

USC Viterbi

School of Engineering
*Information
Technology Program*

ITP-180 “Video Game Production”

Units: 2

Fall 2022

Wednesdays 1:00 PM to 2:50 PM

Location: EGG 108

Instructor: Kyle Ackerman

Office: EGG 208

Office Hours:

By appointment

Contact Info:

KyleAcke@usc.edu

Teaching Assistant: TBD

Contact Info: TBD

IT Help: Viterbi IT

Hours of Service:

Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Contact Info:

DRB 205

(213) 740-0517

engrhelp@usc.edu

Catalogue Description

The process of video game production. Video game history, genres, development process (concept, preproduction, production, and post-production) and roles (producers, artists, programmers, etc.).

Course Description

Video Game Production will help students gain a hands-on understanding of the process of developing video games, with an emphasis on production and project management. Students will be introduced to the many facets of video game production including design, art, programming, and management. The course will introduce and include various hardware and software tools and processes involved in the video game production process.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Recognize common hardware and software tools involved in the creation of games.
2. Differentiate the various roles in video game development.
3. Design the project production lifecycle and customize it for the specific needs of a game development studio.
4. Interact with specific video game development roles such as marketing, art, audio, narrative, design, software engineering and usability.
5. Break down how team roles, as well as software and hardware constraints and tools, have shaped the production of past games.
6. Analyze video games to identify the hallmarks of successful production and critique failures of process.

Prerequisite(s): n/a

Co-Requisite(s): n/a

Concurrent Enrollment: n/a

Recommended Preparation: ITP 101 recommended.

Course Notes

Lecture slides and course content, including homework, will be posted to the course Blackboard page. Course announcements will be posted as an announcement to Blackboard or emailed directly to your USC emails.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students are expected to be able to perform the following tasks before the course begins:

- Basic computer literacy
- Submit files through Blackboard's submission page
- Download files from Blackboard
- Basic familiarity with Google Slides and G-suite or PowerPoint and MS Office

USC Technology Support Links

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- *The Game Production Toolbox* by Heather Maxwell Chandler (CRC Press 2020)
ISBN-13: 978-1138341715
- *Additional supplementary materials will be posted on Blackboard*

Optional Materials

- *Producing Games: From Business and Budgets to Creativity and Design* by D.S. Cohen and Sergio A Bustamante (Routledge 2009)
ISBN-13: 978-0240810706
- *Inside the Video Game Industry: Game Developers Talk About the Business of Play* by Ruggill, McAllister, Nichols and Kaufman (Routledge 2016)
ISBN-13: 978-0415828284
- *Legal Guide to Video Game Development* by Ross Dannenberg (ABA 2016)
ISBN-13: 978-1634256216
- *Agile Game Development: Build, Play, Repeat (2nd Edition)* by Clinton Keith (Addison-Wesley 2021)
ISBN-13: 978-0136527817

Description and Assessment of Assignments

In-Class Presentation

The first classroom presentation will involve a brief overview of a commercial title, its genre, market, reception, and production challenges. Timing of presentations will be scheduled in the first week.

In-Class Lab Assignments

Short laboratory assignments will occupy that latter part of the class period in weeks when larger assignments are not being presented to the class. These exercises will reinforce production knowledge and for the building blocks of larger assignments.

Production Role Essay

The first written assignment will be to choose and describe a role involved in the modern process of creating, developing, and bringing a major video game to market, including the training and responsibilities of that role.

Production Contrast Essay

The second written assignment will compare and contrast a current commercial title with an older title of a similar genre, with a focus on considering the different production challenges faced by each.

High-Level Pitch

The final written assignment will be a high-concept game pitch, with a focus on the production challenges posed by that game, and a high-level development plan including project milestones.

Class Participation

Students are expected to contribute meaningfully to in-class discussions, drawing connections between assigned and supplemental readings to the week's topics, and sharing those connections with the class

Final Pitch Presentation

The final written pitch will also be presented to the class prior to completion for feedback to allow for improvements and revisions.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	% of grade
<i>In-Class Presentation</i>	15
<i>In-Class Lab Assignments</i>	10
<i>Production Role Essay</i>	15
<i>Production Contrast Essay</i>	15
<i>High-Level Pitch (written)</i>	20
<i>Class Participation</i>	10
<i>Final Pitch Presentation</i>	15
TOTAL	100

Grading Scale Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

A	93+
A-	90 - <93
B+	87 - <90
B	83 - <87
B-	80 - <83
C+	77 - <80
C	73 - <77
C-	70 - <73
D+	67 - <70
D	63 - <67
D-	60 - <63
F	<60

Assignment Rubrics:

In-Class Presentation

35% present central ideas of title, genre, market reception; 35% presents clear support for challenges in coming to market, 15% style of slides, 15% verbal organization and presentation

In-Class Lab Assignments

30% follow professional communication standards as covered in lecture and demonstrations (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation), 30% completeness of fields and diagrams, 30% clarity and supporting evidence, and 10% comprehensiveness and detail.

