

Experimental Game Lab

Fall 2018 Syllabus

Course ID: ARTTECH-4136-002
Instructor: Amanda Dittami
Time: Friday, 9am-4pm
Classroom: MacLean 402
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Course Description

As a growing, hybrid form of art, experimental video games deal and intersect with themes of politics and society, architecture, storytelling; they subvert common commercial tropes of popular games, and push the boundaries on play with digital avatars and systems. Students will play, analyze, and discuss a variety of recent and older games, increase their literacy with the field, and apply the ideas learned in creating their own games or interactive digital artworks. Access to a Mac or Windows computer for playing and developing games is required. Workshops will be taught for Unity. No prior experience required.

My Course Goals

- + Teach students how to utilize Unity in order to create unique game experiences.
- + Give students the tools to work together and/or independently in order to work on small game projects outside of the classroom.
- + Assign students with a variety of experimental games and other forms of media to study, critique and discuss with the class.
- + Help foster the creative process of taking complex subjects and translating them into game mechanics.
- + To understand each students' goals and put each student on the right path toward best achieving them.
- + Create a safe and comfortable space for students to express themselves and experiment with their creativity.
- + To exhibit students' work at the end of the semester and to enhance their portfolios.

To && For All

- + This is a safe space. Treat all others with respect. Everyone does not need to agree but it is a valuable exercise in and outside of this class to actively try understand perspectives outside of your own.
- + Do not limit references and inspiration purely to games.
- + Turn phones to silent. Be respectful of time spent / use of phone. Excessive use of a cell phone during class can affect a students' grade after a warning has been discussed.

Gain EXP

- + Create an email filter for emails with the keyword "[EXP-GAME-LAB-FA18]"
- + Watch the Canvas Tutorials and familiarize yourself with the platform. Get involved in discussions!
- + Make sure you regularly backup all your work in at least one separate storage location / repository.
- + It is best to partake in the materials assigned sooner rather than later in order to give yourself time to reflect on the experience. Be sure to avoid playing a game, reading an article, watching a segment, etc the day before class.
- + Study tutorials on using Unity outside of the ones we go over in class. There are so many good ones that are completely free!

Class Flow

Participation

- + Your presence is important. Two unexcused absences will put a student at risk of failing the course.
- + Your perspective is essential. Unwillingness to actively participate in class discussions, online and during class, will affect your grade negatively..

Assignments

- + **Lectures**
 - + Class lectures will lend to much of the concepts and materials we will go over in class. Lectures are not graded but are still important to pay attention to. Since this is a workshop class, I plan to make most lectures short and sweet.
- + **In-Class Exercises**
 - + In-class exercises are to be uploaded online through Canvas. They are worth 10 points each and graded based on participation (3 points) and effort (7 points). Participation is pass/fail, effort is determined through observance in class as well as content uploaded to Canvas.
- + **Demonstrations**
 - + Demonstrations are demonstrated during class and also recorded so students may revisit after class. Students should be sure to follow along as projects made during these demonstrations are meant to be built on and turned in to Canvas, which become "Demos" (worth 20 points).
- + **Online Discussions**
 - + At the end of most classes I will assign media for students to consume and review by posting their thoughts via Canvas. Students are encouraged to discuss online and may also be prompted to discuss as a class in person

during the following class. Review posts are worth 7 points each. Thoughtful replies to other students' posts are worth 1 point, which students can earn up to 3 points.

+ Extra Credit

- + Throughout the semester there will be opportunities to earn extra credit.

Course Outline

August 31 - Class 1

- I. Introductions
- II. Class Lecture: Course Overview and What are Experimental Games
- III. In-Class Exercise: Translating Complex Systems & Ideas
 - A. Values & Existing Games
 - B. Discussion
- IV. In-Class Demonstration 1: Console Coding Strings
 - A. Download and Install Unity and Visual Studio
 - B. Hello World
 - C. Carny Code Part I
- V. Lunch
- VI. In-Class Demonstration 2: Infinite Scroller
 - A. Importing asset
 - B. Scrolling background
 - C. Adding player and input
- VII. For Next Week
 - A. Demo: Expanding on Infinity
 1. Modify, edit and/or add to the Infinite Scroller to reflect a Value of your choice.
 - B. Online Discussion: Sharing EXP
 1. Post and share one of your most favorite, preferably free, experimental games / prototypes / interactive experiences on Canvas with a description and link to a playable a version(s).
 2. Play one of the games posted by your colleagues and comment on your experience.

