![USC University of Southern California]

CTIN 541: Design for Interactive Media
Units: 4

Meeting Time: Tuesday 10:00 AM - 12:50 PM (PST)
Lab time: Friday 10:00 AM - 12:50 PM (PST)

Location: SCI L114

Professor: Tracy Fullerton
Office: SCI 201M
Office Hours by appointment:
Scheduling link will be given out in class
Contact Info: email will be given out in class
Bio: http://www.tracyfullerton.com/bio

Teaching Assistant: Haoyun Zhang
Contact Info: email will be given out in class

Course Description
This course introduces students to core skills in interactive design, including conceptualizing interactive systems, prototyping, playtesting, and managing an iterative design process to meet specific and meaningful experience goals for users. The overarching themes of the class are:

> **Preparation** – Developing a vocabulary of interactive design concepts, including formal and dramatic elements of interactivity, deep analysis of interactive systems, focusing on the player experience, study of prior art.

> **Process** – Setting experience goals, ideation techniques, brainstorming, prototyping methods, playtesting, iterative design, specification, and presentation.

> **Practice** – Developing & exercising skills, initiating projects, follow through, giving and taking critique.

> **Partnership** – Developing a collaborative mindset, communication skills, sharing authorship, managing yourself and others.

The course approaches interactivity as a participatory art form, with the designer's goal to provide a specific and meaningful experience for the users and to respond quickly and creatively to feedback during the design process. During the semester, the exercises and assignments primarily focus on developing design skills and practicing good design process through the development of prototypes for games, interactive experiences, and narratives using analog and digital methods.

A central purpose of this course is to give students the opportunity to explore various types of design strategies, to discover their own strengths and interests, and to provide them with a wide repertoire of techniques upon which to draw in the future. In addition, the course will introduce students to the "playcentric" design methodology practiced at USC Games, encouraging them to develop a focus on the central user experience that anchors their design process.

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

Currently, we are expecting to hold classes in person at the University of Southern California. Students should plan on attending class and working on group projects in person unless they are ill. Students exhibiting any signs of illness should not attend class in person and should contact the professor and student assistant at the earliest possible notice to plan for the classes and projects they must miss. If possible, accommodations for virtual participation will be made. All students and professors are expected to wear masks when working indoors, both in and out of class as per current University policy.

Throughout this class, students are encouraged to take risks and to look beyond prior art, in-class examples and common wisdom to explore new and different design ideas. In many cases, students will be assigned to work in partnerships or teams and the quality of students' participation within these groups is of great importance – perhaps as important as the final project. Interactive media in all forms is a collaborative discipline and learning to communicate, share workload, learn from and help others excel is a core value in this field.

Prerequisite(s)
Open to IMGD M.F.A. and iMAP Ph.D. students (as well as other interested and qualified students, by interview with the instructor).

Course Notes
This class combines elements of a studio production course with theory and lecture. A major component of the course will be the collaborative design and development of three game projects, which will be presented, and play tested in class. Students are expected to participate actively in these group projects and respectfully in the critique of one another's work.

This course will deal with game design and prototyping in both tabletop and digital formats. Tabletop design is used to study fundamental game design concepts, and the practice of using non-digital prototyping techniques will prove useful to the digital design practice, which will be introduced in the final project.

Participating in in-class playtests is a requirement of the class. Designers must provide a working game prototype for the play testers and observe them through a short play session. After the group has played the game, the designers must lead a feedback session, eliciting as much information as possible from their play testers. At the end of the session, the design team as a group must submit a copy of the game description and rules, as well as a playtest evaluation document synthesizing the comments of the play testers and the priority changes for the design team. Both documents will be evaluated as part of the assignment grade. All participants in the group projects will receive the same grade and should strive to contribute equally to the project.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required
Programming is not a core focus of this class; however, several technical proficiencies may prove beneficial. Many students will likely use image creation or layout software (like Affinity Photo and Affinity Designer) to create artwork for their prototypes. Students may also organize their designs using common office tools such as word processors, spreadsheets, flow-charting software, or free versions of project management tools like Asana or Trello. A limited educational license for Miro.com, a collaborative visual brainstorming and group work tool will be made available to everyone in class for the duration of the semester.

