



## **CSCI 599 - Mobile Social Games**

**Units: 4**

**Fall 2019—Monday 2-5:30PM**

**Location:** SCI 108

**Instructor: Scott Easley**

**Office:** EGG 207

**Office Hours:** TBD

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**TA: Harmeet Singh**

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### **Course Description**

This class is co-taught alongside CTIN 482. Students from CSCI 599 will team up with students in CTIN 482. We will also share lectures in most cases and have similar deliverables week to week. A few assignments for students enrolled in CSCI 599 will differ from those given in CTIN 482, and those differences will be clarified in class and in the assignment details.

Working in a professional studio-like atmosphere, students in CSCI 599 will learn the fundamentals of Product Management as it relates to game design and development, and develop a playable prototype for a social, free-to-play mobile game. In teams, students will take on the roles of Product Manager, Engineers, Producer, etc to learn both the basics of the roles as well as, critically, how they work together in a professional development studio setting. Students learn how to perform market analysis, create and present game pitches, and build a design document. The course culminates with a polished, portfolio-quality vertical slice and professional quality supporting documentation.

Our professional partner Zynga will provide key lectures and materials, giving students a chance to learn directly from a game studio and make networking connections.

### **Learning Objectives**

Students learn fundamentals of Product Management in social game design; basic technologies for mobile platforms, including working with various, commonly-used APIs; how to perform market research and analysis; how to present a polished pitch; how to create effective design and engineering documentation; how to work on a team with defined roles to collaborate on a project.

## Course Notes

This course will assign a letter grade.

Students will submit work via Google Drive, Blackboard, and by showing builds to instructors and peers in class.

Students will have access to an educational version of Sensor Tower. Students will work with other development and production tools, as discussed in class.

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Handouts, templates, games, and sample documents will be supplied by the instructors when assigned.

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

Students will create both interactive experiences and documentation. The interactive experiences will be either simple prototypes of core game mechanics or a more polished vertical slice. Assignments will be graded on effort, collaboration, execution as compared to goal, and overall quality.

Documentation may consist of: pitch presentations, design documents, technical specifications, playtesting logs, design journals, and other forms of documentation as assigned. Students will learn professional documentation and presentation techniques. Assignments will be graded on effort, collaboration, execution, and, where applicable, iterative improvement.

## Grading Breakdown

Assignment	% of Grade	Due
Weekly deliverables	50	Ongoing
Midterm prototype deliverables	15	Week 10
Final Deliverables	20	Week 15
Final Presentation	10	Ongoing
Participation	5	Ongoing
TOTAL	100	

## Assignment Submission Policy

Written assignments and prototypes are due at the beginning of class of the assigned week.

### 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.

Excused absences are:

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

## **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 may 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.

## **Creating an Inclusive 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 you will be expected to offer content warnings when appropriate, use students' stated 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 something problematic, avoid being defensive; this is a valuable opportunity for us to grow and learn together. If you have a concern about any aspect of the class, you are welcome to speak with the instructor or the advisor for the division.

## **Additional Policies**

This course emphasizes teamwork, and one of the desired learning outcomes is for students to develop communication and leadership skills. Students are expected to treat each other with respect, listen to each other, and work together towards a shared, collaborative, healthy work culture. Any student found to be disruptive or engaging in behavior that doesn't meet the standards of respectful teamwork may be asked to leave by the instructor.

If you experience any problems with a fellow student regarding their work, please bring up your concerns with the instructor.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

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

## **Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

**\*\*Subject to change\*\***

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1	Introduction to the Course and Goals. Intro to Social Games.	Research: play games in different genres, pay attention to core loops, game features, monetization strategies. Think about a game genre you're interested in exploring.	
Week 2	NO CLASS - Labor Day	Pick 2-3 games and play them daily for a week. Document their loops and core features. What makes them effective? What's the emotional investment?	
Week 3	Lecture: Dev Tools <b>Zynga Lecture: Consumer Insights, Deconstructs, User Empathy</b> Caucus: Form Teams!		<b>DUE: 2-3 games similar to what you want to work on. Short paragraph describing genre and core loop and primary features</b>
Week 4	Lecture: Greyboxing Intro to Analytics		<b>Due: weekly deliverable</b>
Week 5	<b>Zynga Lecture: Product Management and Organic Growth</b> Project Planning		<b>Due: weekly deliverable</b>
Week 6	<b>Zynga Lecture: Product Lifestyle, Live Products, and Development</b>		<b>Due: weekly deliverable</b>
Week 7	Core Loops and FTUE		<b>Due: weekly deliverable</b>
Week 8	Analytics		<b>Due: weekly deliverable</b>
Week 9	<b>Zynga Lecture: Product Design, Specs, Hypothesis-driven Testing</b>		<b>DUE: Plan for integrating analytics</b>
Week 10	Playtest prototypes, gather data	MIDTERM PROTOTYPE	<b>Due: Playable prototype</b>
Week 11	<b>Zynga Lecture: Communication and Product Toolkit</b>		<b>Due: weekly deliverable</b>
Week 12	Sprint 1		<b>Due: weekly deliverable</b>
Week 13	<b>Zynga Lecture: Thinking about Growth, User Acquisition</b>		<b>Due: weekly deliverable</b>

<b>Week 14</b>	Sprint 2		<b>Due: weekly deliverable</b>
<b>Week 15</b>	Final Project Presentations		<b>DUE: Final Presentation DUE: Final Documentation</b>

## 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/student/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>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office* <http://equity.usc.edu> and/or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://dps.usc.edu>. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

### 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://ali.usc.edu>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://dsp.usc.edu> provides 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.