



# BAEP 599 - Video Game Entrepreneurship

W - 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Units: 3

**Professor:** Dr. Anthony Borquez **Office:** Fertitta Hall (JFF 5<sup>th</sup> Floor)

**Phone:** (310) 309-0590 **Term:** Spring 2019

Office Hours: Wed 2:30 - 3:45 PM

or by appointment

Email: anthonyb@usc.edu

## **Course Description**

Video games have emerged as one of the most lucrative fields in entertainment. With global revenues approaching 120 Billion, the video game market has captured the attention of entrepreneurs from all over the world. New game genres spanning multiple platforms (mobile, console, pc, AR, VR, etc.) are providing opportunities for next generation game startups. This course aims to provide a core foundation of entrepreneurial principles focused on the video game industry and enable students to create new startups and/or video game IP.

## **Learning Objectives**

In this course, you will develop your conceptual and practical knowledge of creating new products, IP, or companies in the video game industry. When this course is over, you will be able to:

- 1. Understand the key components required to create a video game including development of a minimum viable product (MVP), rapid prototyping, and project management using SCRUM.
- 2. Evaluate the latest technology trends (i.e. game engines, consoles, mobile gaming, virtual reality, augmented reality, etc.) and how they influence entrepreneurship.
- 3. Develop a business model for video game products including a detailed P&L (profit and loss) statement.
- 4. Create a marketing strategy for attracting users to your game, including social media influencers. The marketing strategy will include a plan for User Acquisition.
- 5. Build a profit and loss (P&L) statement for a high-tech startup to support your business model assumptions.

To achieve these objectives, a combination of methods will be used in the course, including lectures, case studies, individual and team projects, student presentations, and guest speakers.

Although it is a technology class, you are **NOT** expected to be tech savvy with computer programming or other technical skill sets. Success in this course is based upon how you prepare for each lecture, how familiar you





become with the topics/principles presented in each class, participation, and quality (and timeliness) of your assignments.

## **Required Materials**

Course Textbook & Case Studies:

**Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon, Jonas Heide Smith and Susan Pajares Tosca.** *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.* New York: Routledge, 2016.

Schrier, Jason. Blood, Sweat and Pixels. New York: Harper, 2017.

*Groysberg, Boris and Michael Norris.* Riot Games: Can Culture Survive Growth? Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Review, 2015.

Rayport, Jeffrey, Davide Sola, Federica Gabrieli, and Elena Corsi. King Digital Entertainment. Cambridge, MA:Harvard Business Review, 2017.

#### **Course Notes**

#### Communication

Course communication will take place through announcements in class, emails, GroupMe mobile application, and Blackboard (http://blackboard.usc.edu/). Many of the emails sent by the instructor will go through Blackboard. As a result, it is imperative that you have a fully operational Blackboard account with an active USC email address.

#### **Posted Materials**

In several instances, class slides or other information will additionally be posted to Blackboard for reference. Often, these will not appear online until <u>after</u> the session in which the content within those materials is addressed. Posted slides contain only a subset of all course content. Students are responsible not only for this posted content, but also the additional content presented within all class lectures, discussions, and activities. Students are strongly encouraged to take independent notes for review.

## **Grading Policies**

To achieve an A or A- in this class, you will need to go well beyond the minimum requirements as stated in the syllabus in terms of the quality of your work and your involvement in and contribution to the class. Similarly, an A or A- on any assignment will reflect high quality work in excess of the minimum requirements addressed within associated assignment instructions. An A is a sign of superior work and, much like entrepreneurs' efforts, reflects the fact that you stood out from the crowd. All assignments will have complete instructions available in Blackboard and be discussed in class before they are due.

If you have any questions about your grade during the semester, please make an appointment to see me to discuss your concerns. Do not wait until the end of the semester to do so!

#### ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING DETAIL

There are six assignments that must be completed in this course. Detailed instructions for all of these will be distributed and discussed separately, with all deadlines listed in the class schedule at the end of the syllabus.





