



## GAME CULTURE & INTERACTIVE WORLDS

### Game Culture and Interactive Worlds

Fall Quarter, 2015

Bellevue College

Digital Media Arts and Communication Studies

#### Course Instructor

Instructor: Bruce Wolcott

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- OFFICE/PHONE:** Emergencies only: Leave messages with departments
- Digital Media Arts (A254/255)  
Evelyn Kasama - (425) 564-2311
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(425) 564-2341

**OFFICE HOURS:** by appointment

**TEXTBOOK:** REQUIRED:  
*Game Development Essentials* by Jeannie Novack, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed, 2012  
ISBN-13: 978-1-1113-0765-3

**COURSE MEETS:** One or two days per week on campus as specified by instructor; remainder delivered online.

#### Course Description:

Game Culture and Interactive Worlds fulfills cultural and gen-ed requirements for Digital Media Arts and Communication Studies programs at Bellevue College. As a Digital Media Arts course, it provides a foundation for pursuing more technically oriented game theory and design classes; as a Communication Studies course, *Game Culture and Interactive Worlds* examines the impact of interactive technologies, especially on the ways we represent and share ideas in an expanding, networked social environment.

The video game (often called the *interactive entertainment*) industry is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the U.S. According to the Entertainment Software Association, Americans spent over \$21 billion on video game hardware and software combined in 2013. By the year 2007, video games had surpassed both the motion picture and music industry in total revenue. However, videogames are having a cultural impact far beyond their role as an economic commodity; they are also changing how we tell stories, the way we interact with one another, and nature of communities in which we learn, play, work, and engage with our life experiences.

*Game Culture and Interactive Worlds* provides an overview of gaming and real time interactive simulations, to familiarize students with a "big picture" of interactive

entertainment, technology augmented communication, as well as the social implications of these experiences. Those students who want to pursue a career in the interactive communication industries need to be aware of the wide diversity of technical, narrative, business, and artistic skills required to succeed in this arena. Students are introduced to the history, design, technology, business, cultural and psychological aspects of digital gaming. Also included are featured module on genres, artificial intelligence, and practical applications for “serious” games and simulations. This course advocates media literacy - the importance of understanding how interactive digital technologies communicate ideas in the media rich environments of the 21st Century.

The course will include guest speakers, lectures, readings, case studies, online demos, exploration of game genres, and time applied to creating, analyzing and playing games.

A capstone team project will be required to investigate a social, aesthetic, or cultural topic related to interactive entertainment or communications. Teams will be required to present their projects for peer review, and for subsequent archiving in the course online knowledge base.

### **Online Components:**

*Game Culture and Interactive Worlds* is a hybrid class which meets one or two days on campus with occasional labs or presentations scheduled for a second day each week as scheduled by the instructor. The remainder of the class takes place online. All of the lecture content is posted on the Canvas website, and students are responsible for keeping up to date with this material and all reading assignments in preparation for in-class discussions, demonstrations, hands-on exercises, and other in-class activities.

The online portion of this course will also be used as a supplemental information resource and discussion area for the gaming class outside of regular classroom hours. On the Canvas Game Culture & Interactive Worlds web site, students can also contact the instructor, track their grades, submit assignments, and check the calendar for classroom assignments and deadlines.

Students will be responsible for tracking all updates and assignments on the class website.

Once you are enrolled in the class and the quarter has begun, you will be able to log onto the class website at <http://bellevuecollege.edu/canvas>. If you need logon assistance, check out <http://depts.bellevuecollege.edu/helpdesk/students/canvas/>

Occasionally, technical problems can block you from accessing the course site. Try switching browsers and if you still can't get onto our site, call the Help at (425) 564-HELP (4357) to troubleshoot your connection issue.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Other social networking tools may also be introduced as needed during the semester to enhance course collaboration.

### Course Objectives:

- Differentiate and describe categories of games by genre, technology, and player interaction.
- Play and analyze games in terms of topics explored in the readings and online presentations
- Identify the principles of narrative and story structure as they apply to engagement with interactive experiences
- Provided with specific design criteria, construct a simple interactive game experience using middleware
- Explain the psychological motivations and incentives of game players.
- Demonstrate fundamental concepts behind creating interactive gaming experiences.
- Explain the relationship between artificial intelligence and interactive gaming experiences
- Describe the social design considerations in the creation of online multi-participant worlds.
- Develop a critical vocabulary for analyzing all types of videogames
- Identify and discuss social, economic, and ethical issues related to interactive entertainment experiences.

### Course Schedule:

The course section listed below approximately correspond to the weeks of the quarter, but are subject to modification in order to flexibly meet the scheduling requirements of this synchronous distance learning class. Consequently, this schedule may need to be adjusted or modified as the quarter progresses. Instructor may alter the course to accommodate curriculum and schedule changes.

