



The Business and Management of Games
USC School of Cinematic Arts

CTIN 458 Instructor: Robert Nashak

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Course Description:

The course will be in person. It provides students with a deep understanding of the current worldwide marketplace for digital entertainment and games. The world's 2.7 billion gamers spent nearly \$160 billion on games in 2020. Anyone preparing for a career in games or entertainment will benefit from developing a deep understanding of an industry that is revolutionizing how interactive entertainment is produced, funded and distributed. The course covers marketplace dynamics across all gaming platforms including console and PC games, social gaming, smart phone and tablet games, virtual reality, augmented reality, Esports, MMOs and more. With a focus on entrepreneurialism, we'll cover a wide range of business, management and legal issues, including an overview of current business models in games and interactive media, methods for pitching and getting products funded, legal issues pertaining to copyright and intellectual property, product development methodologies, indie games and game publishers, as well as business start-up nuts and bolts for aspiring entrepreneurs. No prior knowledge of the games industry is required.

The course will consist of lectures, discussions and hands-on exercises that will prepare students to pitch creative, innovative ideas for today's ever-changing games market.

You will be required to come up with an original game, product or service based on current marketplace trends. By the end of the semester, you will create a world-class funding presentation to pitch your original product or service.

Guest speakers will illuminate aspects of the industry from a first-hand perspective.

Meeting Information:

Lecture, Participation and Discussion: 3 hours

Evaluation of student performance:

The course will have ongoing in-class assignments, and one final project that will start mid-term and continue to the end of the semester. Students will be graded based on creativity and ability to apply class teachings. Students are also graded for the quality of their final presentation.

Graded Assignments:

- 1) Half-way through the semester, students will submit the first half of their final project presentation.
- 2) Final Presentation: in-class pitch followed by final presentation submission on the day of the class's final exam.

Grade value will be apportioned as follows:

Participation	20
Mid-Term Project	30
Final Verbal Pitch Presentation	10
Final Project Pitch Deck	40
Total:	100

Course content:

Week 1: Introduction to the Class

Lecture/discussion: Syllabus Overview and intro to course

Week 2: Games Market Overview – Platforms and Pricing Models

Lecture/discussion: Overview of the games market across all key platforms including console, PC/Mac, mobile/tablet, VR, AR, MMO, etc., with a focus on pricing models including free-to-play, premium pricing, subscriptions, in-app

purchases, etc.

Week 3: Games Market Overview – Key Worldwide Territories

Lecture/discussion: Overview of the games market across all key territories including, NA, EMEA, APAC, etc. with a focus on North America, Europe, South Korea, Japan and China.

Week 4: Creative Game Development

Student Game Presentations and Lecture/discussion: Overview of what makes for great game design in today's changing marketplace with a focus on designing for audience acquisition and monetization, how hits are made and how hits become genres, franchise management, brand management, etc.

Week 5: Sizing the Market

Lecture/discussion: How to analyze market opportunities across the games space, how to size the market opportunity for your product or service, understanding TAM, customer demographic and psychographic profiles, competitive analysis, etc.

Week 6: History of Video Games & Digital Media Trends

Lecture/discussion: Overview of the history of games, key technology trends from cloud gaming to big data, regional differences, including the Asia gaming market

Week 7: Multi-platform Entertainment

Lecture/discussion: Cross-platform IP development, franchise and entertainment IP, the role of original IP, transmedia, gamification/gamified systems.

Week 8: How Game Publishers Work

Lecture/discussion: Overview of major WW game publishers across PC, Console, and Mobile and how to pitch to them, including a deep dive into how they work: greenlight processes, key stakeholders and decision making, portfolio management, external vs. internal development, localization, etc.

Week 9: Indie Gaming: How to Start and Run a Games Business

Lecture/discussion: Overview of running games businesses, including fund-raising (angel, VC, strategic, crowd-funding, etc.), team development and talent management, marketing and distribution.

Week 10: Marketing and Business Plan Essentials

Lecture/discussion: Audience acquisition strategies across all platforms, business plan essentials, sources of funding, product development planning, marketing/PR, including paid, owned and earned media, Opportunity/Mission/Vision.