- Assignment 1: This individual assignment requires you to think about a trend or issue in the video game industry and write a blog post (i.e. something you would publish on a platform like Medium). The writeup will include your industry trend/topic, your hypothesis or position, and lastly supporting documentation.
- Assignment #2: This individual assignment will require you to pitch an idea for a video game. This must be an original idea and you will create a high concept pitch deck included with your writeup. A SWOT analysis will also be required.
- Assignment #3: This individual assignment focuses on Agile Methodologies and understanding how to manage a video game tech team. This assignment will accompany the in-class exercise on SCRUM.
- **Assignment #4**: This individual assignment will focus on eSports and understanding how eSports can impact a game company, intellectual property, and brand management through an industry case study.
- **Assignment #5:** This individual assignment will be focused on the Riot Games Harvard Case Study and require students to answer questions related to the growth strategy of the company.
- Midterm Project: The midterm will have an individual assessment and reflection requirement, as well as a group project. The midterm requires all the knowledge and skills you have developed leading up to this point in the semester. In addition to the previous requirements from Assignment #2, the midterm will also require a detailed business model, comprehensive game design document, team overview, and reflection on King Digital Entertainment case study, field trip experience, and customer discovery analysis.
- **Final Presentations & Deck:** The final presentation and deck is the conclusive, polished materials that will be representative of your final project. These materials will have gone through several iterations to make the deck and presentation presentable for venture funding consideration.
- **Final Project**: The final group project is a culmination of everything learned in class throughout the semester. In addition to all the requirements from Assignment #2 and the Midterm, students will also be required to create a marketing video of the game, a detailed profit and loss (P&L statement), and a concise digital marketing and user acquisition strategy. The individual component of the final project will be a paper reflecting on the entire semester including lectures, field trips assignments, and in-class discussions.

#### **Assignments**

Your final grade is based on an evaluation of the following activities:

Due	Assignment	Points	% of Grade
	Participation	50	8%
Week 3	Assignment #1	25	4%
Week 4	Assignment #2	50	8%
Week 6	Assignment #3	25	4%
Week 8	Midterm Group Project	150	24%
Week 11	Assignment #4	25	4%
Week 13	Assignment #5	25	4%
Week 15	Final Project Presentations	25	4%
Finals Week	Final Project	250	40%
	TOTAL FOR CLASS	625	100%

#### **Assignment Submission & Late Policy**

All PROJECTS and Due Dates are presented in the Class Schedule.





The following deductions apply for late submission of the course work:

Submission between the beginning & end of class:

Submission between the end of class and 48 hours of the date due:

Submission between 48 hours and 7 days after the date due:

Submission 7 days after date due:

Submission 7 days after date due:

NO SCORE

If you must be absent for a class meeting, make sure you have submitted your assignment according to the assignment guidelines in order to be considered on time.

#### **Evaluation of Your Work**

## Papers, Videos, Slides, and Other Submissions

You may regard each of your submissions as an "exam" in which you apply what you've learned according to the assignment. I will do my best to make my expectations for the various assignments clear and to evaluate them as fairly and objectively as I can. If you feel that an error has occurred in the grading of any assignment, you may, within one week of the date the assignment is returned to you, write me a memo in which you request that I re-evaluate the assignment. Attach the original assignment to the memo, in which you explain fully and carefully why you think the assignment should be re-graded. Be aware that the re-evaluation process can result in three types of grade adjustments: positive, none, or negative. (Note: Complaints on the date of a graded assignment's return to you will not be addressed.)

## **Participation**

The Entrepreneur Program is a real-life experience and as such expects you to be real world professionals. The class is treated as a business meeting. The motto is "treat each other as you would a customer." Therefore, tardiness and absences without notice are not acceptable. If you have a customer meeting, you will be on time. If you cannot be on time, you will call well in advance. Similar etiquette is required in this program.

Your responsibilities for all classes are to:

- 1. Attend the class promptly
- 2. Complete all assigned projects
- 3. Participate actively with teams and in classroom discussions

Scores for individual student contributions to team projects are assigned by me, based on my observations of the team's working dynamics, my assessment of the team's project quality, and thoughtful consideration of the information provided through your peer evaluations. Students that meet the participation responsibilities will receive 50 points. Those that partially meet this requirement will receive 40 points, and students with minimal participation will receive 25. Students who do not participate at all will receive 0 points.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

## Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies Confidentiality Policy

Throughout the Entrepreneur Program's classes and events, students will be exposed to proprietary information from other students, guest lecturers, and faculty. It is the policy of the Entrepreneur Program that all such information is to be treated as confidential.

