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| Video Game Project ManagementITP 391a (4 Units) | E:\Dropbox\USC\viterbiengineering\Viterbi _ Engineering\Vertical\Vertical_Formal_JPEG\Vert_Formal_Viterbi_CardOnTrans.jpg |

**Fall 2017** *Version 180815a*

### Objective

To educate the student about the job of the video game producer, and prepare the student for a job in the game industry, or project management inside or outside the game industry. On completing the course, the student will be able to:

* Write a game schedule
* Write a game budget
* Read and negotiate game contracts
* Write weekly status reports
* Have an understanding of what it means to work in games and
* Know how to successfully apply for a game job.

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| Concepts |

In this course, students engage in a semester-long development process of an imaginary video game, from concept through pre-production to production to release and aftermarket, conducted through lectures and discussions. Throughout the course of the semester, details of the job of the video game producer, and the realities of working in a game company, are explored and revealed. Students learn many of the necessary "soft skills" of a video game producer (project manager).

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| Prerequisites |

* **ITP-280**
* Students should furthermore be fluent in the use of Microsoft Word, Excel, Powerpoint, email and Internet.

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| Instructor | Tom Sloper |
| Contacting the Instructor | Email: [sloper@usc.edu](mailto:sloper@usc.edu?subject=ITP391%20-%20) Office: OHE 412 |
| Office Hours | See <https://itp.usc.edu/current-students/faculty-office-hours/> |
| Lab Assistants | None |
| Lecture/Lab | 2 hours, twice a week, for a total of 4 hours |

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| Required Textbooks |

***Course Reader*** (also may be referred to as "course pack"), available at USC bookstore. It's a combined course pack for both ITP230 and ITP391. Title: **"Video Game Quality Assurance, Production, Design"**

Students are also required to stay apprised of video game industry news. Free daily industry news (required reading): **http://www.gamesindustry.biz**

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| Optional Textbooks |

**INTRODUCTION TO GAME DEVELOPMENT**, edited by Steve Rabin; Charles River Media; Second Edition, ISBN-13: 978-1-58450-679-9; ISBN-10: 1-58450-679-2

**SECRETS OF THE GAME BUSINESS**, edited by François Dominic Laramée; Charles River Media; ISBN 1-58450-282-7

**THE GAME PRODUCTION HANDBOOK**, by Heather Chandler; Charles River Media; ISBN 1-58450-416-1

**GAME DESIGN WORKSHOP**, by Tracy Fullerton; Morgan Kaufmann Publishers; Second Edition, ISBN 978-0-240-80974-8

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| Website |

All course material will be on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.usc.edu>).

Also: http://www.sloperama.com/advice.html

### IT Help

Hours of Service: 8AM-9PM; Phone: 213-740-0517; Email: [engrhelp@usc.edu](mailto:engrhelp@usc.edu)

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| Grading | | |
| The following percentage breakdown will be used in determining the grade for the course. | | |
| Assignments | | 50% | |
| Midterm | | 15% | |
| Final exam and presentation | | 25% | |
| Participation | | 10% | |
| Total | | 100% | |
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| Grading Scale | |
| The following shows the grading scale to be used to determine the letter grade. | |
| 93% and above | A |
| 90% - 92% | A- |
| 87% - 89% | B+ |
| 83% - 86% | B |
| 80% - 82% | B- |
| 77% - 79% | C+ |
| 73% - 76% | C |
| 70% - 72% | C- |
| 67% - 69% | D+ |
| 65% - 66% | D |
| 64% and below | F |
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### Course Project:

The purpose of the course project is to prepare the student for planning real-life game projects. The goal of the project is to develop an individual plan and presentation for the student's game, similar to the way game producers present their prospective projects to a game publisher's Greenlight Committee. Selected weekly assignments are to be refined and used as portions of the overall final presentation at semester's end.