Production Role Essay

30% ideas, 30% organization, 30% supporting evidence (including training and responsibilities), and 10% style (including grammar, punctuation, and spelling)

Production Contrast Essay

30% central thesis (comparing two titles), 30% organization, 30% supporting evidence (including production challenges), and 10% style (including grammar, punctuation, and spelling)

Final Pitch Presentation

This is an opportunity to discuss the final, high-level pitch and receive feedback from the class before completing the final assignment. Focus is on clarity, organization and presentation

30% content (presents required information), 30% clarity and style of presentation, 30% supporting evidence (including production challenges), and 10% response to Q&A.

High-Level Pitch

30% content (presents required information), 30% organization (follows formats from class), 30% supporting evidence (including milestones and production challenges), and 10% style (including grammar, punctuation, and spelling)

Class Participation Rubric

50% active contribution to discussions 50% demonstrated connection of the reading and experience to weekly topics

Remote learning Policies/Zoom etiquette

During remote teaching situations, classes will meet via Zoom. Students are expected to participate via microphones and camera whenever possible.

Homework will be assigned and turned in through Blackboard, but presentations are also required to be added to the class Google share drive for presentation purposes.

Additional Policies

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 instructors before the assignment due date and present verifiable evidence for a deadline extension to be granted.

In-class assessments and presentations cannot be rescheduled (except for an unforeseeable event) as this will disrupt the course schedule. If you know you will be missing any classes at the beginning of the semester, please tell the instructor as soon as possible.

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 absence from class.

Guidelines for unexcused absences affecting grading:

Two absences: lowers grade one full grade point (e.g. from A to B)

Three absences: lowers grade two full grade points

Four or more absences: request to withdraw from course (instructor's discretion)

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.

Synchronous session recording notice

During remote teaching situations, the [Zoom](#) courses will be recorded, and these recordings will be shared with the class. While this will not entirely replace in-class participation, these recorded classes will allow students to catch up on lectures they were unable to attend as well as for useful review.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Preparation	Deliverables
<i>Week 1</i>	Introduction and Course Overview What is game production/ game project management?		Introductory Lab Exercise
<i>Week 2</i>	State of the Industry: Game genres, game platforms, and development considerations.	Chandler Ch 1, excerpted primary readings	<i>Presentations signup complete</i> List of Production Roles Lab Exercise
<i>Week 3</i>	The Development Team	Chandler Ch 2,10,11	Break-out teams by role Scope of role responsibilities <i>Commercial Title presentations</i>
<i>Week 4</i>	Setting up a Business Entity, IP	Chandler Ch 3, white paper excerpts	Production Role Essay Due <i>Commercial Title presentations</i>
<i>Week 5</i>	Target Audience, Design and Pitch	Chandler Ch 4, 5	Break out groups on modern titles <i>Commercial Title presentations</i>
<i>Week 6</i>	Budget and Schedule	Chandler Ch 7,8	Break-out groups on historical titles <i>Commercial Title presentations complete</i>
<i>Week 7</i>	Pitching	Chandler Ch 6	Lab pitch exercise
<i>Week 8</i>	Prototyping	AGILE/SCRUM readings (see Blackboard)	Production Contrast Essay Due
<i>Week 9</i>	Project Management Tools	Chandler Ch 12, 13	Lab break-out groups to workshop production techniques
<i>Week 10</i>	Leadership, Management and Outsourcing	Chandler Ch 14, 17	Lab break-out groups to discuss comparables
<i>Week 11</i>	Execution, Pipeline, and Localization	Chandler Ch 15, 16, 18	Lab Elevator Pitch and group feedback
<i>Week 12</i>	Producing UX, Audio, and QA	Chandler Ch 19	High-Level Pitch for Feedback
<i>Week 13</i>	Producing and Marketing	Chandler Ch 20 LiveOps Reading on Blackboard	High-Level Pitch for Feedback Lab Break-out groups to workshop milestones and resources
<i>Week 14</i>	Thanksgiving Break	Thanksgiving Break	Thanksgiving Break
<i>Week 15</i>	Release, support and Live Ops		Final written pitch and production timeline Presentations Due
<i>FINAL</i>			Refer to the final exam schedule in the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at classes.usc.edu .

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.

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 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.

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 and 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) 442-120 – 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.