

George Mason University College of Visual and Performing Arts  
Computer Game Design

**GAME 367-002: Writing Sound/Music for Games 3 Credit Hours**

Prerequisites: Sound & Music: GAME 250

Instructor: Matt Nolan

Studio/Lecture: Tuesday 1:30-4:10 PM

Classroom: AB 1018

Office: Art & Design RM 2023

Office Hours: Thursday 2-4:30 or by appointment

Contact: 703-993-9591, mnolan4@gmu.edu

**Course Description:**

Combined studio and lecture course that will focus on the composition, editing, processing, mixing, and integration of sound effects, narration, and music into computer games. Time, frequency, and amplitude domain digital production and post-production techniques, MIDI control and processing will be reviewed.

Audio mixing will be studied, as well as the differences between linear and nonlinear game sound production.

Students are expected to build and maintain a portfolio of original scripts, sound effects and music. This portfolio will be reviewed throughout the semester. Students are expected to have these sounds saved on a physical drive (USB) named with their first initial and last name. Files should be well organized into categories to facilitate easy review and access to files when working on projects. This portfolio should be on hand each class, in case you are asked to share your work.

Students will create, post-produce, and mix the sound and music for a pre-existing computer game 'map' (level) that will be due at Mid-Term.

Students will also create, post-produce, and mix the sounds and music for a complete original computer game (three levels minimum) that will be due at the end of the semester.

**Objectives:**

To build student awareness of the techniques, methods, and aesthetic choices used to ensure quality sounds, narration, and music for computer games through existing examples, peer critique and discussions, and writing, producing, and post-producing original sounds and music for computer games.

**Requirements and Evaluation:**

At the beginning of each class meeting, students should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings, topic assignments, and sound/music examples. In addition, students should be prepared to discuss with the class the status and stage of their project(s), as well as any design, structural, technical, or theoretical and historical issues. A lecture will follow, and then students are expected to work during class on their assignments or project. The assigned readings, or other required materials will be online, reserved in the program Game Library or in the Johnson Center Library.

At Mid-Term, students are required to present and submit an original produced, post-produced and mixed complete audio score to a small/limited computer game map/level using a minimum of 10 original audio sources, including interface sounds/music, menu sound/music, character sound/music, environmental sounds, asset sounds, and level (theme and battle) music. Students may choose to use their own, or a pre-existing computer game to score the music and sound.

During the first week of class, students will write a proposal detailing their Mid-Term Project: the intended audience and purpose, the origin of the computer game, and the original resource(s) for the sound and music.

During the 8th week of class, students will provide a 20-minute presentation discussing the technical, structural and artistic content of their mid-term project.

In the 9th week of class, students will write a proposal detailing their final project: the intended audience and purpose, the origin of their chosen 'original' computer game, and source(s) for the sound and music. In the final week of class,

students will provide a 20-minute presentation discussing the technical, structural and artistic content of their final project.

During the final week of the semester, students will present and submit an originally produced, post-produced, and mixed complete audio score, including MIDI controlled resources to a complete original multi-level (3+) computer game with a minimum of 20 original audio sources (including narration, interface sounds/music, environmental sounds, asset sounds, and level music).

A series of short projects will be assigned to compliment most lectures.

**Texts:** Marks, Aaron, "**The Complete Guide to Game Audio, Second Edition: For Composers, Musicians, Sound Designers, Game Developers** (Gama Network Series)", Focal Press; 2nd Ed. (October 31, 2008)

Collins, Karen, "**Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory, and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design**", MIT Press; October 31, 2008

**Other helpful Texts:**

Menard, Michelle, “**Game Development with Unity**”, Course Technology, PRT; 1st Edition (Jan. 2011).

Brandon, A., **Audio for Games, Process and Production** (Paperback), New Rider Games, 2004. ISBN-13: 978-0735714137

**Grading:**

Grading will be based on participation in classroom discussions, homework, and mini-projects (25%),

Sound, Music, and scripting portfolio (20%)

Mid-term presentation and project (20%),

Final presentation and project (35%).

To receive a grade of "A" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 90% on the course work requirements.

To receive a grade of "B" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 80% on the course work requirements.

To receive a grade of "C" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 70% on the course work requirements.

To receive a grade of "D" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 60% on the course work requirements.

Failure to receive a "D" grade will result in a grade of "F".

**Honor Code Statement:** George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee. See [honorcode.gmu.edu](http://honorcode.gmu.edu) for more detailed information.