

**GAME 210 Basic Game Design**  
**Fall 2017 – Section 003**  
**Monday, Wednesday 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM, Art and Design Room 1018**

**Instructor and Contact Info**

- Instructor: Josiah Lebowitz
- Office: Art and Design, Room 2015
- Office Phone: 703-993-8823
- E-Mail: jlebowi2@gmu.edu
- Office Hours: Monday & Thursday: 12:00 – 1:30 PM and On Request
- General Notes: Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns, or just to chat about the course, games, and the like. **The best contact method is e-mail.** I will normally reply to all course related e-mails with 24 hours (48 hours during weekends and holidays). I am generally available for phone calls and in-person visits during my office hours, but it's still best to check ahead of time and let me know when you want to come by. Phone conversations and in-person meetings can be arranged at other times if necessary.

**Course Description**

This course is an introductory overview of the video game development process with an emphasis on game design. Through detailed study of historical as well as current games, students will learn the language and structure needed to develop their own game ideas. Students will learn the many aspects of a game development team and learn how each of these roles contributes to a game's overall design. Projects, in and out of class, will focus on creating and designing game concepts both digital and non-digital. A strong focus on the elements of game design and process will support class projects. Students will get a basic overview of game studies and integrate those concepts into their work.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students who complete this course will:

- A. Be familiar with the evolution of electronic gaming and factors that drove its development.
- B. Be able to evaluate the video game industry and market
- C. Understand the basic mechanics and design structure of traditional and digital games.
- D. Understand elements related to game strategy, theory and gameplay
- E. Understand the basic game development process.
- F. Be able to identify the roles within a game development team.
- G. Analyze and develop game concepts and proposals
- H. Develop a traditional game in a team environment.
- I. Develop a simple video game in a team environment.

**Requirements and Evaluation**

Students should come to class prepared to discuss any and all material covered in the assigned readings. Classes will consist of lectures, discussions, videos, game demonstrations, project work, and group activities.

Projects and assignments will consist of writing short essays about game development, creating various types of game documentation (solo and as part of a team), creating playable traditional and video games as part of a team, and other related activities. The full details for all assignments and projects can be found on Blackboard.

For the mid-term, student teams will create and submit a design document describing the premise, content, and gameplay for an original game idea of their own design. Work on the document will begin early in the semester and build upon itself leading up to the mid-term.

For the final project, student teams will submit and present an original game or game demo/prototype based on the design document from their mid-term. Games will be created using an established game engine. Student teams will be self-evaluated as part of the project grade for work contributed, communication and excellence.

Students' final grades are calculated by comparing their scores to the maximum possible score. The breakdown is as follows:

- 40% - Projects and Assignments
- 25% - Mid-Term Design Document
- 25% - Final Game Project and Presentation
- 10% - Attendance / Class Participation

A: 90–100 B: 80–89.9 C: 70–79.9 D: 60–69.9 F: 0–59.9

### Course Schedule and Assignments

Start Date	Section Name	Due Date
8/28	What is game design? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Assignment</li> </ul>	9/3
9/4	Game Elements, Platforms, and Genres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Assignment</li> <li>• Game Analysis Assignment</li> <li>• Industry News Assignment #1</li> </ul>	9/17
9/18	Creating an Idea and the Three C's <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Assignment</li> <li>• Pitch Document and Three C's Assignment</li> </ul>	10/1
10/2	Expanding Your Idea and Creating a Design Document <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Assignment</li> <li>• Mid-Term Design Document Assignment</li> </ul>	10/15
10/16	The Development Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Assignment</li> <li>• Development Team Assignment</li> </ul>	10/29

10/30	Level and Puzzle Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Assignment</li> <li>• Level and Puzzle Design Assignment</li> </ul>	11/12
11/13	Combat, Enemies, Abilities, and Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Assignment</li> <li>• Industry News Assignment #2</li> </ul>	11/26
11/27	Finishing Your Game <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Assignment</li> <li>• Final Game Project</li> <li>• Final Project Presentation</li> </ul>	12/13

### **University Holidays**

9/4 (Mon) Labor Day

10/9 (Mon) Columbus Day

11/22 – 26 (Wed – Sun) Thanksgiving Break

### **Required Texts and Materials**

Level Up! The Guide to Great Video Game Design (2nd Edition)

By Scott Rogers

ISBN: 1118877160

### **Recommended Materials**

PC Desktop / Laptop (For working on projects outside of class.)

USB Flash Drive and/or Online File Sharing Account

### **Assumptions**

It is assumed that students are familiar with MLA and/or APA formatting or resources that contain such guidelines for writing assignments. It is also assumed that students have regular access to email and the Internet. Any issues with email or Blackboard access should be taken up with university ITU. Finally, it is assumed that students are familiar with and have regular access to Microsoft Word.

### **Late Work**

Unless otherwise noted, all quizzes, assignments, and projects must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM on their due date. Anything submitted after this time will be considered late. They can still be turned in for credit, but for each day a quiz or assignment is late your score will be reduced by 5%. Unless otherwise noted, the final turn in date for late assignments and quizzes is one week after their original due date. After that, they will automatically receive a score of 0.

Late work will only be accepted without penalty in the case of a documented medical illness or another serious extenuating circumstance. In such cases, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss the situation.

### **Class Participation**

Students are expected to actively engage in class discussions and activities. While reading assignments and lecture notes will be made available online, in-class lectures and activities will contain additional information, provide considerable hands-on experience, and also offer opportunities to earn bonus points via in-class assignments and challenges.

The use of laptops, tablets, smart phones, etc. is allowed in-class for the purposes of note taking, following along with the lecture material, and participating in certain activities. However, all devices must be in silent mode and used in a way that does not disrupt the class or otherwise disturb fellow students.

### **Online Participation**

All course assignments and due dates can be found on Blackboard, along with announcements, lecture notes, and other important information. Many of the assignments must also be submitted via Blackboard. Therefore, it is recommended that students familiarize themselves with Blackboard at the start of the semester and check it regularly. If you have any non-technical questions about Blackboard and how it's utilized as part of the course, don't hesitate to ask.

### **E-Mail Policy**

Students must use their MasonLIVE or gmU.edu email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

### **Students With Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see the professor and contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

### **Honor Code**

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code:* Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

Students are expected to follow all University policies and guidelines. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

### **University Catalog**

Students are to be aware of the policies listed in the University Catalog: <http://catalog.gmu.edu/>.

### **GMU Add/Drop Policy**

It is the student's responsibility to check to verify that they are properly enrolled as no credit will be awarded to students who are not. University dates concerning withdrawal can be found in the academic calendar and are not negotiable by the professor.