic	field trip / group experience
Activities	

Week 7: October 2

Topics	object modification and environmental hacking
Prepare:	TBA from Dunne, A. and Raby, F. *Speculative everything: Design, fiction, and social dreaming*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. (2014)
Activities	object modification workshopping

Week 8: October 9

Topics	object modification and environmental hacking
Assignment Due	**toy modification (15%)**
Activities	demonstration and critique

Week 9: October 16

Topics	throughput and people

Prepare	(readings TBA)
Activities	designing for a commercial space

Week 10: October 23

Topics	commercial space / group project
Assignment Due	**commercial space (5%)**
Activities	group project development / commercial space critique

Week 11: October 30

Prepare / Due	first iteration on theme and gameplay loop
Activities	group project development /TBA Speaker

Week 12: November 6
Election Day – No class (Vote!)

Week 13: November 13

Prepare / Due	first playable
Activities	group project development/ first playable critique

Week 14: November 20

Activities	group project development /TBA Speaker

Week 15: November 27

Activities	**group projects demonstration and critique (30%)**

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct
Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standardshttps://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems
A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs
http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.htmlprovides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information
http://emergency.usc.edu/will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Disruptive Student Behavior:
Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

Syllabus Updates:
This syllabus is liable to change up to the beginning of class and possibly over the semester. Please check the posted syllabus regularly, and note all changes that are shared by the instructor in class.