

# USC Viterbi

School of Engineering  
*Information  
Technology Program*

## **ITP-180 “Video Game Production”**

**Units:** 2

**Fall 2025**

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](mailto: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

Homework, will be posted to the course Brightspace page. Course announcements will be posted as an announcement to Brightspace 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 Brightspace's submission page
- Download files from Brightspace
- Basic familiarity with Google Slides and G-suite or PowerPoint and MS Office

## USC Technology Support Links

[Zoom information 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 Brightspace*

### **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 (2<sup>nd</sup> 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 and Quizzes*

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. Quizzes on lectures or readings may also be included.

#### *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. This pitch will be presented by the student.

#### *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. An optional final exam will be offered. Strong performance on the final exam will allow students to raise their Class Participation score up to the maximum 10%.

### *Final Pitch Presentation*

The final written pitch will include all feedback on the High-Level Pitch, resulting in a revised version of the pitch that is turned in as a final slide deck presentation.

### **Grading Breakdown**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>% of grade</b>
<i>In-Class Presentation</i>	15
<i>In-Class Lab Assignments and Quizzes</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
<b>TOTAL</b>	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. Strong performance on the optional final exam will allow students to raise their Class Participation score up to the maximum 10%.

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

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

### Support Systems:

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

Non-emergency assistance or information.

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

[ombuds.usc.edu](http://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.