CSCI 526 - Mobile Social Games
Units: 4
Fall 2021—*Monday 2 - 5:20 PM*

Location: Zoom room on Blackboard

Instructor: Scott Easley
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Course Description

This class is taught along with the occasional involvement of CTIN 482. Students from CSCI 526 will team up with each other and create games that will be judged for analytics and statistics by students in CTIN 482. We will share lectures in some cases and have deliverables week to week. Students from CTIN 482 will be Product Managers for each project in CSCI 526 although the product will be the only item between the two teams, mirroring more the real world of production. We will have three visits to CTAN 482 throughout the duration of class.

Working in a professional studio-like atmosphere, students in CSCI 526 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 Designers, Engineers, Producers, etc to learn both the basics of the roles as well as how they work together in a professional development studio setting. By having CTIN 482 as a Product Manager class, CSCI 526 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 game veteran instructor will provide key lectures and materials, giving students a chance to learn directly from game studio techniques and make networking connections.

Learning Objectives
Students learn fundamentals of core loops and design in social games; 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
Prototype deliverables	20	Week 6
Midterm deliverables	20	Week 9
Final Deliverables	20	Week 15
Final Presentation	25	Ongoing
Participation	15	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 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 Aug 23	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. What makes them effective? What's the emotional investment?	**Homework**: Form Teams, name team, choose Captain, fill in roster on schedule page Pick 2-3 games and play them daily for a week. Team document genres and primary features of chosen games
Week 2 Aug 30	**Lecture:** Dev Tools	Divide teams into design and coding implementation.	**Due:** Team chooses game idea, make one-paragraph GDD post link on main page. In it cite genres and primary features of chosen games as inspiration.
Week 3 Sep 6	**No Lecture:** **Labor day**		
Week 4 Sep 13	**Lecture:** Game Dev Engines	Unity Tutorials	**Due: Join Discord server**
Week 5 Sep 20	**Lecture**: Greyboxing	Start planning schedule to complete greybox prototype by Week 6 *Field trip #1 - CTIN 482 students to go over the prototypes. PM's will meet the teams to understand the game*	**Due:** All teams using version control.
Week 6 Sep 27	**Lecture:** Core Loops		**Due:** Greybox Prototype is ready in following week
Week 7 Oct 4	**Lecture:** What is a PM?	Teams begin to plan for dashboard and analytics into their game. *Field trip #2 - CTIN 482 to review open GL prototype and discuss the reason for tracking data. Make a list of 3 things to track.*	**Due:** Greybox Prototype published on WebGL, link on team page.(WebGL builds should be ready for CTIN 482)

Week 8 Oct 11	**Lecture**: Dashboards and Slow-Growth Success	*Field Trip #3 -CTIN 482 PM students will visit teams for a list of things to track, along with reasons WHY (e.g. track number of levels completed, because we think level 2 might be challenging, etc.). By the end of this meeting there should be a list of 10 things.*	**Due:** **CSCI 526** students receive **CTIN 482 PM** students list of tracking suggestions
Week 9 Oct 18	**Lecture:** Intro to Analytics	*Field trip #4 -Dashboard coding into game, connect and communicate with assigned PMs from **CTIN 482 PM**. Students will present their initial dashboards to the PM's (Dashboards should be ready)*	**Due:** Schedule implementing tracking suggestions. Dashboards should be ready.
Week 10 Oct 25	**No lecture - MIDTERM**	**MIDTERM (PROTOTYPE)** 526 students present (in teams) their games with dashboards, showing the collected. Everyone plays everyone else's games in their team breakout rooms, alongside their corresponding PM team.	**MIDTERM (PROTOTYPE)** 526 students present (in teams) their dashboards, showing the data they will be collecting from midterm. They will do this in breakout rooms, each prototype team with the corresponding PM team.
Week 11 Nov 1	**Lecture:** UI and UX	Teams share data from dashboards with PMs *Field trip #5 -Review of the data and discussion on how design may be impacted by the data.*	**Due:** Teams meet and discuss **CTIN 482** feedback and changes to game for final.
Week 12 Nov 8	**Lecture**: Mobile Game Art	Students will receive feedback from **CTIN 482 PMs** detailing what was learned from the data, why data is in current numbers, possible changes based on the data – and its determinant of game's core solidity	**Due:** Final conversations with PMs on evolution of game with analytics – suggestions for future

Week 13 Nov 15	Lecture: Retention, Reward, and User Acquisition	*Field Trip #7 - CTIN 482 will hear feed-back from CSCI 526 teams as to whether they made changes or not, and if so, were the changes successful, and if not, why not. CSCI 526 students to deliver a short paper by end of week(Friday)* *1.changes they plan to make,* *2.changes they would make if they had time* *3.changes they don't agree with*	
Week 14 Nov 22	Lab: Finish your game!		Due: Scheduled plan for changes/fixes/updates for final presentation
Week 15 Nov 29	Final Project Presentations		DUE: Final Presentation Final Publication Final Documentation

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 ac-commodations. 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 in-struction 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 resolu-tion 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.