Interactive Design and Production 1

USC School of Cinematic Arts, CTIN 532
A USC Games Course

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Course Description: This is a follow-up to a handful of game design and development courses that introduces students to more advanced concepts in game design and development such as concept ideation, digital prototyping, interface design, usability testing, communication, collaborative teamwork, project scoping and management. The main emphasis of the class is on the conceptualization of innovative design goals and the execution of those goals in the form of a complete, polished intermediate game project.

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

Concerning your teammate, you are encouraged to look outside of existing friendships to find teammates whose skills counterbalance your own: i.e. programmers should seek out artists and vice versa.

Throughout this class, you are encouraged to take risks and to look beyond the examples of existing video game genres to try new and different design ideas. At the same time, you are also expected to fully complete an innovative small game, and so must take into account the timeline of the course and the resources available to you to complete the project.

You are encouraged to enlist the help of outside musicians, sound designers and/or voice-over actors. In addition, you may work with outside artists to add animation and visual style to your project. However, you and your teammate must do all of the game design and programming for your projects. And so, you must fairly credit all contributors to your project.

Meeting Information:
SCI L114
M/Th 10am to 12:20 pm
Units: 4

Grading and Due Dates:

Class Participation - 15%
Early Prototypes (combined) - 15%
Preproduction deliverables - 10%
Alpha milestone - 15%
Formal playtests - 10%
Beta milestone - 15%
Release Candidate milestone - 10%
Trailer - 10%

Course content (summarized by class meeting)

Wk	Monday	Thursday
1	August 23 Course Overview, Expectations & Schedule Self Introduction Presentations Why Are We Here?	August 26 What is Ideation? Your Skills and Interests Perforce and Unity Design Challenge
2	August 30 Perforce and Unity Prototype 1 Due	September 2 Reading Due (See Assignments) Brainstorming
3	September 6 HOLIDAY	September 9 Prototype 2 Due Reading Due (See Assignments) Project Statement Due
4	September 13 Prototype 2 Due	September 16 Lecture: Pre-production, Full Production, Alpha, Beta and Release Candidate

5	September 20 Vertical Slice Progress Due	September 23 Lecture: The Game Macro
6	September 27 Vertical Slice Progress Due Guest Lecture: Berklee professor, Gina Zdanowicz (10am)	September 30 Reading Due (See Assignments) Macro Due Sell Sheets Due Lecture: The Burndown Chart.
7	October 4 FULL PRODUCTION BEGINS Burndown Chart Due Review Vertical Slices.	October 7 Review Vertical Slices. Reading Due (See Assignments)
8	October 11 25% to Alpha Individual meetings. Revisit image boards. Individual meetings. Revisit image boards. Berklee Update due	October 14 HOLIDAY

9	October 18 50% to Alpha	October 21 Lecture: the QA process In class peer playtest. Reading Due (See Assignments)
10	October 25 75% to Alpha	October 28 Individual meetings Berklee Update 2 due
11	November 1 ALPHA BUILD DEADLINE Playtest 1 Questionnaire and Interview Questions Due Playtest 1	November 4 Brain Trust Berklee Update 2 Playtest Questionnaire Results Due
12	November 8 50% to Beta	November 11 Workshop
13	November 15 BETA BUILD DEADLINE Playtest 2 Questionnaire and Interview Questions Due Playtest 2	November 18 Brain Trust
14	November 22 50% to Release Candidate Playtest 2 Data and Metrics Due Trailer rough cut presented to class.	November 25 HOLIDAY
15	November 29	December 2

	RELEASE CANDIDATE DEADLINE Game, and deliverables due.	Project "Postpartum" and class wrap-up Final Trailer Due
Wk	**Monday**	**Thursday**

More on the Assignments

Game Macro and Burn Down Chart: An important aspect of this class is the opportunity to scope and manage a project from start to finish. This class uses the "Game Macro" approach suggested by Mark Cerny and Michael John's "Method" to provide a plan that is concrete enough to permit the creation of a schedule (in the form of an Agile Development-style "burn down chart"), but abstract enough to be modifiable as game design discoveries are made during development. The Game Macro and Burn Down Chart will be updated as the project progresses, to adapt to any opportunistic changes made to the game design, and to the team's evolving understanding of how long it takes to implement features and create assets.

Playtesting Assignments: Students will conduct two sets of formal playtests over the course of the semester – although you are encouraged to playtest informally as well. Prior to each test, teams will prepare a questionnaire and an exit interview. The playtests will be conducted during class and a follow-up report is due the next week.

Reviews & Critiques: In addition to formal testing, projects will also undergo extensive peer review and critique during the class sessions. Students are expected to participate actively in both the giving and receiving of feedback as a crucial part of the design process. These reviews will cover both creative and technical aspects of the project.

Final Project: Students are expected to complete their game projects by the end of the semester. All interface art, characters, environments, levels, etc. must be integrated into the students' projects in order to fully flesh out the player experience. Concept art that has not been integrated into the final build will not be considered as part of the project grade. As such, it is very important that the initial design process consider the scope of the project envisioned and the resources available. The game project is expected to go through each of the production milestones listed on the schedule, including: pre-production, concept ideation, prototyping, approval for final project, playtesting, Alpha milestone review, Beta milestone review, usability testing, and a final "Release Candidate" build. Projects that do not go through these milestones within the class sessions will not be considered for submission of the Final Project.

Missing an Assignment Deadline, Incompletes:

The only acceptable excuses for missing an assignment deadline or taking an incomplete 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.

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)

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 Safe 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. 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 either the undergraduate or graduate advisor for the division, who can discuss the issue with you directly or point you toward other on- and off-campus resources for addressing your concern.

Fair Use

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. The Interactive Media & Games Division of USC's School of the Cinematic Arts seeks to apply a reasonable working definition of fair use that will enable students and instructors to develop multimedia projects without seeking authorization for non-commercial, educational uses. In keeping with section 107 of the Copyright Act we recognize four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

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, up to and including expulsion from the program and the university. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* 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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

You are welcome to make use of code libraries, Unity extensions, and the like, as appropriate to your project. However the substance of the project must be your work, and you must document the sources (links to the original work) in a text file submitted with your project. If you are not sure whether you need to document something, document it. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, it is your responsibility to ask the instructors for clarification.

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* equity.usc.edu or to the *Department of Public Safety* dps.usc.edu/contact/report. 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. *Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (*RSVP, formerly known as the Center for Women and Men*)* engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp provides 24/7 confidential support, and the *Sexual Assault Resource Center* 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* dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* 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 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.