September 7 - Class 2

- I. Share Projects and Feedback
- II. Class Lecture: Comedy in Games (or lack thereof)
- III. In-Class Exercise: Comedy as a Game Mechanic
- IV. In-Class Demonstration 1: Console Coding Variables
 - A. Carnie Code Part II
- V. Lunch

- VI. In-Class Demonstration Part 2:
 - A. Fight!
- VII. For Next Week
 - A. Demo: Expansion Pack
 - 1. Modify, edit and/or add to the Simple Fighter to reflect a Value of your choice OR continue to modify, edit and/or add to the Infinite Scroller from last week.
 - B. Online Discussion: Shared Dreaming EXP
 - 1. Post and share a memorable dream you have had (one you feel comfortable sharing) and relate it to experiences you have felt in games. For example: changing from a first person camera to 3rd person at random or spawning at a random point. In the same discussion post, write about how you might utilize Unity in order to translate an aspect / action / element of a dream. For example: Using Vuforia with Unity to insert digital elements into your camera's depiction of the world in order to capture the surreal nature of familiar environments that can happen in dreams.

****September 11 - Fall add/drops ends!**

September 14 - Class 3

- I. Class Lecture: Dreams, Games and/or Alternate Realities
- II. In-Class Exercise: Elevated Dream Game Idea Pitch
 - A. Create an elevator pitch for an experimental dream game and share your idea with the class. For example, in this class' presentation I briefly speak about a Randomization Dream Engine idea. Keep your pitch to under 2 minutes, images are welcome. This is not something you will be making, just a conceptual exercise.
- III. In-Class Demonstration 1
 - A. Finish Simple 2D Fighter
- IV. Lunch
- V. In-Class Demonstration Part 2:
 - A. AR: Vuforia
 - B. 3D Animation
 - C. Simple Mobile Controller
- VI. For Next Week
 - A. Demo Presentation
 - 1. Prepare one of your demos to present to the class (*details in Canvas*)

September 21 - Class 4

- I. Share Projects and Feedback
- II. Class Lecture: Artificial Obedience
- III. In-Class Exercise: Psuedo-coding free will
- IV. In-Class Demonstration 1
 - A. Simple Crowd AI
- V. Lunch

- VI. In-Class Demonstration Part 2
 - A. Unity WebGL
 - B. Uploading Projects for Assignments
- VII. For Next Week
 - A. Online Discussion: Experimental Gameplay Workshop Part I (EGW)
 - 1. Watch an EGW panel video from the GDC archives and write about your favorite presenter(s) of the panel and what you enjoyed about it most. Don't forget to include a link to the presentation, the time start position, presenter name(s), etc.

2013: <http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1017828/Experimental-Gameplay>
2014: <http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1020467/Experimental-Gameplay>
2015: <http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1021964/Experimental-Gameplay>
 - B. Midterm Pitch Presentation

September 28 - Class 5

- I. Midterm Pitch Presentations
- II. In-Class Assignment: Re-evaluating Scope
 - A. Introduce surprise factor to class, have them reconsider project scale/scope based on this
 - B. Each student has "x" minutes to change project idea and add this to their slide presentation. Students will share plans with the class for live instructor feedback
- III. Lunch
- IV. In-Class Demonstration 2:
 - A. GitHub
 - B. Turning in Work (revised)
- V. In-Class Demonstration 1:
 - A. Start Menu
 - B. SFX Slider
- VI. EGW Discussion (time permitted)
- VII. Midterm Workshop Time
 - A. Use this time wisely! Remember I am here to help
 - B. Be respectful of others in the classroom and keep noise levels down
- VIII. For Next Week
 - A. Work on Midterm
 - B. Online Discussion: EGW Part II
 - 1. Watch an EGW panel video from the GDC archives and write about your favorite presenter(s) of the panel and what you enjoyed about it most. Don't forget to include a link to the presentation, the time start position, presenter name(s), etc.

2016: <http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1023585/Experimental-Gameplay>
2017: <http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1024377/Experimental-Gameplay>
2018: <http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1024941/Experimental-Gameplay>

October 5 - Class 6

- I. Best of EGW 2013-2015
 - A. Panel Highlights
 - B. Class Discussion
- II. Lunch
- III. Workshop Time
 - A. Work on Midterm
- IV. For Next Week
 - A. Prepare Midterm Projects for playtesting
 1. See Canvas for details

October 12 - Class 7

- I. Workshop Time
 - A. Work on Midterm
- II. Lunch
- III. Midterm Project Playtesting and Review
- IV. REMINDER: Midterms due Next WEDNESDAY by 11:59pm