By enrolling in and taking part in the Entrepreneur Program's classes and activities, students agree not to disclose this information to any third parties without specific written permission from students, guest lecturers, or faculty,





as applicable. Students further agree not to utilize any such proprietary information for their own personal commercial advantage or for the commercial advantage of any third party.

In addition, students agree that any legal or consulting advice provided without direct fee and in an academic setting will not be relied upon without the enlisted opinion of an outside attorney or consultant without affiliation to the Program.

Any breach of this policy may subject a student to academic integrity proceedings as described in the University of Southern California University Governance Policies and procedures as outlined in *SCampus* and to any remedies that may be available at law.

The Entrepreneur program, the Marshall School of Business, and the University of Southern California disclaim any responsibility for the protection of intellectual property of students, guest lecturers or faculty who are involved in Entrepreneur Program classes or events. Receipt of this policy and registration in our classes are evidence that you understand this policy and will abide by it.

## Add/Drop Process

Most Marshall classes are open enrollment (R-clearance) through the Add deadline. If there is an open seat, students can add the class using Web Registration. If the class is full students should sign up on the waiting list as instructed at the top of the BAEP page in the *Schedule of Classes*. Students who do not attend the first two class sessions (for classes that meet twice per week) or the first-class meeting (for classes that meet once per week) may be dropped from the course if they do not notify the instructor prior to their absence.

#### Retention of Graded Coursework

Final exams and all other graded work which affected the course grade will be retained for one year after the end of the course **if** the graded work has not been returned to the student. If I returned a graded paper to you, it is your responsibility to file it.

#### **Technology Policy**

Laptop and Internet usage is not permitted during academic or professional sessions unless otherwise stated by the respective professor and/or staff. Use of other personal communication devices, such as cell phones, is considered unprofessional and is not permitted during academic or professional sessions. ANY e-devices (cell phones, iPads, other texting devices, laptops, I-pods) must be completely turned off during class time. Upon request, you must comply and put your device on the table in off mode and FACE DOWN. You might also be asked to deposit your devices in a designated area in the classroom. Videotaping faculty lectures is not permitted due to copyright infringement regulations. Audiotaping may be permitted if approved by the professor. Use of any recorded or distributed material is reserved exclusively for the USC students registered in this class.

#### **Field Trip**

In this course, there are two planned field trips to video game companies in the Los Angeles area. The purpose of the field trips is to expose students to the culture & environment of a game company, network with industry professionals, and apply the knowledge learned in class to a commercial setting. Students will depart from USC at the scheduled start time of the class and arrive back at USC before the end of the scheduled lecture period. Students will be required to make their own travel arrangements and meet at the site. Students will be required to fill out a 'Student Self-Transportation Waiver' form that can be downloaded from the following USC Website: <a href="http://adminopsnet.usc.edu/sites/default/files/all\_departments/Risk/USCFIELDTRIPGUIDELINES.pdf">http://adminopsnet.usc.edu/sites/default/files/all\_departments/Risk/USCFIELDTRIPGUIDELINES.pdf</a>. The Instructor will collect the completed waiver forms prior to students departing campus





## **USC Statements on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

#### **Academic Conduct**

Students are expected to make themselves aware of and abide by the University community's standards of behavior as articulated in the <u>Student Conduct Code</u>. 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" <u>policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b</u>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct at <a href="http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct">http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct</a>.

## **Support Systems**

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours -24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298 equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298





#### usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776 dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call* <u>dps.usc.edu</u>, <u>emergency.usc.edu</u>

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

## **Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, the *USC Emergency Information* web site (<a href="http://emergency.usc.edu/">http://emergency.usc.edu/</a>) will provide safety and other information, including electronic means by which instructors will conduct class using a combination of USC's Blackboard learning management system (blackboard.usc.edu), teleconferencing, and other technologies.