*Project Timeline:*

• Week 3 - Elevator pitch and 2-page concept paper

• Week 6, 8 - Schedule

• Week 7, 9 - Budget

• Week 11, 13 - Powerpoint or Prezi presentation

• Week 14, 15 - Résumé, business card

• Finals week - All delivered in final form

*Grading breakdown of the course project (percentage of overall grade):*

• Elevator pitch and 2-page concept paper: 3%

• Schedule: 6%

• Budget: 6%

• Powerpoint or Prezi presentation: 6%

• Résumé, business card: 6%

• Final presentation: 15%

### Policies

Participation - Students should notify instructor by email in advance if a class will be missed. Students are expected to come to class on time and participate in discussions in each class.

Assignments - Weekly assignments should be delivered online via Blackboard. Assignments are to be in Microsoft Word, Excel, Prezi, or PowerPoint format unless otherwise specified. There are two types of assignments: written assignments to be graded as turned in, and presentation assignments, to be graded after first being presented, adjusted, and resubmitted. Unless otherwise announced at the time of assignment, written assignments are due within the week assigned (usually by the Thursday evening of that week). Unless otherwise announced at the time of assignment, presentation assignments are due the Sunday following the day assigned.

Late Submissions - Assignments turned in late will be reduced by **20%** the first day late, and by **50%** the second day. After that deadline, a zero is entered in the grade center. Deadline extensions are granted based on written excuse with specific request, and are granted on a case-by-case basis only; no guarantee that an extension will be granted.

Make-up policies - To make up for a missed exam, the student must provide a satisfactory reason (as determined by the instructor) along with proper documentation. Make-up exams are only allowed under extraordinary circumstances.

Classroom Computers - Before logging off a computer, students must ensure that they have emailed or saved assignments created during the class or lab session. Any work saved to the computer may be erased after restarting the computer. ITP is not responsible for any work lost.

Open Lab - ITP offers Open Lab use for all students enrolled in ITP classes. These open labs are held beginning the second week of classes through the last week of classes.

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| Incomplete and Missing Grades |

Excerpts for this section have been taken from the University Grading Handbook, located at

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/grades/gradinghandbook/index.html>. Please see the link for more details on this and any other grading concerns.

A grade of Missing Grade (MG) “should only be assigned in unique or unusual situations… for those cases in which a student does not complete work for the course before the semester ends. All missing grades must be resolved by the instructor through the Correction of Grade Process. One calendar year is allowed to resolve a MG. If an MG is not resolved [within] one year the grade is changed to [Unofficial Withdrawal] UW and will be calculated into the grade point average a zero grade points.

A grade of Incomplete (IN) “is assigned when work is no completed because of documented illness or other ‘emergency’ **occurring after the twelfth week** of the semester (or 12th week equivalency for any course scheduled for less than 15 weeks).”

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| Academic Integrity |

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus,* the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

If the instructor, a grader, or a lab assistant suspects you of academic dishonesty, it has to be reported to SJACS. Do not share your lab assignments with other students. Do not submit another student’s work as your own. Do not look at other students’ papers during exams. Do not leave the room during an exam. Do not cheat! As Trojans, we are faithful, scholarly, skillful, courageous, and ambitious.

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| 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 your course instructor (or TA) as early in the semester as possible. If you need accommodations for an exam, the form needs to be given to the instructor at least two weeks before the exam.

DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30am to 5:00pm, Monday through Friday. Contact info: 213-740-0776 (Phone), 213-740-6948 (TDD only), 213-740-8216 (FAX), [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu), <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html>.

