



**CTIN 541: Design for Interactive Media**  
**Units: 2**  
**Fall 2019**

**Meeting Time:** Wednesdays 1:00 AM - 3:50 PM  
**Lab time:** Friday 10:00 AM - 12:50 PM

**Location:** SCI L114

**Professor:** Tracy Fullerton  
**Office:** SCI 201M  
**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 10AM - 12PM or by appointment  
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### **Course Description**

This course introduces students to core skills in interactive design, including conceptualizing interactive systems, prototyping, playtesting, and managing an iterative design process to meet specific and meaningful experience goals for users. The overarching themes of the class are:

**Preparation** – Developing a vocabulary of interactive design concepts and formal elements of interactivity, deep analysis of interactive systems, focusing on the player/user experience, study of prior art.

**Process** – Setting experience goals, ideation techniques, brainstorming, prototyping methods, playtesting, iterative design, specification, presentation.

**Practice** – Developing & exercising skills, initiating projects, follow through, giving and taking critique.

**Partnership** – Developing a collaborative mindset, communication skills, sharing authorship, managing yourself and others.

The course approaches interactivity as a participatory art form, with the designer's goal to provide a specific and meaningful experience for the users and to respond quickly and creatively to feedback during the design process. During the course of the semester, the exercises and assignments primarily focus on developing low- and non-technical prototypes of interactive concepts, experimenting with games, improvisational theater, fine arts, toys, interactive narrative, and real and virtual play spaces.

A central purpose of this course is to give students the opportunity to explore various types of design strategies, to discover their own strengths and interests, and to provide them with a wide repertoire of techniques upon which to draw in the future. In addition, the course will introduce students to the "playcentric" design methodology practiced in the Interactive Media and Games Division, encouraging them to develop a focus on the central user experience that anchors their design process.

This is a studio class and a large part of the class content will focus on in-class discussion, critique, and problem solving for individual projects. As such, it is imperative that students treat the development of their design projects professionally and bring requested milestones to class on time, ready to present. Students will be expected to participate actively in all discussions and critique sessions, giving and receiving feedback of the highest quality.

Throughout this class, students are encouraged to take risks and to look beyond prior art, in-class examples and common wisdom to explore new and different design ideas. In many cases, students will be assigned to work in partnerships or teams and the quality of students' participation within these groups is of great importance – perhaps as important as the final project. Interactive media in all forms is a collaborative discipline and learning to communicate, share workload, learn from and help others excel is a core value in this field.

#### **Note regarding the Diversity & Inclusion Labs**

Throughout the course of the semester, there will be five weeks during which there will be a Friday lab organized by the Council for Diversity and Inclusion. These labs will be from 2:00 PM to 4:50 PM on the dates listed below. (Note that these hours are listed on the schedule of classes as part of this course and therefore should always be available in your calendar. On dates when the Diversity & Inclusion labs are not in session, you are free to use the time as you choose.) The meetings for this lab will be held in SCA 108. The Diversity & Inclusion labs are a required part of the course; failure to attend these meetings will negatively affect your grade.

- Friday, August 30, 2:00-4:50pm, SCA 108.
- Friday, September 27, 2:00-4:50pm, SCA 108.
- Friday, October 25, 2:00-4:50pm, SCA 108.
- Friday, November 22, 2:00-4:50pm, SCA 108.
- Friday, December 6, 2:00-4:50pm SCA 108.

Contact info for the Diversity & Inclusion Labs:

- Instructor: Evan Hughes (ehughes@usc.edu)
- Lead TA: Kam Copeland (kcopelan@usc.edu)

#### **Prerequisite(s)**

Open to IMGD M.F.A. and iMAP Ph.D. students (as well as other interested and qualified students, by interview with the instructor).

#### **Course Notes**

This class combines elements of a studio production course with theory and lecture. A major component of the course will be the collaborative design and development of three game projects, which will be presented and playtested in class. Students are expected to participate actively in these group projects and respectfully in the critique of one another's work.

This course will deal with game design in both tabletop and digital concepts. Non-digital work is used to study fundamental game design concepts, and the practice of paper prototyping techniques will prove useful to the digital design practice.

Participating in in-class playtests is a requirement of the class. Designers must quickly and clearly explain their game system to the playtesters 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 playtesters. At the end of the session, the design team as a group must submit a copy of the game description and rules, as well as a playtest postmortem document synthesizing the comments of the playtesters. Both of these documents will be evaluated as part of the assignment grade. All participants in the group projects will receive the same grade and should strive to contribute equally to the project.

#### **Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

There are no technology requirements for this class, however several technical proficiencies may prove beneficial. Many students will use image creation or layout software (like Adobe Photoshop and Adobe InDesign) to create artwork for their paper prototypes. Students may also organize their designs using common office tools such as word processors, spreadsheets, flow-charting software or project

management tools like Asana or Trello. For the final game project, which will be co-created in CTIN 534, where technology proficiency is a component of the class, students will use Twine, RPG Maker, Ren'Py, Unity, or a similar digital game framework. Students who do not have previous experience with any of these tools may use Twine for this assignment, which does not require programming, or may partner with students who have technical skills on this assignment. Please communicate with the instructor if you have any questions about the technical requirements for your assignments.