# **Course Calendar**

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Week 1	Lecture: Introduction and Course Overview
1/15/20	Syllabus & Blackboard
	Instructor Background
	Course Goals
	<ul> <li>Overview of Assignment #1</li> </ul>
	State of the Video Game Industry
	Assignment: no assignment first week
	Reading: no reading first week
Week 2	Lecture: History of Games / Game Genres
1/22/20	History of Games
	Eras of video games
	Deconstruction of iconic games
	What we have learned from the past
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	Game Genres
	<ul> <li>RPGs, FPS, RTS, Action, Sports, MMOs, Simulation</li> </ul>
	In-class exercise on Game Genres
	Emerging genres
	Assignment #1 Overview
	Reading: Understanding Video Games, Chapters 1, 4
Week 3	Lecture: How to Run a Tech Team / Project
1/29/20	Video Game Production Process
	Production Process for Games
	<ul> <li>High Concept Pitch, Pre-Production, Prototype, Alpha, Beta, Launch</li> </ul>
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	Overview of Agile Development for Games
	SCRUM and Agile Methodologies
	Why projects typically fail in the game industry
	Overview of Trello and sample game boards
	Working with tech teams & team dynamics
	In-Class Lego Exercise Building a City
	Guest Lecturers: Hans Vancol (EVP Production), Harold Vancol (Creative Director)





	Assignment #1 Due Reading: Understanding Video Games, Chapters 2, 3
Week 4 2/05/19	Lecture: Student Presentations Assignment #2 Presentations
	<ul> <li>Project pitches</li> <li>In-class assessment / Feedback forms</li> </ul> Assignment #2 due
	Reading: Understanding Video Games, Chapters 5
Week 5 2/12/20	Lecture: Presentations and Video Game Platforms
, ,	Continue Assignment 2 Presentations
	<ul> <li>Deep Dive into Video Game Platforms</li> <li>Consoles: Switch, PS4, Xbox1</li> <li>Mobile: iOS/Android</li> <li>Game-Design Considerations</li> <li>Development Considerations</li> </ul>
	Guest Lecturer: TBD
	Reading: Understanding Video Games, Chapters 6, 7
Week 6 2/19/20	Lecture: Virtual Reality Games  Demonstrations Trello Marvel  Virtual Reality Games and Opportunities  What is virtual reality? Overview of the technology Who are the major players? Vive, Facebook/Oculus, PSVR, Daydream, GearVR Case Studies: Arizona Sunshine, Knockout League, Tiltbrush Production schedules for VR game development  Approaching Emerging platforms
	Assignment #3 due Reading: Understanding Video Games, Chapters 8
Week 7 2/26/20	Lecture: Field Trip TBD





	<ul> <li>Call of Duty History</li> <li>COD Game Design</li> <li>Production</li> <li>Monetization         <ul> <li>Free-to-play Considerations</li> <li>DLC</li> </ul> </li> <li>Development strategies</li> </ul> Assignment: Work on Midterm Project Reading: Understanding Video Games, Chapters 9
Week 8 3/04/20	Lecture: eSports  Guest Speaker: TBD  History of eSports
	<ul> <li>Evolution of eSports</li> <li>Overview of ecosystem</li> <li>Top Teams and Games</li> <li>eSports Trends</li> <li>Franchising with League of Legends and Overwatch</li> <li>Opportunities for entrepreneurs in the eSports industry</li> <li>Midterm Projects Due</li> <li>Reading: Blood, Sweat, and Pixels, Chapters 1-2;</li> </ul>
Week 9 3/11/20	Lecture: Video Game Analytics  Business Model Canvas  9 Building Blocks of a Business Model  Identifying key metrics for your games  Big Data terms every entrepreneur and game developer should be familiar with  Web vs. Mobile Analytics  Overview of the major analytic players:  Google Analytics / Omniture  Flurry / MixPanel / Localytics  How to integrate the correct analytics into your product  Assignment: Work on Midterm Projects  Reading: Business Model Canvas Chapter on Blackboard; Blood, Sweat, and Pixels, Ch 3,4
3/18/20	Spring Break