#### Module 1 : Overview of Interactive Entertainment

#### TOPICS:

Class Introductions and Course Overview  
Introduction to Video Games and Real-Time Interactive Computer Simulations

**READINGS:**

*Game Development Essentials* - Historical Elements, Chapters 1,2 - pp. 3-55;

**MODULE 1 ACTIVITY**

- Familiarize yourself with Canvas, the Bellevue College course delivery system
- CANVAS: Complete Getting Started and Module 1 Module Module
- ONLINE LECTURE: Introduction to Interactive Entertainment
- Post survey and biographical information to the Canvas Discussion area

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- Obtain required textbook.
- Access Bellevue College Office 365 account (details in class) -
- Review Office 365 tutorials as needed (available online)
- View and respond to assignments as specified in class

## **Module 2 : Game History and Genres**

**TOPICS:**

- History of Video Games: From Atari arcades to massively multiplayer online games.
- Game Taxonomy: classification based on delivery platforms, genres, player interaction.
- Games, simulations, puzzles.

**READINGS:**

Steven Kent. *Trend Setters: The 10 Most Significant Games* - available in the courser reader.

**MODULE 2 ACTIVITY:**

- View and respond to reading and/or video assignments as specified in class
- Explore classic games from provided links and select one for your first written project.
- ONLINE LECTURES: Game History and Game Genres

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- **Project 1 assigned:** Classic Game Review (games available online)
- **Knowledgebase Project** teams selected and posted for developing a knowledgebase project contract

## **Module 3: Interactivity and Entertainment Technology**

**TOPICS:**

- The Attention Economy ("Attention is the currency of the Internet.")
- Interactive Entertainment: Fundamental Concepts
- Psychology of the Player

- Player Types
- Motivational strategies
- Ingredients of compelling gameplay

**READINGS:**

Textbook: *Game Development Essentials* -  
Chapter 6 - Gameplay: Creating the Experience, pp.183-211

**MODULE 3 ACTIVITY:**

- ONLINE LECTURES: Entertainment Technology Theory
- View and respond to reading and/or video assignments as specified in class

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Quiz:** Interactive Entertainment, Game History, and Genres

## **Module 4 : AI, Middleware, Interactive Devices**

**TOPICS:**

- The great convergence: Current directions in video games and entertainment. Consoles, PCs, handheld devices, and social networks.
- Middleware overview: Newly available game and level creation tools
- History of artificial intelligence (AI)
- Characteristics and challenges of AI
- Cybernetics and human-machine interactivity
- New Gaming Interfaces

**READING:**

Chapter 8 - Interface: Creating the Connection, pp. 235-275

**VIEWING**

Ray Kurzweil: *The increasing role of virtual reality* (online)  
Ray Kurzweil on *MOORE'S LAW* (online)

**MODULE 4 ACTIVITY:**

- ONLINE LECTURES: Artificial Intelligence, Middleware
- View and respond to reading and/or video assignments as specified in class  
Build a simple game using Kodu

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Knowledgebase Team project contract finalized for completion by Week 11. Requires team participation and decision-making.

## **Module 5 : Interactive Narrative**

**TOPICS:**

- The role of stories in interactive entertainment
- Joseph Campbell, Christopher Vogler, and the Hero's Journey story cycle

- Storytelling devices
- The central story issue in games: freedom of choice versus narrative control
- Integrating story and game structures
- AI augmented dramatic action

**READINGS:**

*Game Development Essentials* - Chapter 5 - Story and Character Development pp. 123-180.

**MODULE 5 ACTIVITY:**

- ONLINE LECTURES: Game Story and Narrative
- View and respond to reading and/or video assignments as specified in class

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- **Project 2 assigned:** Provide an analysis of a favorite game based on assigned evaluation criteria.
- **Graded Discussion:** AI-Driven Narrative in *Façade*
- **Quiz:** Game Theory, Artificial Intelligence, Middleware

## **Module 6 : World Building**

**TOPICS:**

- 2D versus 3D games
- 3D modeling concepts and level design
- Conceptual illustrations and graphic themes
- World Building: Environments, architecture, and characters
- Environmental storytelling
- Usability testing and mapping gameplay
- Use of visual programming applications (middleware) for creating games

**READINGS:**

*Game Development Essentials* - Chapter 7- Levels: Creating the World, pp. 213-233.

**MODULE 5 ACTIVITY:**

- Introduction to the Portal 2 level editor. Use the PuzzleMaker editor to create an interactive level.
- ONLINE LECTURES: Game Environments and World Building

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

View and respond to reading and/or video assignments as specified in class  
Midterm Exam to follow completion of Module 6.