****October 17 (Midterm due, Wednesday by 11:59pm)**

October 19 - Class 8

- I. Midterm Project Presentation
- II. Writing a Pitch to the Experimental Gameplay Workshop
 - A. Students will use the submission form from GDC's EGW to write a pitch for their final project idea (actual submission not required).
- III. Lunch
- IV. Individual Check-ins
- V. Workshop: Final Project Ideas

October 26 - Class 9

- I. In-Class Demonstration 1: Endless Runner : Player Controller
+ and/or Workshop Time Final Project
- II. Lunch
- III. In-Class Demonstration 2: Endless Runner : Obstacle Spawner
+ and/or Workshop Time Final Project
- IV. Upcoming
 - A. Assignments
 1. [Submit an Exhibit name](#) for our collective final projects
 2. Submit your Final Project Idea
 - B. Extra Credit
 1. Attend the [Chicago New Media Symposium by VGA Gallery and Gallery 400](#) on Nov 1 and write a review of your experience
 - C. Reminders
 1. Option to submit to [EGW 2019](#) (deadline Nov 1)

2. October 30 is the last day to withdraw
- D. Events
1. Nov 1 [Chicago New Media Symposium by VGA Gallery and Gallery 400](#)
 2. Nov 3 [International Games Day at the Harold Washington Library](#)
 3. ATS Beginnings
 - a) Please come and join us for hors d'oeuvre and drinks at the closing reception of "ATS Beginnings", next Friday Oct 26 at 4:15PM. Eduardo Kac will be giving a short presentation and speech about the 50th anniversary celebration to come. We will be looking forward to seeing everyone at the closing reception!

****October 30 - Last day to withdraw**

****November 1 - [Experimental Gameplay at GDC 2019 Game Submission](#) Deadline**

Students are encouraged but not required to submit this idea to EGW

November 9 - Class 11

- I. Vote for Exhibit name
- II. In-Class Demonstration 1: Endless Runner : Effects
+ and/or Workshop Time Final Project
- III. In-Class Demonstration 2: Endless Runner : Effects Continued
+ and/or Workshop Time Final Project
- IV. Lunch
- V. Workshop Time: Final Project
- VI. Upcoming
 - A. Assignments
 1. Continue work on your Final Project

November 16 - Class 12

- I. In-Class Assignment:
 - A. In Canvas for the Final Project Progress I Assignment, send me a link to a folder in your shared student folder that contains
 - a) Zipped (using WinZip) WebGL folder to your shared student folder in Drive

AND/OR

- b) Screenshots of current project (if you don't have a playable version)
 - B. Listen to the SoundCloud links from Sean's class and let me know which composer you are interested in working with
 - Kevin <https://soundcloud.com/kevin-paul-mcgrath>
 - Howard <https://soundcloud.com/howradouyang>
 - Emilia <https://soundcloud.com/d0rmil0na>
 - Jack <https://soundcloud.com/mfjack>
 - La Trell <https://soundcloud.com/user-266732803>
 - Emily <https://clyp.it/user/dxcrcq0w2>

- II. In-Class Demonstration 1:
 - A. Endless Runner: Sound, Fade In/Out and Camera Pan
- III. Lunch
 - *Please note: Lunch may run a bit longer than usual, as I will be meeting with the Assistant Director of Exhibitions*
- IV. Exhibition Update
- V. Individual
 - A. Check-ins
 - B. Workshop Time (Final Project)
- VI. Upcoming
 - A. Assignments
 - Continue work on your Final Project
 - B. Extra Credit
 - Attend any of the following Events and write a review of your experience:
 - a) Piskel Art Sprite Making Workshop, November 17, 2018, 1–3 p.m.
<https://www.artdesignchicago.org/events/piskel-art-sprite-making-workshop>
 - b) Game Design Meetup & Playtesting at Good Games, Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 7-9pm
<https://www.meetup.com/Chicago-Boardgame-Designers/events/kfnvdqyxpbdc/>

November 23 - Class 13

- I. No Class - Thanksgiving Break

November 30 - Class 14

- I. Updates
 - A. Opening Reception of Olfactory Art Show Nov 30 4:15pm in Flex Space
 - B. Need screenshots for Pop-up Flyer
 - C. Credits
 - D. Exhibit controls (keyboard and mouse)
 - E. PolyPlay submission <http://extvsaic.org/polyplay>
- II. Course Evaluations <http://evaluations.saic.edu>
- III. Final Project Playtesting
- IV. Lunch
- V. Workshop Time
 - A. Final Project
- VI. Upcoming
 - A. Assignment
 - 1. Finish Final Project (due December 12 by 11:59pm)
 - a) Students who do not turn finals in on time will not be exhibited in the pop-up. For every day the project is late, the student will lose participation points.
 - b) Be sure to test your projects, including exporting to other computers. Games with game-breaking bugs and/or games

that are incompatible to play on the target machine (Mac-Mini) will not be exhibited in the pop-up.