Week 11: P&Ls, Making your Business Case, IP ownership, Contracts

Lecture/discussion: P&Ls and P&L management, licensing, contracts, and IP ownership

Week 12: Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality/Mixed Reality Deep Dive

Lecture/discussion: Deep dive into current market for VR/AR/MR and why growth has not met expectations.

Week 13: Product Development

Lecture/discussion: How games are developed across all platforms, product development methodologies including Agile development, team resourcing, ramping up and ramping down teams, Quality Assurance, Multi-player and backend development, Cloud-based services, product timelines, submissions requirements across console and PC distribution, etc.

Week 14: Pitch Presentations

Students present project pitches

Week 15: Pitch Presentations

Students present project pitches

Suggested Readings:

The Art of Interactive Design, Chris Crawford

The Playful World: How Technology is Transforming Our Imagination, Mark Pesce

Playing For Profit: How Digital Entertainment Is Making Big Business Out of Child's Play, Alice LaPlante/Rich Seidner

Trigger Happy: Games and the Entertainment Revolution, Steven Poole

Interactive Design for New Media and the Web, Nicholas V. Iuppa

Writing for Interactive Media: The Complete Guide, Jon Samsel/Darryl Wimberley

Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment, Carolyn Handler Miller

Game Architecture and Design: A New Edition, Andrew Rollings

Ultimate Game Design: Building Game Worlds, Tom Meigs

Creation Emotion in Games: The Craft and Art of Emotioneering, David Freeman

Developing Online Games: An Insider's Guide, Jessica Mulligan/Bridgette Patrovsky

Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams on Game Design, Andrew Rollings/Ernest Adams

Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created An Empire and Transformed Pop Culture, David Kushner

Break Into the Game Industry: How to Get a Job Making Video Games, Ernest Adams

Game Over: Press Start to Continue, David Sheff

The Ultimate History of Video Games: From Pong to Pokemon – The Story Behind the Craze that Touched Our Lives and Changed the World, Steven L. Kent

High Score: The Illustrated History of Electronic Games, Rusel DeMaria/Johnny L. Wilson

The Visual Story: Seeing the Structure in Film, TV, and New Media, Bruce A. Block

Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment, Carolyn Handler Miller

Pause and Effect: The Art of Interactive Narrative, Mark Stephen Meadows

Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals, Katie Salen/Eric Zimmerman,

Interactive Television Demystified, Jerry C. Whitaker

Bamboozled at the Revolution: How Big Media Lost Billions in the Battle for the Internet, John Motavalli

The Medium of the Video Game, Mark J.P. Wolf/Ralph H. Baer

The First Quarter: A 25-year History of Video Games, Steven L. Kent

Game Development and Production, Erik Bethke

Game Design Workshop, Tracy Fullerton/Christopher Swain/Steven Hoffman

Missing an Assignment, Incompletes:

The only acceptable excuses for missing an assignment or taking an incomplete in the course are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform the instructor before the assignment is due and present verifiable evidence in order for a make-up to be scheduled. Students who wish to take incompletes must also present documentation of the problem to the instructor before final grades are due.

Note for students with disabilities:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to us as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open 8:30am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Academic Integrity:

The School of Cinema-Television expects the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical performance from USC students. It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one instructor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade and be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. If you have any doubts or questions about these policies, consult "SCAMPUS" and/or confer with the instructor.

Harassment, sexual misconduct, interpersonal violence, and stalking are not tolerated by the university. All faculty and most staff are considered Responsible Employees by the university and must forward all information they receive about these types of situations to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for assisting students with supportive accommodations, including academic accommodations, as well as investigating these incidents if the reporting student wants an investigation. The Title IX office is also responsible for coordinating supportive measures for transgender and nonbinary students such as faculty notifications, and more. If you need supportive accommodations you may contact the Title IX Coordinator directly (titleix@usc.edu or 213-821-8298) without sharing any personal information with me. If you would like to speak with a confidential counselor, Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) provides 24/7 confidential support for students (213-740-9355 (WELL); press 0 after hours).