



CTIN 592: Game Development Capstone

Units: 4

Section: 18440D

Spring 2023 — W 9:00AM - 12:50PM (PST)

Location: SCI L114

Instructor: Sean Bouchard

Office: SCI 303 / Virtual

Office Hours: Th 12:00-2:00 or by appointment

Contact Info: bouchard@usc.edu

IT Help: Creative Tech

Contact Info: creativetech@cinema.usc.edu

Course Description

Throughout your career as a student in game development, you have created a variety of games in other courses, for game jams, and as personal projects. Most of these projects are taken from ideation, through pre-production, and into production. Many end before the production phase is fully completed, and almost none are taken through a proper post-production process or launched outside the USC Games ecosystem.

This course aims to give students the experience of finishing, polishing, and publishing a game. Students will bring in previous projects at or near a beta state of completion and pitch them to the class for continued development. The class will form small teams of 3-5 students around a number of these projects which will complete their production and post-production development, culminating in a public launch on Steam or a Kickstarter campaign. Over the course of the semester we will learn about important parts of production that are sometimes overlooked, like usability, accessibility, and marketability, and parts of post-production that are not generally part of students' game development experience, such as market positioning, audience development, and launch planning. As a class, we will workshop the chosen games for marketability as public-facing products. As a result, students will gain a much broader understanding of what needs to be done to finish and publish a creative product, and will have the experience of having launched a game.

Course Pre-requisites

CTIN 532

Course Communications

Announcements and updates will come via our Discord server (link in W1 slides or ask for invite).

Our Discord is always the best way to reach me. If we have an in-person conversation, you must always follow up with a message on Discord; otherwise I may forget whatever we agreed on. I will do my best to answer messages promptly, but please allow at least 24 hours for a response.

Participation

Participation consists of taking part in class discussions and exercises and coming to office hours, in whatever combination you like. Participation is the single best way to get the most out of your grad school experience.

Grading Breakdown

Students will be graded according to the following rubric.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Alpha build	10	10%
Usability report	10	10%
Beta build	10	10%
Gold build	15	15%
Launch plan	15	15%
Website	20	20%
Launch report	20	20%
TOTAL	100	100%

Assignment Descriptions

- **Alpha build:** A feature-complete and footprint-complete build of your game, due in the fourth week of class.
- **Usability report:** A written summary of usability tests conducted in the fifth week of class. The usability report should focus on issues related to learning and understanding, navigation, accessibility, and satisfying feedback. Due in the sixth week of class.
- **Beta build:** A content-complete build of your game, due in the seventh week of class.
- **Gold build:** A release candidate build of your game, due in the tenth week of class. Your gold build should be balanced, polished, and properly QA tested.
- **Launch plan:** An overview of your launch and distribution strategy, delivered as a short presentation in the eleventh week of class.
- **Website:** A public website for the game, housing any marketing copy, visual and video assets, and other public-facing material you have developed over the course of the semester. The website should also contain a standard game presskit with appropriate information for your game. Due in the fifteenth week of class.
- **Launch report:** A short written summary of the results of your game's public launch, based on the launch and distribution strategy presented previously to the class. Due at the class's final period.

Attendance Policy

Punctual attendance at all classes is mandatory. Students with unavoidable scheduling conflicts should inform the instructor ahead of time so that accommodations can be made. 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 absence from class, unless prior permission has been obtained from the instructors. Two absences without the instructor's approval will lower the student's grade by one half grade (for example, from A to A-). Three unapproved absences will lower the student's grade by one full letter grade (for example, from A to B).

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.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities
Week 1	Class Overview
Week 2	Pitch Presentations
Week 3	Playtests
Week 4	Branding
Week 5	Usability Testing
Week 6	Productization
Week 7	Quality Assurance
Week 8	Finishing & Polishing
Week 9	Launch Plans
Week 10	Gold Milestone
Week 11	Social Media
Week 12	Video Production
Week 13	Website and Presskit
Week 14	Outreach
Week 15	Portfolios

Final Turn-In

Your final turn-in is due during the appointed time for our final. That's currently 8am - 10am on May 5th. We will not meet in person for our final.

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” policy.usc.edu/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.

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.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

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 Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.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

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

<p>PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACE IN THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX</p>