### **Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

This course has two required texts, which are available online or from the USC Bookstore. (Note that the 4th edition of *Game Design Workshop* may not be available in the library yet, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, which is available to check out, will suffice if you are not able to purchase a copy.)

*Game Design Workshop, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games* by Tracy Fullerton

<https://www.amazon.com/Game-Design-Workshop-Playcentric-Innovative/dp/1138098779>

*Situational Game Design* by Brian Upton

<https://www.amazon.com/Situational-Game-Design-Brian-Upton/dp/113803181X>

In addition, there will be several chapters and articles assigned as reading. These will be made available in class or on the course website. For those students interested in further readings on interactive design and game design, the following are recommended additional texts. These are not required to purchase for the class.

*Designing Interactions* by Bill Moggridge

<https://www.amazon.com/Designing-Interactions-Press-Bill-Moggridge/dp/0262134748/>

*Rules of Play* by Katie Salen Tekinbaş and Eric Zimmerman

<https://www.amazon.com/Rules-Play-Design-Fundamentals-Press-ebook/dp/B007GCCAQW/>

Students will be required to supply their own materials for paper prototyping and developing physical games. As the needs of specific projects may vary, students should plan to have a small budget for these materials. However, commonly used supplies include:

- Index cards
- Colored markers
- Polyhedral dice
- Construction paper

### **Course Website**

A copy of this syllabus is available at the course website:

[www.tracyfullerton.com/541](http://www.tracyfullerton.com/541) (Password: playtest)

### **Overview of Assignments**

#### Written Analysis Assignments

- Simple system analysis 1 page, due week 2
- Board game system analysis 2-3 pages, due week 3

#### Design & Prototyping Projects

- Up the River variation, due week 4
- Meaningful play prototype, due week 7
- Narrative play 1<sup>st</sup> prototype, due week 10
- Digital prototype design document, due week 12

- Digital prototype (co-assigned as 534 final project), testable version due week 15 and final build and post-mortem due at final exam

#### Collaboration Assignment

- Skill sharing, due week 13

#### **Grading Breakdown**

Participation	5
Simple system analysis	5
Board game system analysis	10
Up the River variation	15
Meaningful play prototype	15
Narrative play prototype	15
Digital prototype design document	15
Digital prototype playtest & analysis	10
Skill sharing	10
Total:	100

#### **Assignment Submission Policy**

All written and digital assignments, including the documentation component of each of the game projects, should be submitted by email to [tfullerton@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:tfullerton@cinema.usc.edu) by the start of class on the day that they are due. Games that will be playtested in class must be brought to class, ready to be played.

#### **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 instructors 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 instructors or student assistant before final grades are due. Incompletes are only available after the week-twelve withdrawal deadline.

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 instructors. The following guidelines are from the Interactive Media Division & Games handbook regarding absences and grading and apply to all students.

#### **Guidelines for absences affecting grading**

Two unexcused absences: lowers grade ½ grade (for example, from A to A-)

Three unexcused absences: lowers grade one full grade

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)

Observance of religious holy day (with advance notice to instructor)

### Unauthorized Social Media Use During Class

Social media use, including text messaging, Internet messaging and email, is not permitted in class unless explicitly permitted by the instructors. A 0.5% grade reduction will result from each occurrence of a student being found using social media in class.

### A Safer Space

In this class, we make a commitment to foster a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. This means that we will use preferred pronouns and respect self-identifications. While debate and discussion are welcome, please remain aware of the implications of your words and the images that you include in your work. If the instructor or another student points out that something you have said or shared with the group might be offensive, avoid being defensive; this is a valuable opportunity for us to grow and learn together.

Because this class involves presentation and discussion of creative projects that will contain a range of materials, some of which may present difficulties for others in the class, students and groups are encouraged to use content or trigger warnings as part of their presentation as appropriate.

If you have a concern about any aspect of the class, you are encouraged to speak with the instructor. If you feel uncomfortable speaking with the instructor, you are also welcome to speak with the graduate advisor for the division, who can either discuss the issue with you directly or point you toward other on- and off-campus resources for addressing your concern.

