



## **CTIN 482 - Mobile Social Games**

**Units: 2**

**Fall 2023—Monday 1-3:50 PM**

**Location: SCI 206**

**Instructor: Cynthia Woll:**

**Office Hours: By Appointment**

**Contact Info: [cwoll@usc.edu](mailto:cwoll@usc.edu)**

**SA: Ashley Cates**

**Office Hours: By Appointment**

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### **Course Description**

Working in a professional studio-like atmosphere, students will learn the fundamentals of Game Design and Product Management for social games. As designers, students will form teams to develop concepts, wireframes and prototypes for original games, to be presented and discussed in class. Students learn how to perform market analysis, create and present game pitches, and build a design document. The course culminates with a portfolio-quality clickable prototype and professional-quality supporting documentation.

Students will also learn the basics of Analytics, Data-Driven Design and Live Ops. They will learn how to gather both qualitative and quantitative data for their game designs, and how to apply data to improve the game experience for players.

### **Learning Objectives**

Students learn fundamentals of Game Design and Product Management for social games. Students work in teams to prepare game design documents, analytics, market research, polished pitches, and prototypes.

### **Course Notes**

This course will assign a letter grade.

Students will submit work via Google Drive, Blackboard, and by showing documents to instructors and peers in class. Students will work with other development and production tools, as discussed in class. We will also use a Discord server for class socializing and co-working.

## 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. The length of the final documentation should be 6-10 pages. 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
Weekly deliverables	30	Ongoing
Midterm prototype deliverables	20	Week 7
Analysis Paper	10	Week 12
Final prototype deliverables	30	Week 15
Participation	10	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 in order 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. 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 instructor. The following guidelines are from the Interactive Media & Games Division handbook regarding absences and grading and apply to all students.

#### Guidelines for absences affecting grading

- Two unexcused absences: lowers grade one full grade point (for example, from A to B)
- Three unexcused absences: lowers grade two full grade points
- Four or more unexcused absences: request to withdraw from course (instructor's discretion)

#### Excused absences are:

- Illness with verification according to University policy.
- Family or personal emergency with verification according to University policy.

Social media, including text messaging and internet messaging, are excluded from class unless explicitly permitted by the instructor. A 0.5% grade reduction will result from each occurrence of a student being found using them.

### **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.

### **Title IX Policy**

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).

### **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 any of the instructors.

	Class Topics/Lectures	Assignments	Assignment Due Date
<b>Week 1</b> August 21	<p>Introduction to the course and course goals.</p> <p>Introduction to social games.</p> <p>In class: Genres/Game Mechanics</p> <p>In-class assignment: Assign genre buddy. Pair up and play games in the genre. (6 genres)</p> <p>Create one genre slide for discussion in class</p>	<p>With genre buddy, create 4 slides for a new game concept for mobile that mashes up 2 different genres</p>	<p>Week 2, August 28</p>
<b>Week 2</b> August 28	<p>Review genre slides ideas</p> <p>Lecture: Core Loop</p> <p>In-class assignment: create a core loop for your game</p> <p>Lecture: Economy Basics, Reward Systems, Limits</p> <p>In-class assignments: create an economy loop for your game</p> <p>Review and discuss core loops and economy loops</p> <p>Discuss wireframes and wireframing tools</p>	<p>Form teams of 2-3 people.</p> <p>Review Figma tutorials</p> <p>Begin wireframes. Have at least 5 frames complete, making sure the core loop and economy loop are represented</p>	<p>Week 4, September 11</p>
<b>Week 3</b> September 4 Labor Day – No Class			
<b>Week 4</b> September 11	<p>Lecture: Intro to Analytics</p> <p>Assignment: list 5 things you might want to track in your game.</p> <p>In-class: Review wireframes from your homework</p> <p>Lecture/Discussion UI/UX and Wireframes:</p> <p>Lecture/Discussion: Mapping the player journey</p>	<p>Continue to develop wireframes showing the player journey. Consider what path you, the designer, want the player to take</p> <p>Create a slide for your game showing what you should track and why you want to track it</p>	<p>Week 5, September 18</p>

<b>Week 5</b> September 18	Review wireframes  Review and discuss list of things to track  Lecture: Meta Game  Lecture: Live Ops  In-class assignment – create one slide showing a holiday event for your game  Review in-class assignment	Continue wireframes  Create an idea for your metagame. Add the idea to your slides  Add your holiday event to your wireframes	Week 6, September 25
<b>Week 6</b> September 25	Review Wireframes and slides  Lecture: Consumer Insights, Deconstructs, User Empathy.  In-class exercise: create a list of questions to ask potential players to develop a persona for your game  Lecture/Discussion: What is a GDD?	Begin GDD  Continue Wireframes  Develop one Persona	Week 7, October 2
<b>Week 7</b> October 2	Review personas  Review wireframes  Lecture: Social Features  Discussion: Diversity	Design a social feature  Complete wireframes, GDD and slides for original mobile game. Include your social feature, meta game, and holiday event. Create a video “pitching” your game using the wireframes and slides as a basis	Week 8, October 9
<b>Week 8</b> October 9	Midterm: Present wireframes in video format in class. Video should be 5-8 minutes long and should “sell” your game. Video should show your core loop, economy loop, social feature, meta game and holiday event  Briefly discuss paper due in week 11  Form new teams, brainstorm new game, for any platform	5 slides for new game with core loop  Choose game for paper	Week 9, October 16

<b>Week 9</b> October 16	Review slides for new games  Lecture: More Analytics  Lecture: Connecting Events, player progression, meta game and business model  Discuss games chosen for analytics paper	Begin wireframes for new game  Create personas for new game  Design a social feature for new game  Begin Analysis paper: Select any free to play game and write a 2–4-page paper analyzing the core loop, the economy design, social features, meta game, and player progression	Week 10, October 24
<b>Week 10</b> October 23	Review new wireframes, social features and personas  Lecture: spreadsheets  In-class exercise: begin a spreadsheet for your new game  Review in-class exercise	Continue new wireframes  Begin GDD  Reading: Balancing free to play economies	Week 12, October 30
<b>Week 11</b> October 30	Briefly discuss analytics paper  Lecture: More spreadsheets  Lecture/Discussion: Imagining Data, Hypothesis-driven Testing  Collecting qualitative data  Review wireframes and GDDs	Create a spreadsheet for your new game  Reading: a practical example of a free to play economy  Complete your analytics paper	Week 12, November 6
<b>Week 12</b> November 6	Review and discuss spreadsheets  Review wireframes, GDDs  In-class exercise: collect qualitative data  Discussion: pitch decks  Turn in analytics paper	Continue wireframes and GDD  Create pitch deck for your game  Collect Qualitative data from your slides or wireframes	Week 13, November 13
<b>Week 13</b> November 13	Review pitch deck  Review wireframes with meta game, social feature, events, retention feature	Propose an idea for UGC for your game in your slides	Week 14: UGC idea due November 20  Week 15: Final project due, November 27

	Review qualitative data  Economy lecture/discussion  Lecture: User Generated Content - UGC		
<b>Week 14</b> November 20	Review UGC ideas  Semester review	Prepare videos of final wireframes	Week 15, November 27
<b>Week 15</b> November 27	Final presentations		

## 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](http://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](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](https://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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776*

[osas.usc.edu](https://osas.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.

*Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](https://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](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

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

[ombuds.usc.edu](https://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 style="text-align: center;"><b>PLEASE NOTE:</b> FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACE IN THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX</p>
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