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| Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis |

In case of emergency, when travel to campus is difficult, if not impossible, USC executive leadership will announce a digital way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of the Blackboard LMS (Learning Management System), teleconferencing, and other technologies. Instructors should be prepared to assign students a “Plan B” assignment that can be completed ‘at a distance.’ For additional information about maintaining your classes in an emergency, please access: <http://cst.usc.edu/services/emergencyprep.html>

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| Video Game Game Project ManagementITP 391a (4 Units)Course Outline |
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| Precise schedule of events may vary due to holidays, guest speaker availability, etc. |

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|  | **Topics/Daily Activities** | **Readings and Homework** | **Deliverable/**  **Due Dates** |
| **Week 1** | Introduce instructor and course.  - Examination of the roles of the producer or project manager in video game development.  - Introduce imaginary group production: an externally-developed movie license IP game. The new producer's 1st job is to learn everything possible about the IP. Problem for discussion: how to go about it; what actions to take, in what order?  - Introduce individual productions (drawn from a hat) | GamesIndustry News, Sloperama FAQ 42 (http://sloperama.com/ advice/lesson42.htm) and Extra Credits: So You Want To Be A Producer (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUkcz2taCiw) | Go see movie (over weekend); write introductory status report (due Friday). |
| **Week 2** | The New Producer's New Production  - Producer goes to visit IP owner and learns about the game's design direction guidelines. Writes an internal proposal for concept greenlight. Problem: who's on the greenlight committee? What does each one need to hear? How to anticipate what they'll ask? | GamesIndustry.biz news (due every class day) | Saw movie over weekend, now collaborate on a 2-page Concept Document including a log line (due Sunday); weekly status report (due Friday). |

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| **Week 3** | Greenlight; Hunt for Development Team  - Greenlight committee approves direction. Producer identifies development candidates. Problem: how to identify development candidates? | GamesIndustry News; Course Pack, chapter 7.2: Game Industry Roles, pp. 837-854 | Write elevator pitch and 2-pager for individual CSR production (due Sunday); status report (due Friday). |
| **Week 4** | Vet teams, send bid packages, select developer  - Problems for discussion: what goes into a bid package? How to select developer? | GamesIndustry News as usual; Course Pack chp. 7.3, The Publisher-Developer Relationship, pp. 857-871 | Collaborate on selecting a developer (due Sunday); status report (due Friday as always). |
| **Week 5** | Contracts and early production planning  - Game Design Documents, Technical Design Documents (GDDs, TDDs). The 5 phases of a video game production. The Golden Spike; why Xmas happens in July. The issues that usually arise in game development contracts. Focus on Concept Phase, Pre-Production Phase. | The Call of Duty Contract - http://www.gamasutra .com/features/20070112/ spark\_01.shtml  GamesIndustry news | Write 1st Playable milestone description for group production (due Sunday); status report (due Friday) |
| **Week 6** | Budgets. Graphics approval cycles. Politics of waiting. Quiz.  - Tracking the creation of assets.  - Politics that occur during the long wait for First Playable.  - How to write a schedule. | Course Pack, Chapter 7.3, The Publisher-Developer Relationship, pp. 872-876  GamesIndustry news | Rewrite of 1st Playable milestone (due Sunday); status report (due Friday) Quiz. |
| **Week 7** | First Playable!  - Receiving and reviewing the First Playable build. Red flag spotting. Politics that occur when First Playable arrives. The Production Phase, in depth.  - How to write a budget.  QUIZ on Wednesday. | Latest Salary Survey (link on Blackboard), and  "Making A Schedule You Can Believe In," down-loadable from http:// sloperama.com/downlode/ - and GamesIndustry news as usual | 1st draft of budget for individual production (due Sunday); status report (due Friday) |
| **Week 8** | Flying to developer's location. Conducting developer meetings.  Discussion problem: how do you set this up, what arrangements do you make, how do you conduct it? | God of War: Ascension postmortem (https://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/193695/postmortem\_\_sony\_santa\_monicas\_.php) | 2nd draft of budget (due Sunday); Status report (due Friday) |
| **Week 9** | Midterm on Wednesday.  Midterm consists of multiple-choice quiz and a couple of written questions.  - Show First Playable to stakeholders. Meet with the IP owner to discuss the production's direction. Get greenlight committee consensus.  - Production tracking without micromanaging.  - Managing expectations  - The evil triangle (good vs. fast vs. cheap) and priority setting | "The Evil Triangle," downloadable from http://sloperama.com/ downlode/  Course Pack, Chapter 7.1, Production, pp. 791-808  - and GamesIndustry news as usual | Assignment: 2nd draft of budget (due Sunday); Status report (due Friday) |
| **Week 10** | Putting Out Another Developer Fire  - A red flag bursts into flame; how a good producer can deal with the crisis  - Managing and motivating personnel | "Smoothing the Deve-loper-Publisher Relations-hip," downloadable from http://sloperama.com/downlode/  - and GamesIndustry news as usual | Find online articles about employee motivational techniques, and write an essay about applying those techniques to video games (due Sunday). Status report (due Friday) |
| **Week 11** | Nearing the end of Production phase; Alpha, Beta, Marketing  - Working with Marketing. Game's final title, box & docs, demos, screen shots, interviews. | Course Pack, Chapter 7.1, Production, pp. 808-823; Guy Kawasaki's 10-20-30 rule; GamesIndustry News | 1st draft of individual pro-duction Greenlight pitch (PowerPoint or Prezi, due Sun-day); status report (due Friday) |