## **Module 7 : Social Worlds**

**TOPICS:**

- World Building: Environments, architecture, and characters
- World creation at Blizzard Entertainment and Pixar

- Online Games and Virtual Worlds : Minecraft versus Second Life
- Character Development and Identity

**READINGS:**

*The Lessons of LucasFilms Habitat*, Randall Farmer & Chip Morningstar, (1990)  
*Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: People Who Suit MUDs*, Richard Bartle, (1996)

**MODULE 7 ACTIVITY AND ASSIGNMENT:**

- ONLINE LECTURES: Social Worlds & Transmedia
- Create an interactive Portal map in Puzzlemaker
- View and respond to reading and/or video assignments as specified in class
- Long Distance Game Lab

**Module 8: Social Issues**

**TOPICS:**

**Social Issues Related to Interactive Environments**

- Ethical Issues in Games
- Censorship
- Surveillance
- Trolling, Bullying, Harassment
- Game Violence
- Game and Interactive Device addiction
- Competitive Gaming
- Social Isolation

**READINGS:**

- Video interviews with Dr. Hilarie Cash on game addiction and other selected videos or written articles.

**MODULE 8: ACTIVITY**

- Discussion on social issues: addictions, surveillance, censorship, bullying, etc.
- ONLINE LECTURES: Social Issues in Online Worlds
- Dr. Hilarie Cash: Games and Internet addictions

**Exam:** Mid-Term Exam, in class

**Module 9 : Serious Games**

**TOPICS:**

- Serious Games (for health, learning, and social change)
- Simulations for training, pain diversion, treatment of phobias
- Collaborative multi-participant idea spaces
- Gaming and online learning

**READINGS:**

- *Game Development Essentials - Serious Games* - pp. 60-65 (review).
- "Semiotic Domains: Is Playing Video Games a "Waste of Time?" *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. James Gee

#### **MODULE 9 ACTIVITY:**

- ONLINE LECTURES: Serious Games
- Addendum: Reading and Viewing, Serious Games videos
- Assignment:  
Serious Game Review, Using Minecraft to Learn Programming at Code.org
- Unreal Tournament team competition, in class

### **Module 10 : VR and Interactive Worlds**

#### **TOPICS:**

- Legacy and origins of Virtual Reality
- Dr. Thomas Furness and the Virtual Cockpit
- Applications of VR
- Trending VR technologies
- Integration of artificial intelligence and human cognition

#### **ASSIGNMENT**

GRADED DISCUSSION - Evaluate the following videos:  
*Apple's Knowledge Navigator* (1988)  
*Sight* (2012)

### **Module 11 : Capstone Team Projects**

#### **Team-based Knowledgebase Project Presentations**

**Module 10 Content:** Final Project grade criteria

- Following specifications
- Working in teams
- Project presentation delivery

**Last Week - Final Exam**

### **MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS**

**These are the required assignments and associated point values for the class:**

**1. Classic Game Review:**

Write a description of a classic arcade game to include the following: history, game story, objective, gameplay characteristics, and a personal rating of 1 (best) to 10 (worst) with an explanation for your score. Be prepared to demonstrate and present your results in class. (100 points)

2. **Game Analysis**

Write an evaluation of a game that you've played based on game design criteria that are discussed in class. Included will be a history of a chosen game, the game platform, a synopsis of the game story, and a subjective account of impressions and experiences with the game. Explain how specific cultural attitudes and beliefs are represented in the game. Be prepared to demonstrate and present your results in class. (100 points)

3. **Online Networking Project:**

Develop an online team collaboration project using middleware. (50 points)

4. **Capstone Project:**

Students will be expected to contribute an area of their expertise in the co-creation of a Gaming Theory course topic along with other members of a presentation team. This can take the form of programming, teaching, graphic/web/video design, as part of an online 20 minute presentation on a game-related area of interest. Teams will be formed in Week 4 and will turn in a contract proposal for instructor review and suggestions. The team Knowledgebase Project presentation will be due by the 10<sup>th</sup> week of the quarter, and will include a summarizing article published on the class wiki. (100 points)

5. **LAN Game Tournament**

Participate in an in-class networked videogame tournament. (50 points)

6. **Class Participation**

Students must be prepared to discuss all reading assignments in assigned texts, hand-outs, and discussion topics introduced in class. During the quarter, students will be assigned a variety of smaller projects and quizzes worth a total of 100 points. (100 class participation points)

7. **Exams**

Finally, there will be a mid-term test (100 points) and final test (100 points)

**Grading:**

Course grades will be assigned based on the percentage of the total points a student receives for their Exams and Projects.

**Grading Scale: 700 Total Class Points**

It is a Gaming Program policy that any grade lower than C- is not considered adequate for completion of the class as a Program Degree or Certificate requirement or as a prerequisite for any other program courses.

