



USC School of Cinematic Arts

CTIN 594b Master Thesis II

Units: 2

Spring 2025 - Thursdays - 10:00 AM - 1:50 PM PT

January 16, 2025 - May 1, 2025

May 12 2025 Thesis Show

May 13 2025 USC Games Expo

Location: SCI 306

Prerequisites: CTIN-542, 548, 594a

Instructors:

Martzi Campos

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Cell: 650-452-3848

Office Hours: By appointment

Laird Malamed

lairdo@cinema.usc.edu

Cell: 310-903-0886

Office Hours: By appointment

Class Student Assistant:

Samuel Tang

tangsamu@usc.edu

Class Discord Server: "CTIN 594 2023/4"

IT Help: USC Cinema Creative Computing

Contact Info: creativetech@cinema.usc.edu

Access to campus requires numerous prerequisites and is subject to changes at any time based on USC and Los Angeles city/county regulations. Everyone's patience and flexibility is appreciated.

Course Description

CTIN-594b Masters Thesis is the continuation of the studio class designed to provide the framework, guidance and feedback to assist in the development and production of the MFA thesis final project, begun in 542/548. During this 6th semester of the MFA, students will complete their playable interactive work, develop, draft and submit their written thesis, and present their work to their peers and professors in the Interactive Media & Games Division.

Successful completion of the thesis require:

1. Final thesis playable build
2. Approved final paper, submitted on time and revised as directed by the Graduate School. Class Submission date is March 31, 2025
3. Presentation of findings of the thesis to the faculty and students of CTIN
4. Publicly display the interactive work at the May 2025 Thesis Show & USC Games Expo
5. Approval of all work by the creative thesis committee
6. Other assignments as directed from class

Your creative thesis committee, particularly your chair, will communicate to the 594b faculty their approval of the required materials. Students are expected to regularly meet with all members of their committee. Please inform the instructors of any issues.

The class is almost entirely driven by student work sharing and ample feedback from each other. Attendance is required (unless agreed upon in advance due to urgent requirements). Openness and sharing are key drivers.

The Graduate School of USC oversees the technical submission, review and acceptance of the Thesis Paper. As such, the Graduate School has very specific and rigid deadlines, guidelines and procedures.

The MFA Student is advised to review the Graduate School website, frequently check their profile and raise issues early. Missing deadlines from the Graduate School is likely to shift the graduate date from May 2024 to August 2024 or later.

The Profile Check Date is March 7, 2025

The Paper Submission March 31, 2025

The instructors and IMGD staff cannot lobby for exceptions on behalf of the MFA students.

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstration of the Student of the ability to manage, complete and demonstrate their thesis work in various formats. The class will provide feedback and guidance to help each student achieve this, and guest speakers will help frame the finalization of the product.
2. Prepare for the Thesis Show and the public demonstration of the student work
3. Learn about the future including job searches, start ups and working in the industry

Schedule

Class attendance is mandatory.

This is the draft week by week plan, so changes might occur depending on the ability to bring in speakers.

01/16/25 Week 01: Welcome back / The thesis paper / Check ins & Updates

01/23/25 Week 02: Guest Lecture: Dennis Wixon / Critiques

01/30/25 Week 03: Guest Lecture: Marientina Gotsis - writing your thesis paper / Critiques

02/06/25 Week 04: Round Robin 1

02/13/25 Week 05: Critiques / Thesis Outline workshop sessions / **Thesis Outlines Due**

02/20/25 Week 06: Andy Goldstein and your thesis profile (date might move) /Thesis Show Prep / Critiques