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| **Week 12** | Quality Assurance (Q.A.)  - The Producer / Quality Assurance working relationship.  - The role of QA at a publisher vs. developer vs. platform holder  - Outsourcing QA to a QA lab  - Beta testing vs. play testing vs. bug testing vs. localization testing vs. certification testing and TRCs | http://www.alixgames.co.uk/ post/999610807/how-to-be-a-games-tester  http://www.penny-arcade.com/patv/episode/playtesting  http://sloperama.com/advice/ lesson5.htm  http://sloperama.com/advice/ lesson17.htm  http://www.gamesindustry.biz/ articles/2013-04-29-the-class-of-quality-assurance  http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/193614/Contract\_QA\_A\_dead\_end\_or\_a\_footinthedoor.php | Write 5 bugs in Bugzilla (http:// itpbugzilla.usc.edu - login details on Blackboard, due Sunday); status report (due Friday) |
| **Week 13** | Down To The Wire  - Working with Operations and the platform holder. Platform holder certification/approval. BOM meetings. Closing the production in QA.  - Discussion problem: QA Lead refuses to release game because of some B bugs. What do you do? | http://www.gamasutra.com /blogs/AdriaanDeJongh/2013 0520/192602/  Fingle\_marketing\_effort\_and \_numbers.php and GamesIndustry News and  Course Pack, Chapter 7.1, Production, pp. 823-835 | Greenlight PowerPoint, 2nd draft (due Sunday). Status report (due Friday) Prepare résumés, business cards to bring to the next class. |
| **Week 14** | Aftermarket  - The producer's work isn't finished when the game is released. Customer support, internet presence, sequels, localizations, ports. The cost of patching. | GamesIndustry News | Present résumés, business cards for critiquing. Status report (due Friday) |

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| **Week 15** | Producing internally; Producing a social service; Producing volunteer/student productions; The Real World  - Working with, and overseeing, diverse personnel (skill sets, genders, races, national origins).  - Social games are never "finished"  - Motivating and managing a herd of cats  - Getting a job in the game industry. How to apply for a job in the industry. Mock job interviews. Freelancing.  - Review of material covered during semester; wrap-up of imaginary group production. | GamesIndustry News | Present revised résumé, business cards. And bring portfolio if applicable, for mock interview. Status report (due Friday) |
| **Final** | Final Exam & Presentation  Present final production to a panel of game industry professionals  • Verbal elevator pitch from memory  • Powerpoint or Prezi presentation  • Hand in final document, digital and good-looking hard copy, incorporating:  2-pager (from week 3)  Schedule (from week 8)  Budget (from week 9)  Résumé (from week 15)  Business card (from week 15) |  | Final to be held on Monday, Dec. 10 from 8-10 AM  See USC Schedule of Classes at https://classes.usc.edu/term-20183/finals/ |

Note:

Guest speakers may join class at any time during semester, (to be determined, and at instructor's discretion).

- Topic depends on guest speaker.

- May cause some shuffling of topics from one week to another.