For the final game project, which will be co-created in CTIN 534, where technology proficiency is a component of the class, students will use Unity, Twine, RPG Maker, Ren'Py or a similar digital game framework as selected by the team and the USC Games Perforce server for versioning and managing their team's project. Students who do not have previous experience with any of these tools may use Twine for this assignment, which does not require programming, or may partner with students who have technical skills on this assignment. Please communicate with the instructor if you have any questions about the technical requirements for your assignments.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
This course has two required texts, which are available online or from the USC Bookstore.

Game Design Workshop, 4th Edition: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games by Tracy Fullerton
https://www.amazon.com/Game-Design-Workshop-Playcentric-Innovative/dp/1138098779

Situational Game Design by Brian Upton
https://www.amazon.com/Situational-Game-Design-Brian-Upton/dp/113803181X

In addition, there will be several chapters and articles assigned as reading. These will be made available in class or on the course website. For those students interested in further readings on interactive design and game design, the following are recommended additional texts. These are not required to purchase for the class.

Designing Interactions by Bill Moggridge
https://www.amazon.com/Designing-Interactions-Press-Bill-Moggridge/dp/0262134748/

Rules of Play by Katie Salen Tekinbaş and Eric Zimmerman
https://www.amazon.com/Rules-Play-Design-Fundamentals-Press-ebook/dp/B007GCCAQW/

Students will be required to supply their own materials for paper prototyping and developing physical games. As the needs of specific projects may vary, students should plan to have a small budget for these materials. However, commonly used supplies include:

- Index cards
- Colored markers
- Polyhedral dice
- Construction paper

Course Website
A copy of this syllabus is available at the course website:
www.tracyfullerton.com/541 (Password: playtest)

Overview of Assignments

Written Analysis Assignments
- Simple system analysis 1 page, due week 2
- Board game system analysis 2-3 pages, due week 3

Design & Prototyping Projects
- Up the River variation, due week 4
- Meaningful play prototype, due week 7
- Narrative play 1st prototype, due week 10
- Digital prototype design documents, due week 12
- Digital prototype (co-assigned as 534 final project), testable version due week 15 and final build and post-mortem due at final exam

Collaboration Assignment
- Skill sharing, due week 13

Grading Breakdown

Participation	5
Simple system analysis	5
Board game system analysis	10
Up the River variation	15
Meaningful play prototype	15
Narrative play prototype	15
Digital prototype design documents	15
Digital prototype playtest & analysis	10
Skill sharing	10
Total:	100

Assignment Submission Policy
All written and digital assignments, including the documentation component of each of the game projects, should be submitted by email to tfullerton@cinema.usc.edu by the start of class on the day that they are due. Games that will be playtested in class must be brought to class, ready to be played.

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 instructors or student assistant before final grades are due. Incompletes are only available after the week-twelve withdrawal deadline.

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.

Unauthorized Social Media Use During Class
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 Safer 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.

Because this class involves presentation and discussion of creative projects that will contain a range of materials, some of which may present difficulties for others in the class, students and groups are encouraged to use content or trigger warnings as part of their presentation as appropriate.

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

Title IX at USC
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).

Course content by class meeting

Week 1:	Overview of the class – introduction to each other, discussion of course goals and themes: preparation, process, practice, and partnership, assign collaboration partners for skill sharing assignment, intro to systems thinking, analysis of simple systems.
Assignments	Analysis Assignment 1: Written analysis of simple system – **due week 2** Collaboration Assignment: Choose someone from whom to learn a skill, someone to whom to teach a skill (presentation of skills is **due week 13**)
Readings due Week 2	GDW Chapters 1 – 3 SGD Chapter 1
Lab:	Individual work on simple system analysis. Professor and SA available for assistance and discussion.

Week 2:	Formal, dramatic, and dynamic elements of interactive systems – discuss outcome of simple system analysis, deconstructing Monopoly, Set, Mastermind and Clue, thinking about the player's mental model of a game, discovering the "play" in a system, assign play groups for board game analysis.
Assignments	**Due:** Analysis Assignment 1: Written analysis of simple system Analysis Assignment 2: Board game analysis – **due week 3**
Readings due Week 3	GDW Chapters 4-6 SGD Chapter 2
Lab:	Play board games, group analysis. Professor and SA available for assistance and discussion.

Week 3:	Experience goals and intentional design – discuss outcomes of board game analysis, intro to design techniques, in-class design exercise, assign design teams for Up the River variation assignment.
Assignments	**Due:** Analysis Assignment 2: Board game analysis Prototype #1: Up the River variation – **due week 4**

Readings due Week 4	GDW Chapter 7, 9 SDG Chapter 3-5
Special Friday Lecture:	Play testing and the iterative process. For the remainder of the time, work in teams on Up the River variation assignment. Professor and SA available for assistance with designs.

