

Syllabus: **GDD 101 Introduction to Game Design**

Fall 2024

Class meets M/W 9:00 – 9:15 am Tator Hall 129

Course website: <http://mywebspace.quinnipiac.edu/egbertozzi/101>

INSTRUCTOR INFO: Elena Bertozzi Ph.D. (elena.bertozzi@qu.edu)

OFFICE HOURS

M/W 2:15-3

I am available via email during the week (Monday- Friday) and will try to respond to emails within 48 hours. Emails received on the weekend will be answered by the beginning of the following week.

DESCRIPTION

GDD 101. Introduction to Game Design 3 Credits.

This course introduces students to the practice of game design (board, card, dice, physical games), theories of game design and play, the study of the social effects of games, the role of serious games for teaching and learning and production practices in the games industry. Students learn critical analysis of games and the process of design documentation.

OBJECTIVES

Students in this course will learn:

- What play is, how it differs from everyday life, and required elements for games
- How to critically analyze games and game components verbally and in writing
- The design process for new games: brainstorming, prototyping, design documentation, testing
- How to work with others: playing, testing, and improving each other's games.

STRUCTURE

Students will post weekly responses to the readings and read other students' responses prior to the first weekly class meeting. One class meeting a week will be discussion of the concepts and issues raised by the readings and responses. The other class meeting will be a student-led session critically analyzing a game. Each student will select a game that they feel to be especially interesting and well made. All students will play the game, preferably together for ca. 40 minutes. Then the presenting student will lead a critical analysis and discussion of the game play experience. After each game play session, students will brainstorm ideas for new games.

SOFTWARE/ HARDWARE

You will turn your weekly reading assignments in by uploading them to the discussion board in Blackboard before the due date/time. If you are presenting a digital game, you need to make sure that everyone in the class is able to access and play the game. If you are presenting an analog game, you need to make sure that you have all the needed equipment, have

asked the professor to reserve any needed fields or gyms, and that there are ways for students not willing or able to do specific physical activities to participate.

STUDENT WORK

You will be creating a GDD Portfolio that collects and displays your best work in the program. If you are especially proud of any assignments you created for this class, upload pdfs to your mywebspace folder so you can link them to your Portfolio.

CLASS RULES

No eating in the lab. No cellphone use during class time. No working on projects, browsing the web or watching YouTube while other students are making presentations or during class discussions. This extremely disrespectful towards your classmates and will negatively impact your grade. If you are participating in the class via Zoom, you should be present and engaged for the duration of the class.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Reading responses (20 pts. each x 7 = 140 pts.)
- New Game Ideas (60pts)
- In-Class Game Play Demo (100 pts.)
- Dice Game Assignment (150 pts.)
- Critical Analysis of a Game (150 pts.)
- Card Game Assignment (150 pts.)
- Final Game Prototype and Design Document (200 pts.)
- Class participation (50 pts.)

SCHEDULE: August 26- - December 14

WEEK 1, 8/26

- Intros, course logistics and expectations, overview of the course. Topic: What is Play? What is a Game?
- Reading: brief summary of Huizinga's Homo Ludens (<https://www.gamelevellearn.com/learn>)
- Game presentation demo by Professor

WEEK 2, 9/2

- Due: Response #1
- Discussion topics: constraints that often define play (time, space, rules, intentions)
- Discussion questions:
 - Can play be forced?
 - Can play be an attitude rather than a thing?.
 - What are some of the functions of play in culture?
-
- Reading: (https://learn.canvas.net/courses/3/pages/level-1-dot-2-games-defined?module_item_id=44517)
- Start thinking about Dice assignment
- Game presentation

WEEK 3, 9/9

- Due: Response #2
- Topic: Games as systems: Rules, Feedback, Challenges, Narratives
- Discussion topics: There are many different ways of thinking about and trying to define play. We are not looking to dissect play, but to think about its components so that we can experiment with them and usefully come up with new ideas.
- Discussion questions:
 - How do we determine and evolve rule sets?
 - Why do we play and keep playing? What are important features to keeping players engaged in a game? What makes you want to stop playing?
- Reading: <https://www.jameslindlibrary.org/articles/casting-and-drawing-lots-a-time-honoured-way-of-dealing-with-uncertainty-and-for-ensuring-fairness/>
- Think about
 - How does play help us deal with the randomness of life? The certainty of death?
 - How/ why does the process of drawing lots help us accept undesirable outcomes?
 - List some of the ways that randomness intersects with play to make it better and to make it worse
 - How can game designers use randomness to improve gameplay? What are issues with having it be the main mechanic of the game?
- Game presentation:

WEEK 4, 9/16

In class we will play all the Dice games. Bring the game to class ready to play with a clear set of rules and all the necessary pieces. Your design doc should specifically discuss why and how you included randomness in your game and cite the reading. Your use of randomness should be very intentional. You will observe others playing your game, but cannot intervene or explain. After you have observed players, you will write up a summary of the issues and problems you discovered. Add this observation and photos of people playing to your Dice Game document on BB by 5pm.

- Reading: pgs 1-53 from Rock, Paper Scissors by Len Fischer (available as ebook from the library)
- Due: Dice Assignment
- Game Presentation:

WEEK 5, 9/23

- Due: Response #3
- Topic: Game theory and how it applies to game design
- Discussion topics: the concept of fairness, how we all use a minimax strategy in life and in play, using values like utils to help players compare value and make decisions.
- Discussion questions:
 - What are examples of gameplay where understanding a minimax strategy helps you succeed?
 - What are examples of gameplay where there is some value system (currency, karma, etc.) to help players make strategic decisions?

- Which games do this better than others?

Reading: This article about playtesting (<https://www.gamedeveloper.com/business/playtesting-blueprint-for-game-studio-managers>)

- Game Presentation:

WEEK 6, 9/30

- Topic: Usability/ Playtesting
- Discussion topics: how does our experience of a game change as we learn how to critically assess? How can we use these assessments to guide our own games?
- Discussion questions:
 - What questions would you ask playtesters of your dice game?
 - Why is it difficult to come up with questions that will elicit useful feedback?
 - Why is it difficult for a designer to objectively assess their own work?
- Why should we not try to defend ourselves and our decisions from player feedback?

Reading: (<https://www.gamerswithglasses.com/reviews/gaming-representation>)

Identify game and elements for Critical Analysis

Game Presentation:

WEEK 7, 10/7

- Due: Response #4 and Outline of critical analysis
- Topic: Representation in games: Race, Gender, Ethnicity and otherness
 - Topic: Representations in games: self and other
 - Discussion topics: Why are diversity, inclusion, and equity important in games? Why does it matter how we are represented and how we represent others and environments? How have movements like Gamergate and Black Lives Matter affected representation in games? How can games change attitudes?
- Discussion questions:
 - Many games involve playing at being someone other than yourself. What does it mean if someone says they are "forced to think about race"?
 - Are there games that offer experiences of diversity and inclusion that don't reinforce stereotypes and dominant ideologies?
- Game presentation

WEEK 8, 10/14

- Due: Critical Analysis of Game and Response #5
- Watching for next week: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oW5EeDbY88A> (start ca. 25min in)
- Game Presentation:

WEEK 9, 10/21

- Topic: Prototyping and Iterative Testing
- We will start workshopping your final game and think about how to prototype it.
- Start designing Card Game
- Reading for next week: Reading: Consalvo (<http://www.i-r-i-e.net/inhalt/004/Consalvo.pdf>)
- Game presentation:

WEEK 10, 10/28

- Due: Response #6
- Topic: Ethics and Cheating in Play
- Discussion topics: Do games teach us ethics? How not to be ethical? If a game makes you do something "bad" is the player or designer responsible?
- Discussion questions:
 - What is worse to have in a game with you - a spoilsport or a cheater?
 - Which of the ethical conundrums Consalvo mentions have you experienced?
 - What are games you have played that forced you to make ethical choices?
- Game presentation:

WEEK 11, 11/4

- Due Card Assignment
- Topic: Playtesting your Card Game
- Reading: <https://www.thegamer.com/video-games-best-sound-design/>
- Game presentation:

WEEK 12, 11/11

- Due: Response 7
- Topic: Game Narratives and Audio
- Discussion topics - Game Narratives, Game Audio
- Game presentation:

Week 13, 11/18

- Topic: Workshopping your final game idea
- Using tools like Miro:
 - character design
 - level design

- audio design
- narrative
- UI/UX - how will you give players feedback to keep them engaged and motivated?
- Game Presentation:

Week 14, 12/2

- Due: Draft of Game Design Document with playable paper prototype
- Game Presentation:

Week 15, TBD

- Final Exam day: Design Doc presentations

GRADING SCALE

Your final letter grade is based on the Quinnipiac Grading Scale as follows:

A 93-100	B+ 87-89	B- 80-82	C 73-76	D 60-69
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C+ 77-79	C- 70-72	F 0-59

NOTE: A C- or better is required in all departmental prerequisites.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY Our Academic Integrity Policy is based on the five fundamental values outlined by the Center for Academic Integrity: honesty, trust, responsibility, fairness and respect. Quinnipiac expects all members of our community, students, faculty and staff to uphold these five standards and to contribute to our larger culture of integrity. Go to go.qu.edu/policies to view the Academic Integrity Policy.

GDD INCLUSIVITY AND EQUITY POLICY

GDD is committed to maintaining an environment in which all members are treated equitably, feel fairly represented, and are comfortable discussing topics, particularly controversial ones, with civility and open-mindedness. We are working to build a community of diverse individuals who can celebrate difference while building on what we have in common. Game design is a creative practice, so we encourage wide-ranging explorations of what is possible while respecting practices that work toward the greater good. We ask all members of the community to think about the work they are producing and ask themselves if they are consciously or unconsciously reproducing or reinforcing stereotypes, bias, or other elements that propagate systemic racism, sexism, bigotry or other inequalities. Games can change the world; let's make sure we are changing it in a positive way.

VPA LATE WORK POLICY

The assignments for this class must be turned in complete and on time. **NO LATE WORK IS ACCEPTED.** If you have a medical or family emergency which will prevent you from getting your work done, it is your obligation to notify the professor of this fact and provide him/her with the appropriate documentation **BEFORE** the due date of the assignment. If your work is not turned in on time and you have not provided an excuse prior to the due date, do **NOT** email the professor with justifications. You will simply not receive credit for the assignment.

VPA ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to be in class ready to work at the beginning of the scheduled classtime. PROMPT ARRIVAL TO CLASS IS EXPECTED. Three late arrivals to class will equal one absence. PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU HAVE 6 OR MORE ABSENCES YOU MAY BE ASKED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE COURSE. 7 ABSENCES DURING THE SEMESTER WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE. Attendance for the last class meeting scheduled during Finals Week is required. There is no distinction between "excused" or "unexcused" absences - missed course work, content and class participation are an issue in any absence and can negatively impact the rest of the class members. In the case of extenuating circumstances, such as an ongoing illness or the death of a loved one, the professor should be consulted as soon as possible, and documentation from the Student Affairs office may be required. In such circumstances the faculty and student can negotiate the possibility of granting an "Incomplete." In the rare cases where a student is allowed to take an "Incomplete" as the result of extenuating circumstances, the student must follow the guidelines and timelines stipulated in the University catalog.

POLICY ON DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who wish to request reasonable accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility in Arnold Bernhard Library north wing at (203) 582-7600 or North Haven at SLE 340 (203)-582-7600 (access@quinnipiac.edu). Quinnipiac University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

STUDENT HANDBOOK

The Quinnipiac University Student Handbook is intended to serve as a source of information on the many services, activities and policies of Quinnipiac. The handbook can be found at: <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/student-experience/health-and-safety/student-handbook/>

LEARNING COMMONS

The Learning Commons is a place for students to go when they want to achieve a level of performance they can't reach on their own. In a setting of practice and growth, student resources are provided through Peer Educator programs, the Office of Student Accessibility, and Academic Development & Outreach professional staff. The Learning Commons can be found at the Mount Carmel Campus in the North wing of the Arnold Bernhard Library. Students are encouraged to visit The Learning Commons for support with class content, to improve study skills, to consult on academic success strategies, and for general developmental advising needs.

Phone: 203-582-8628

Email: LearningCommons@Quinnipiac.edu

Website: <https://www.qu.edu/student-resources/academic-support.html>

