



## LMC 4725 Game Design

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Time: MWF 12:20 - 1:10p, Spring 2019 Room: Skiles 357 Office: TSRB DM Suite 8

Office hours: W 1.10 - 2.30p in Skiles 357, and by appointment in office

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### Course Description

Games have been an integral part of human culture for several millennia. Yet, it is only around the last century that the study of games received serious scholarly attention. This is quite understandable. Why study games, when you can just play them? After all, games are great at helping one escape studying! They move us into imaginary places far from the struggles of daily life. They let us undergo experiences we may never have dreamed of. They let us express, create, and transform ourselves and those around us. Studying games breaks these experiences. It pushes us out of the game's magic circle. However, it can lead us to other rewarding experiences. It reveals the wire under the magician's sleeve, the science behind the spell. It empowers us to effectively craft magic circles for others, and it enables us to better understand the place of games in and as culture.

In this course, we will aim to answer the following question: "How can games be designed to produce meaningful experiences?" What is considered meaningful, of course, is a much larger philosophical problem - one that can have many different answers. In this light, you will learn how to analyze and design games taking into account multiple interrelated perspectives, such as the structures of games, their connection to the player's experience, and their relationship with culture. A wide variety of games will be discussed, touching on issues ranging from rules and mechanics, to politics and our social identities. These discussions will be rooted in contemporary articles related to game design and culture. Using this knowledge, you will create a series of short game prototypes based on different design prompts throughout the semester, and a final, more refined digital game beta towards the end.

# Mini Metro™



florence



## Learning Objectives

After completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Analyze games from the perspectives of their formal elements, play experiences, and cultural-contexts and articulate how they contribute to meaningful play
2. Brainstorm, plan and implement basic methodologies of game design, such as: systems thinking, rule-building, iterative design, play-testing, and prototyping
3. Design and develop meaningful game prototypes based on different design prompts
4. Offer constructive criticism of games that balances strengths and weakness and utilizes terminology from the course.

## Course Material

All reading material will available online and will include readings mainly from the following texts (in addition to other supplementary readings and videos):

- Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). *Rules of Play - Game Design Fundamentals*. MIT Press.
- Fullerton, T. (2008). *Game Design Workshop*.
- Flanagan, M. (2014) *Values at Play in Digital Games*.
- YouTube channel: *Extra Credits*

We will discuss these readings in the context of the following games:

- Tic-Tac-Toe
- *Solitaire, Spider Solitaire, Flipflop Solitaire, Sage Solitaire*
- *Okay?, Bring Me Cakes*
- *Mini-Metro, Hollow Knight*
- *Braid, Thomas was Alone*
- *Stardew Valley, Undertale*
- *Virtual Beggar, To The Moon*
- *Florence, 80 Days*
- *The Coming Out Simulator, Gone Home*
- *Papers Please, This War of Mine*



## Developmental Platforms

There are many game development platforms available, including Unity, Unreal, Processing, OpenFrameworks, C/SDL, Phaser, Interlude, Twine, GameMaker, and many more. Students are free to choose between them for the purposes of prototyping, so long as a) it's a computational development environment and b) you bring the appropriate hardware/software setup to class to show the prototypes. Teams should settle amongst themselves on a platform acceptable to all.

## Course Outline

The semester will be divided into two sections by the spring break. In the first half, we will discuss games, game design theory, and practical game design strategies such as prototyping and play-testing. You will participate in various classroom activities and discussions, and work on short theoretical assignments weekly that relate to the readings discussed in class. Additionally, you will also work in groups of two to design and build short game prototypes bi-weekly based on different design prompts.

In the second half, near Spring break, you will work in groups of three or four to pitch a game design idea and iteratively develop a game in three weeks. Most days will be dedicated to play testing and peer feedback sessions. Additionally, you will also present one video game analysis (video or written) that apply all the concepts learnt in class to the games of your choice. The final deliverables will be a short 5 min in-class presentation of your game (including a 2 min trailer), followed by a 15-20 min play session, and a design journal that documents all your decisions and iterations. See course schedule online for more details.

Course schedule link: <http://designstudio.gatech.edu/gamedesign.html>



## Assessments and Weightage

Your full assessment plan is detailed as follows:

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Weightage (total 100 points)</b>
Class Participation and Attendance	5 points
Nine Short Assignments	10 points
Four Game Prototypes	40 points (10 each)
One Game Analysis	5 points
Final Game Beta with Trailer, Documentation, and Individual Reflection	30 points
Weekly Iterative Submissions for Final Game	10 points

## Grading Policy

<b>Score</b>	<b>Grade</b>
90-100	A
80-90	B
50-80	C
40-50	D
<40	Fail



## Attendance and Late Work

Students are expected to arrive on time for class, and be present for the entirety of the class. Because this class hinges on both critique and group work, it is extremely important to attend class and communicate with your groupmates. Students are permitted two absences a semester. Beyond that, you may begin to lose up to 5% off your final grade with each subsequent absence. More than six absences will lead to an F grade. All assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments will lead to a 2 point deduction per day.

## Accommodations for students with disabilities

The Office of Disability Services provides information, resources, and support services to students with disabilities at Georgia Tech. Disability Services, located in the Office of the Dean of Students (Charles A. Smithgall Jr Student Services Building, Suite 210), provides students with information and support. Disability Services assists students self-identifying as having a disability. Any student who wishes to receive accommodation for a disability is encouraged to do so and will be fully accommodated, provided they submit the necessary university accommodation form.

## Academic integrity

In this classroom context, it is not appropriate to represent work as your own or your group's that you did not ideate, brainstorm, prototype and refine (this goes for both the game mechanics and written components such as game rules or any story/narrative). Any instances of such behavior will be given serious review and may be taken to the Office of the Dean of Students. For more information on the Georgia Tech Honor Code, please see: <http://www.honor.gatech.edu/> Students in this course are also bound to the Georgia Tech Student Code of Conduct, which address plagiarism as well as other issues related to academic dishonesty: <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/19b.php>