**EXTRA CREDIT**

Students may give short presentations on game-related topics of interest. These short class presentations are each worth 5 points, with a maximum of 15 points for the quarter.

## Course Policies and Procedures:

### **SYLLABUS CHANGES:**

Contents of this syllabus as well as course policies and procedures may be changed at any time during the quarter at the instructor's discretion.

### **ONLINE AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

Just as in any public environment, disruptions and impoliteness are not tolerated; neither will they be tolerated within the confines of our online "classroom." Students are to show respect towards each other and their instructor, which includes respect and tolerance for each other's ideas. Any sort of disrespect will, at the very least, impact negatively on your class participation grade.

***Unless you are working on class-related projects or taking notes, classroom computer monitors are to be turned off. Also leave cell phones and music players turned off during class periods.***

### **This course adheres to the following policy guidelines:**

Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the student code of conduct. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pages to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates.

### **CLASS ATTENDANCE:**

Attendance at all scheduled class meetings is mandatory. This requirement is particularly meant to apply to courses that are designated for classroom delivery, although distance education courses may also have certain attendance requirements. This requirement is intended 1) to prevent instructors from having to adjudicate individual excuses, and 2) to recognize that excuses are ultimately irrelevant both here at Bellevue College and in the workplace.

A roll call will be taken at the beginning of each class. If you aren't present when your name is called, you will be marked absent for that day. More than three unexcused absences during the quarter will result in your final grade being marked down one letter grade. Example: a B- would be marked down to a C-. For more information regarding my attendance policy, check the Getting Started module called *About Writing Essays, Attendance, and Plagiarism*.

If you are absent for a class or need to leave early, you need to let me know the reason for your absence either verbally or by Canvas email before the class begins, or it will be counted as an unexcused absence..

**SYLLABUS CHANGES:**

Contents of this syllabus may be changed at any time during the quarter at the instructor's discretion.

**GRACE PERIOD for PROJECTS:**

A grace period of two days is given for each assignment except the final project. No assignment will be accepted after the two day grace period has expired, unless explained unexpected circumstances are provided to warrant an extended deadline. For more information regarding expectations for assignment writing and content, review the **Assignments and Writing** page.

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Unless you are working on class-related projects, classroom computer monitors are to be turned off. Also leave cell phones and music players turned off during class periods. Please note: I will deduct five (5) points from your grade for each instance where you are using the classroom computers or other electronic devices for non-class related purposes.

This course adheres to the following policy guidelines as provided by the Office of Student Services:

"Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pages to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Vice President of Student Services for possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Vice President of Student Services."

If you are found to have cheated or copied for any assignment or exam you will forfeit your grade for the assignment, and possibly a failing grade. Cheating includes copying other people's work, with or without their permission, and using content from a Web site, book, or other source without quoting that content or citing sources. For additional information review the **Policies And Procedures** page.

*(\*If you are accused of Cheating, Stealing Exams, and/or Plagiarism, there is a Bellevue College Discipline and Appeals Procedure (the right to due process) which you may pursue. Contact the Business Division Chair in Business Division office (A242), or the Dean of Student Services (B231A), or the Associated Student Body offices (above the Cafeteria) for information regarding the appeals process.)*

**COURSE WITHDRAWAL:**

College policy states that students must formally withdraw from a class by the end of the seventh week of the quarter. (For assistance contact the Registration Office in B125). If a student has not withdrawn by that date, an appropriate letter grade will be assigned for the course.

**CLASS EVALUATION**

During the quarter, you may receive instructions on providing feedback about the class you are taking. This evaluation will only take a few moments of your time. Please ask the instructor any questions you may have about this process.

**STUDENT SERVICES**

The project work submitted this quarter will make use of your presentation, and writing skills to assess your understanding of the class content. If you need help with your writing skills, please make use of the Writing Lab in D-204 (425-564-2400). If you have (or think you might have) a disability that will have an impact on your learning, please take the time to register with Disability Resource Center in B132 (425-564-2498) within the first week of the quarter. In that way, you can properly notify your instructor of your disability and meet to discuss its implications on your class work or attendance.

For more information, visit the Student Services Information Page.

**MEETINGS WITH THE INSTRUCTOR**

By appointment only.

**Additional Information**

Game Culture and Interactive Worlds is a hybrid class which meets on campus on Tuesdays from 12:30PM to 2:40PM and for extra lab or class sessions on Thursdays as needed during the same time slot in N209. The balance of instruction occurs online as assigned by the instructor.

This class is listed as Game Culture & Interactive Worlds under Digital Media Arts - Item #: 4810

For more information contact Bruce Wolcott – [bwolcott@bellevuecollege.edu](mailto:bwolcott@bellevuecollege.edu)