Lecture: Video Games & Marketing
Guest Speaker: TBD
Distribution Platforms
<ul> <li>Pros and Cons of the various platforms:         <ul> <li>Steam, Discord, Battle.net, Epic Games</li> <li>PSVR, Xbox, Nintendo Store</li> <li>iOS/Android</li> </ul> </li> <li>Managing the distribution platforms and understanding the ecosystem</li> <li>Assets and requirements for distributing your game</li> <li>Case Study: recent launch from Indie game studio</li> </ul> <li>Reading: Blood, Sweat, and Pixels, Chapters 5</li>
Lecture: Blockgaming - Genre Overview
<ul> <li>Genre Characteristics</li> <li>Gameplay demos</li> <li>Platform considerations</li> <li>Streaming and viewing opportunities</li> <li>Premium and IAP structures</li> <li>Opportunities for entrepreneurs in the Blockgaming genre</li> </ul>
Assignment 4 due Reading: Blood, Sweat, and Pixels, Chapters 6,7
Lecture: Video Game Technology  Guest Speaker: TBD
Understanding Technology used for creating games
<ul> <li>Popular video game engines         <ul> <li>Unity</li> <li>Unreal</li> </ul> </li> <li>3D Art &amp; Animation Tools</li> <li>Overview of Artificial Intelligence in Games</li> <li>Physics engines</li> <li>Overview of technology due diligence document</li> </ul>
Reading: Blood, Sweat, and Pixels, Chapters 8
Lecture: Field Trip Field Trip
Assignment #5 Due Reading: Blood, Sweat, and Pixels, Chapters 9
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Week 14	Lecture: Profit and Loss Statements / Business Modeling
4/22/20	Creating a realistic business model for your game
	<ul> <li>Costs &amp; Revenue drivers         <ul> <li>Platform fees (console, mobile, etc.)</li> <li>Rev share splits</li> <li>Licensing ranges</li> </ul> </li> <li>Understanding growth variables</li> <li>Understanding User Metrics and growth components</li> <li>Integrating marketing expenses</li> <li>Churn metrics vs. Virality</li> <li>Reading: Blood, Sweat, and Pixels, Chapters 10</li> </ul>
Week 15 4/29/20	FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS
Final Exam Schedule <b>Wed</b>	Lecture: Course Wrap-up
5/6/2020	Review from the semester
	<ul> <li>Importance of the high concept pitch</li> <li>Working with Agile Methodologies</li> <li>Best practices for Game Production</li> <li>Emerging platforms</li> <li>Digital Marketing Strategies</li> <li>eSportsLessons Learned from Field Trips (discussion)</li> <li>Instructor insights on 'Where to go from here'</li> </ul> FINAL PROJECTS DUE





# **APPENDIX**

# MARSHALL GRADUATE PROGRAMS LEARNING GOALS

# **How BAEP 599 Contributes to Marshall Graduate Program Learning Goals**

Our graduates will be impactful leaders who lead with integrity and purpose.  1.1 Possess a clear framework and commitment to an organization's culture and core values, with personal integrity.  1.2 Transcend traditional boundaries with a global mindset, drawing value from diversity and inclusion, and fostering community within and outside of organizations.  1.3 Exhibit exceptional self-awareness through understanding of personal and career goals; awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses; and engagement in personalized, goal-driven, and lifelong learning.  Learning Goal #2:  Our graduates will be impactful leaders who help identify and execute opportunities in uncertain and complex business environments.  2.1 Gain knowledge of the key functions of business enterprises.  3 1,3  2.2 Acquire advanced skills to understand and analyze significant business opportunities, which can be complex, uncertain and dynamic.  3 2,3  2.3 Use critical and analytical thinking to identify viable options that can create short-term and long-term value for organizations and their stakeholders.  Learning Goal #3:  Our graduates will be impactful leaders who achieve results by fostering collaboration on interpersonal, team, and organization levels.  3. 1 Influence and motivate and work with colleagues, partners, and other stakeholders to achieve organizational purposes		Degree of Emphasis (1=Low,	BAEP 599 Objectives
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	to achieve organizational purposes	3	4
3.2 Help build and sustain nign-performing teams by infusing teams with a variety of	3.2 Help build and sustain high-performing teams by infusing teams with a variety of		
	perspectives, talents, and skills and aligning individual success with team success and	3	1
	with overall organizational success		
3.3 Lead and participate in helping organizations adapt to a changing business landscape. 3 2	3.3 Lead and participate in helping organizations adapt to a changing business landscape.	3	2