### Course content by class meeting

Week 1: 8/28/19	Overview of the class – introduction to each other, discussion of course goals and themes: preparation, process, practice and partnership, assign collaboration partners for skill sharing assignment, intro to systems thinking, analysis of simple systems.
Assignments	Analysis Assignment 1: Written analysis of simple system – <b>due week 2</b> Collaboration Assignment: Choose someone from whom to learn a skill, someone to whom to teach a skill (presentation of skills is <b>due week 13</b> )
Readings due Week 2	GDW Chapters 1 – 3 SGD Chapter 1
Diversity Lab	Friday 8/30/19 2-4:50 PM, SCA 108

Week 2: 9/4/2019	Formal elements of interactive systems – discuss outcome of simple system analysis, deconstructing Set, Connect 4, Tic Tac Toe, looking at more complex interactive systems, discovering the “play” in a system, assign play groups for board game analysis.
Assignments	Due: Analysis Assignment 1: Written analysis of simple system Analysis Assignment 2: Board game analysis – <b>due week 3</b>
Readings due Week 3	GDW Chapters 4-6 SGD Chapter 2

Week 3: 9/11/2019	Experience goals and intentional design – discuss outcomes of board game analysis, dramatic and dynamic elements of games, intro to design techniques, in-class design exercise, assign design teams for Up the River variation assignment.
Assignments	Due: Analysis Assignment 2: Board game analysis

	Prototype #1: Up the River variation – <b>due week 4</b>
Readings due Week 4	GDW Chapter 7, 9 SDG Chapter 3-5

Week 4: 9/18/2019	Playtesting and the iterative process -- playtest & critiques of Up the River variations, guest critique.
Assignments	Playtesting analysis and next steps – <b>due week 5</b>
Readings due Week 5	DeKoven “The Well Played Game” Forward - Chapter 1 Rules of Play Ironclad essay Bogost “Persuasive Games” Sicart “Play Matters” Chapter 1 Optional reading: Norman, Emotional Design – Three Teapots

Week 5: 9/25/2019	Meaningful play – expressive elements of interactive systems, levels of engagement, situational game design, communicating ideas through play mechanics, groups and ideation for meaningful play prototype.
Assignments	Prototype #2: Meaningful play – <b>due week 7</b>
Readings due Week 6	New Games Book, “It Began with WWIV;” “Sustainable Play” in Games and Culture, Fullerton, Pearce, Fron and Morie
Diversity Lab	Friday 9/27/2019 2-4:50 PM, SCA 108

Week 6: 10/2/2019	Public play – pervasive games, “big” games, theater games, and improvisation exercises. (Guest lecturer: Sean Bouchard)
Readings due Week 7	GDW Chapters 10-11

Week 7: 10/9/2019	Playtest & critique meaningful play prototypes, guest critique.
Assignments	Playtesting analysis and next steps – <b>due week 8</b> Playtest Meaningful Play prototypes at IndieCade <b>Attend IndieCade!</b>
Readings due Week 8	GDW Chapters 12, 13

Week 8: 10/16/2019	Team building, planning, communication – discuss agile development, collaboration skills. In-class roleplaying exercises.
Assignments	<b>Mid-term conferences (by appointment)</b>
Readings due Week 9	Rules of Play Chapter 26 – Games as Narrative Play SGD Chapters 7-8

Week 9: 10/23/2019	Narrative play – systems of storytelling, “narrative toys”, recombinant narrative exercises, in-class brainstorming for narrative play prototypes, design groups assigned for prototypes.
Assignments	Prototype #3: Narrative play project 1st prototype – <b>due week 10</b>
Diversity Lab	Friday 10/25/2019 2-4:50 PM, SCA 108

Week 10: 10/30/2019	Playtest & critique of narrative prototypes, guest critique.
Assignments	Playtesting analysis and next steps – <b>due week 11</b>
Readings due Week 11	GDW Chapters 8, 14

Week 11: 11/6/2019	Iterating Designs, moving from paper to digital prototypes.
Assignments	Digital prototype design document – <b>due week 12</b>
Readings due Week 12	Moggridge Chapter 8 – Hiroshi Ishii interview, Bill Gaver interview Swink, Game Feel Chapter 1, “Defining Game Feel” and Chapter 6, “Input Metrics”

Week 12: 11/13/2019	Agency and affordance – designing for a range of player agency, affordances of platforms and controls, in-class play experiments with imagining unique play experiences, discussion of final project goals.
Assignments	Prototype #4: Digital prototype (co-assigned with 534) – <b>due week 15</b>
Readings due Week 13	GDW Chapters 15-16

Week 13: 11/20/2019	Working as a designer – discussion of areas of opportunity for designers, presentation of skill sharing assignment outcomes.
Diversity Lab	Friday 11/22/2019 2-4:50 PM, SCA 108
Week 14: 11/27/2019	University holiday – no classes

Week 15: 12/4/2019	Formal playtesting – usability process, playtest & critique of digital prototypes (534 final projects), discuss post-mortems. Class will be held in Game Innovation Lab SCI 301.
Assignments	Formal playtesting analysis and next steps with final prototype build– <b>due at final exam time</b>
Diversity Lab	Friday 12/6/2019 2-4:50 PM, SCA 108

Final Exam 12/18/19	<b>Due:</b> final prototype build, formal playtesting analysis with next steps, and semester post-mortems.
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## 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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. 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>.

### Support Systems:

*Student Counseling Services (SCS)* - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)* - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance* – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

*Student Support and Advocacy* – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

*Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

*USC Department of Public Safety* – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

### PLEASE NOTE:

**FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX**