

SM5350: GAME DESIGN FUNDAMENTALS

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Game Design Fundamentals

Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

Course Number

5350

Academic Unit

School of Creative Media (SM)

College/School

School of Creative Media (SM)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course dives deeply into the theories and concepts that are the foundation of game design. Students will explore critical game design frameworks, including media theory, narrative structures, ideation models, and the intrinsic nature of games

and play. Emphasis is placed on understanding how historical successes and failures in game design inform contemporary practices. The course examines the ethical, cultural, and societal issues intertwined with game creation, guiding students to apply these theories to their own design processes as 'reflective practitioners'. Through lectures, workshops, and critique sessions, students will learn to critically analyze games at various stages of development, using advanced game design concepts to inform their creative work. Assessment will include participation in practical exercises and critique sessions, the development of a game design portfolio, and a reflective essay. Students will master the application of game design theories to create meaningful and culturally relevant interactive experiences.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Reflect on their own creative game design practices in relation to broader social, cultural, and artistic contexts.		x	x	
2	Apply advanced game design concepts, theories, approaches, and processes in designing and implementing their own games.			x	x
3	Review and critique games in various stages of the design process.		x	x	

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	These sessions provide students with a theoretical foundation in game design, covering key techniques, concepts and critical frameworks.	1, 2, 3	

2	In-class game design exercises	These hands-on activities allow students to apply the theories discussed in lectures to real-world scenarios. Students will engage in practical exercises that involve creating and iterating on playable prototypes, enabling them to experiment with game mechanics, narratives, and player engagement strategies.	2, 3	
3	Review and critique sessions	In these sessions, students will present their game design work for peer and instructor feedback. The focus will be on constructive critique, helping students refine their designs and improve their critical analysis skills by evaluating the work of others.	1, 3	
4	Portfolio workshops	These workshops provide students with guidance and support in developing a comprehensive game design portfolio. Students will compile their work from the course, receiving feedback on how to effectively showcase their design process, theoretical understanding, and creative outcomes.	2, 3	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Participation and performance	1, 2, 3	30	-	Yes
2	Reflection essay	1	20	-	Yes
3	Game Design Portfolio	2, 3	50	-	Yes

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Minimum Continuous Assessment Passing Requirement (%)

0

Minimum Examination Passing Requirement (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)

Assessment Task

Participation and Performance

Criterion

This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the tutorial sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to his/her peer members.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-)

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate class discussion and comment on other points
- In-depth pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret others' views with an open mind and ready to negotiate
- Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and synthesis with informed views
- Constructively critical, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues

Good

(B+, B, B-)

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points
- Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret opinions effectively

Fair

(C+, C, C-)

- Attentive in in-class participation, listening with comprehension, but only infrequently contributing
- Adequate pre-class preparation but little familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Fair ability in interpreting opinions

Marginal

(D)

- Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people's views
- Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Poor ability in interpreting opinions

Failure

(F)

- Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher
- No pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Minimal ability in interpreting opinions

Assessment Task

Reflection essay

Criterion

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, build up argument and analysis. The threshold of 'discovery' lies in a student's self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-)

- Excellent grasp of research material, able to explain key concepts, assumptions and debates
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, distinct thesis, properly argued with strong narrative
- Insightful interpretation of the subject matter with distinct themes and thesis
- Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize
- Ability to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools
- Strong bibliography suggesting breadth and depth of coverage and informed insights

Good

(B+, B, B-)

- Firm grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts and assumptions
- Reasonable organization, balanced structure, adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Clear ideas which keep to the point, clear-cut subject, ability to interpret opinions independently
- Organized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic

Fair

(C+, C, C-)

- Comprehensive grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts
- Fair organization, weak structure, adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Relevant points to the subject matter, fair ability to interpret opinions
- Unorganized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic

Marginal

(D)

- Loose grasp of materials, cannot explain key concepts
- Poor organization and structure, weak content, limited use of resources
- Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions
- Insufficient and/or unorganized bibliography

Failure

(F)

- Poor grasp of materials
- No organization and structure, inadequate content
- No/irrelevant use of resources
- Irrelevant points to the subject matter, minimal ability to interpret opinions
- Irrelevant bibliography

Assessment Task

Game Design Portfolio

Criterion

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, execute creative ideas and projects. The threshold of 'discovery' lies in a student's proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned authorship.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-)

- Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature

- Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production
- Innovative exploration by combining knowledge from different disciplines (e.g. mathematics, psychology, physics, anthropology, etc.) to create an inter-disciplinary project
- Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment

Good

(B+, B, B-)

- Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Ability to create project/work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/suggestions

Fair

(C+, C, C-)

- Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Limited ability to create project/work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Marginal

(D)

- Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Marginal ability to create project/work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Failure

(F)

- No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium
- Fail to create project/work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Game design, critique, design process, reflective practitioner, prototyping, design frameworks

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Tracy Fullerton (2024) Game Design Workshop (5h ed). CRC Press.
2	Brian Upton (2017). Situational Game Design. CRC Press.
3	Eric Zimmerman (2022) The Rules We break: Lessons in play, thinking, and design. Chronicle Books.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Mary Flanagan (2013). Critical Play: Radical Game Design. MIT Press.
2	Frank Lantz (2023). The Beauty of Games. MIT Press.
3	Donald Schön (1983) The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think In Action. Basic Books.