02/27/25 Week 07: Paper workshop sessions / Critiques /

03/06/25 Week 08: Round Robin 2

03/07/25 CONFIRM GRADUATE SCHOOL PROFILE

03/13/25 Week 09: **Thesis Paper Rough Drafts Due**

SPRING RECESS 03/17-21: No classes

03/27/25 Week 10: Class Poster / Critiques

03/31/25 12 PM PDT: Thesis Paper due to Graduate School for May Graduation

04/03/25 Week 11: Round Robin 3

04/10/25 Week 12: Thesis Show Prep / Critiques / Presentation Workshop

04/18/25 Presentation materials & builds uploaded to shared folders

04/17/25 Week 13: Thesis Show Prep 3 / Critiques / **Tech Check**

04/21-25/25 Week 14: Thesis Presentations

05/01/25 Week 15: Thesis Show Finalization and class wrap up

Thesis Show/Expo
05/09/25 PM Stage move in
05/09-12/25 PM Set up
05/12/25 5 PM Thesis Show Opens
05/13/25 USC Game Expo
05/14/25 Strike
05/15/25 Thesis Appreciation Event
05/15-16/25 USC Commencement Ceremonies

Formal Check-ins

You will be required to meet with Laird or Martzi regarding your outline. You can choose if you wish to do this before it is due (for brainstorming help) or after it is due (for direct feedback).

In addition - At least once in the semester, each student should schedule a formal check in with Laird and Martzi to discuss your projects. Anytime between weeks 5 and 9 makes the most sense. You do not need to limit it to 1 meeting.

You should be meeting with all of your thesis advisors on a regular basis, including your external advisors.

Grading

CTIN-594b is a complete/incomplete credit course. You will be given credit for the class upon the approval of your masters thesis. You will of course receive feedback on your deliverables, project critiques and your ability to give feedback.

(Note that graduate students must maintain a B average (3.0 GPA) as per USC Graduate School requirements which is based on your other coursework. Please see Sam if you are concerned about this requirement.)

Assignment Submission Policy

Generally, written assignments will be submitted via the shared Google Drive. Please be aware that the entire class can view these files, so please do not share materials in this location you wish to keep private. You may share a link from your own Google drive with Laird, Martzi and Sam.

Oral assignments (project updates, defense presentations, etc) will be presented in class.

Attendance Policy

Punctual attendance at all classes is mandatory. Students arriving (or logging in for Zoom classes) 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.

Excused absences include:

- Illness (with a doctor's verification)
- Family or personal emergency (with verification)
- Religious Observance

We all understand emergencies arise, and breaks will be provided during class to handle the usual deluge of electronic messages. Please inform an instructor or SA of urgent situations.

Given the online nature of the class, we recognize the strain of multiple hours per day with VC. As such, if you need a break, please let your instructors know and take it. We will have break time as part of our classes.

We also realize that since we have devices all around us, the distraction is real. We recommend trying to close down all forms of other comms during class, and silencing alerts from social media, email etc.

Classroom norms

When in class, we expect you to be attentive, not having side conversations and participating. The cohort is stronger for your input and feedback. If you need to step away for any reason, please do so quietly and without interrupting others. We all understand things come up.

Zoom etiquette

As Laird will be participating remotely about half the semester, we will have a Zoom option and use 360 cameras. It is expected that those on Zoom will have their cameras on, and their other work minimized so they can focus in on class. We will be having breakout groups and will work to fold in the Zoomers to ensure they get the benefit of small group discussion.

Please use discord or text messages if you need to reach us due to technical issues.

And please contact Laird and Martzi with any concerns about the above.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In making games and interactive media in a professional and ethical way, it is important that you consider diversity and inclusion. 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.

Safer Spaces

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 issue content warnings as appropriate, 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.

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).

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

AI Generators in 594b

Permitted on specific assignments (sort of)

With the wide adoption of AI tools, we recognize there are some very powerful uses. For example, creating sample art with DALL-E might be a great way to generate imagery (especially if you are not strong in artistic skills). However, as 594b is a class designed to see your creative output, generally AI tools should not be used unless discussed in advance.

You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Please review the instructions in each assignment for more details on how and when to use AI Generators for your submissions if allowed.

If found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such as an “F” grade on the assignment, exam, and/or in the course.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the

academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. 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. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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

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

Non-emergency assistance or information.

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

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.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

PLEASE NOTE:

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