December 7 - Class 15

- I. No Class - Crit Week

****December 12 (Final due, Wednesday by 11:59pm)**

December 14 - Class 16

- I. Final Project Installation

Policies

Lateness Policy

- If you are late to class by over 15 minutes without a valid reason, you are marked late. If you are consistently late but always within the 15 minute you will be marked late even if you are within the 15 minutes.
- If a student contacts me by 1:00pm the day of class with a valid reason for being late, that student will not be marked as late.
- Two lates are equivalent to one unexcused absence. Therefore four or six lates can lead to failing the course.

Attendance Policy

Because of the nature of this course, missing the classes early into the semester will set you back far more than the classes late into the semester. Therefore, here are the conditions under which unexcused absences will fail you if you do not withdraw from the class prior to the deadline for withdrawal with a grade of "W."

- **Missing the first class**
- **Missing two classes within the first four weeks**
- **Missing three classes overall**

Deadline for withdrawal: **Tuesday, October 30, 2018**

Please note that SAIC policy states that students are expected to attend all classes regularly and on time.

Students should miss class only with reasonable cause. If a student needs to miss class with reasonable cause, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to receive

instruction for how to make up for the missed class. Missing class for other than a reasonable cause may jeopardize the student's academic standing in the class.

Reasonable cause to miss a class might include:

- + Illness or hospitalization (the student should contact Health Services, who will relay information to the faculty in whose class the student is enrolled)
- + Observation of a religious holiday
- + Friend/Family illness or death
- + Catastrophic CTA delays, airport delays over **four hours** (do not book a flight landing at O'Hare at 7 AM on a Friday!)
- + Possibly more, on a case-by-case basis (contact me ahead of time when possible)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

SAIC is committed to full compliance with all laws regarding equal opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with known or suspected disabilities, such as a Reading/Writing Disorder, ADD/ADHD, and/or a mental health condition who think they would benefit from assistance or accommodations should first contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) to schedule an appointment. DLRC staff will review your disability documentation and work with you to determine reasonable accommodations. They will then provide you with a letter outlining the approved accommodations for you to deliver to your instructors. This letter must be presented before any accommodations will be implemented. You should contact the DLRC as early in the semester as possible. The DLRC is located within the Wellness Center on the 13th floor of 116 S Michigan Ave. and can be reached via phone at 312.499.4278 or email at dlrc@saic.edu.

Academic Misconduct

From the SAIC Student Handbook:

Academic misconduct includes both plagiarism and cheating, and may consist of: the submission of the work of another as one's own; unauthorized assistance on a test or assignment; submission of the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all instructors; or the failure to properly cite texts or ideas from other sources.

Academic integrity is expected in all coursework, including online learning. It is assumed that the person receiving the credit for the course is the person completing the work. SAIC has processes in place that protect student privacy and uses LDAP authentication to verify student identity.

Specific procedures for faculty to follow in the case of academic misconduct are detailed in the Student Handbook.

Course Progress Reports

If you miss assignment deadlines repeatedly, fall behind, or have difficulties with attendance or lateness, you will receive a Course Progress Report (CPR). CPRs are used to provide feedback to students concerning their progress in a class, notify them of specific class

requirements that are not being met or notify them that they may be in jeopardy of receiving a No Credit grade (NCR). Your academic advisor will receive a copy of the CPR.

Title IX

By federal law, as SAIC faculty I am required to report any acts:

- occurring in the classroom,
- reported by students to me,
- mentioned or brought up during discussion or critique,

falling under Title IX, which may include Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking. Depending on the incident reported, you may or may not receive follow-ups from SAIC regarding resources.

All reports will be strictly private within the relevant University departments related to Title IX, but not confidential. (For more on confidentiality vs. privacy:

<http://www.saic.edu/lifeatsaic/campussecurity/sexualassaultdomesticviolencedatingviolenceandstalking/confidentialityvsprivacy/>)

For more info:

<http://www.saic.edu/lifeatsaic/campussecurity/sexualassaultdomesticviolencedatingviolenceandstalking/>

Submission Policy

Due to law, you are not required to make your work public. I suggest itch.io for uploading all games, even if you want to remain private (you are allowed to keep the game in a private state and distribute a secret link). You are not required to use itch.io and may upload your games to a cloud sync service (Dropbox etc.), or anything else, provided all other students can download the game.