Week 4:	Playtest & critiques of Up the River variations.
Assignments	**Due:** Prototype Assignment 1: Up the River variation Playtesting analysis and next steps – **due week 5**
Readings due Week 5	DeKoven "The Well Played Game" Forward - Chapter 1 Bogost "Persuasive Games" Sicart "Play Matters" Chapter 1
Lab:	Second set of playtests for Up the River variations.

Week 5:	Meaningful play – expressive elements of interactive systems, levels of engagement, situational game design, communicating ideas through play mechanics, groups and ideation for meaningful play prototype.
Assignments	Prototype #2: Meaningful play – **due week 7**
Readings due Week 6	New Games Book, "It Began with WWIV;" "Sustainable Play" in Games and Culture, Fullerton, Pearce, Fron and Morie
Lab:	Work in teams on meaningful play assignment. Professor and SA available for assistance with designs.

Week 6:	Public play – pervasive games, "big" games, theater games, and improvisation exercises.
Readings due Week 7	GDW Chapters 10-11 SGD Chapter 6
Lab:	Work in teams on meaningful play assignment. Professor and SA available for assistance with designs.

Week 7:	Playtest & critiques of meaningful play prototypes.
Assignments	**Due:** Prototyping Assignment #2: Meaningful Play prototype Playtesting analysis and next steps – **due week 8**
Readings due Week 8	SGD Chapters 7-8 Design is Storytelling Act 1: Action, Narrative Arc, Hero's Journey

Lab:	Second set of playtests for Meaningful Play.

Week 8:	Narrative play – foundations of storytelling, characters, situations, conflict and the dramatic arc, in-class brainstorming for narrative play prototypes, design groups assigned for prototypes.
Assignments	Prototype #3: Narrative play project paper prototype – due week 10 **Mid-term conferences (by appointment)**
Readings due Week 9	GDW Chapters 12-13
Lab:	No lab day – Fall Recess

Week 9:	Team building, planning, communication – discuss agile development, collaboration skills. In-class roleplaying exercises.
Assignments	**Mid-term conferences (by appointment)**
Readings due Week 10	GDW Chapters 8, 14
Lab:	Work in teams on narrative play assignment. Professor and SA available for assistance with designs.

Week 10:	Playtest & critique of narrative prototypes.
Assignments	**Due:** Prototyping Assignment #3: Narrative Play prototype Playtesting analysis and next steps – **due week 11**
Readings due Week 11	Moggridge Chapter 8 – Hiroshi Ishii interview, Bill Gaver interview Swink, Game Feel Chapter 1, "Defining Game Feel" and Chapter 6, "Input Metrics"
Special Friday Lecture:	Iterating designs, moving from paper to digital prototypes. Assignment: Digital prototype design documents – **due week 12**

Week 11:	Agency and affordance – designing for a range of player agency, affordances of platforms and controls, in-class play experiments with imagining unique play experiences, discussion of final project goals.
Readings due Week 12	GDW Chapters 15-16
Lab:	Getting set up in Perforce workshop. Work on assignments continued. Professor and SA available for assistance with designs and design docs.

Week 12:	Working as a designer – discussion of areas of opportunity for designers, professionalization, role-playing exercises.

Assignments	**Due:** Digital Prototype Design Documents Prototype #4: Digital prototype (co-assigned with 534) – **due week 15**
Lab:	Non-instructional day – no lab time

Week 13:	Presentation of skill sharing assignment outcomes.
Lab:	Informal playtesting during lab time.

Week 14:	Introduction to formal playtesting and user research – Guest lecture, Dennis Wixon.
Lab:	University holiday – no lab time

Week 15:	Formal playtesting – usability process, playtest & critique of digital prototypes (534 final projects), discuss post-mortems. Class will be held in Game Innovation Lab SCI 301.
Assignments	**Due:** Digital prototype for playtesting Formal playtesting analysis and next steps with final prototype build– **due at final exam time**
Lab:	Additional formal playtests as necessary, team analysis of playtests. Work on personal reflections.

Final Exam: 12/7 11AM	**Due**: final prototype build, formal playtesting analysis with next steps, and semester reflections.

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.

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