MDIA3001

Serious Games

Session 2, 2013

http://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au

*Interface mock-up from 2012 student team Funtastic*
1. Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACULTY</th>
<th>Arts and Social Sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL or DEPARTMENT</td>
<td>School of the Arts and Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE CODE</td>
<td>MDIA3001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE NAME</td>
<td>Serious Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SESSION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LECTURE</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDIO</td>
<td>Squarehouse 109 (K-E4-109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEBSITE</td>
<td><a href="http://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au/">http://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Staff contact details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Convener</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Email address</th>
<th>Contact time and availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brigid Costello</td>
<td>9385 6805</td>
<td>Robert Webster Level 3 Room 311P</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bm.costello@unsw.edu.au">bm.costello@unsw.edu.au</a></td>
<td>Mondays 11.00am-12.00noon or by appointment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timetable</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Requirements</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Summary</td>
<td>Units of Credit 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aims 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Learning Outcomes 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate Attributes 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Strategies and Rationale</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Schedule</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Summary 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task 1 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task 2 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task 3 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policies 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Honesty and Plagiarism</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Resources</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Feedback</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Policy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mondays</td>
<td>10:00am -11:00am</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>9:00am -11:00am</td>
<td>Squarehouse 109 (K-E4-109)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Attendance Requirements

To pass this course you are required to attend at least 80% of lectures, studios and tutorial laboratories. If you do not meet the minimum attendance requirement for any reason you may fail the course.

Attendance at studios will be recorded each week. If you are more than 10 minutes late, you are deemed not to have attended. It is your responsibility to ensure your name has been marked off at each class. Attendance at the online lecture will be recorded each week via your timely online response to the weekly lecture discussion question.

If you experience a prolonged illness or misadventure that prevents you from meeting the 80% attendance requirement you should contact your course convener immediately. You may be advised to withdraw from the course.
6. Course details

**Credit Points**

| 6 uoc |

**Summary of the Course**

Games that are used for more serious real-life purposes than pure entertainment are known as ‘Serious Games’. These games might be used for social change, education, training, advertising, or to help people achieve a particular health objective. In this course students will focus on the conceptual design and analysis of these serious games. This context will shape an investigation into game aesthetics, learning, affect and engagement. Students will also be introduced to the theory and method of user-centered design.

The course does not involve any computer programming or require any previous knowledge in this area, apart from skills developed in MDIA1000. Students will work with paper prototypes to develop and evaluate their game concepts.

**Aims of the Course**

1. Give students a broad knowledge of the social, ethical and cultural contexts of the production and consumption of serious games.
2. Introduce students to the critical and analytic reading of a serious game.
3. Promote understanding of the methods of user-centered design.
4. Develop students’ ability to critically and creatively apply these methods in the creation or evaluation of a serious game.
5. Initiate reflection on the relationship between designers and user-groups.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Knowledge of the social, ethical and cultural contexts of the production and consumption of serious games.
2. Increased ability to analyze and evaluate a serious game.
3. Understanding of the methods of user-centered design.
4. Ability to critically and creatively apply these methods in the creation of a serious game.
5. Practice-based knowledge of the relationship between designers and user-groups.

**Graduate Attributes**

1. An appreciation of the cultural diversity of media audiences, media forms and media delivery contexts.
2. A respect for ethical practice and social responsibility.
3. The skills of communicating effectively through media production and the ability to tailor this communication to suit different audiences and delivery platforms.
4. The skills involved in practice-based research.
5. The capacity for analytical and critical thinking and for creative problem-solving within a media production context.

7. Teaching Strategies and Rationale

There will be a strong emphasis on the relationship between practice, theory and method in this course. The weekly 1-hour lectures will provide theoretical and methodological frameworks that will then be explored within a practical context in the 2-hour studios. The 2-hour studios will also be structured to encourage students to give support and feedback to fellow students. This will provide opportunities for students to reflect on the production practices of others and to view their own practice experiences within a broader context. The course will use real-world client briefs and where possible will provide game project students with an industry client to work with. This is designed to give students experience at developing and maintaining a client relationship. Our past experience shows that this approach can help students start to develop the professional networks that they will need after they graduate.
8. **Course Schedule** (All readings are online and can be accessed from the course website)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | **Lecture:** What are Serious Games?  
      Studios begin next week in week 2. |
| 2    | **Lecture:** Game Mechanics and Dynamics |
| 3    | **Lecture:** Are we having fun yet? Affect and Engagement |
| 4    | **Lecture:** Strange Bedfellows? Learning and Games |
| 5    | **Lecture:** Guest – Malcolm Ryan  
      Essay Due 29th August |
| 6    | **Lecture:** Designing your games - process and practice |
| 7    | **Lecture:** Play-testing and Evaluating |
| 8    | **Lecture:** Game Balance  
      *Due in Studio:* Play-testing Group A |
| 9    | **Lecture:** Creating Social Interaction  
      *Due in Studio:* Play-testing Group B |
|      | **Break 30th Sept – 4th Oct** |
| 10   | **Lecture:** Working with Drama and Narrative |
| 11   | **Lecture:** Breaking the Rules |
| 12   | **Lecture:** Wrap-up  
      *Due in Studio:* Project Presentations Group A |
| 13   | *Due in Studio:* Project Presentations Group B |

9. **Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment task</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Learning outcomes assessed</th>
<th>Graduate attributes assessed</th>
<th>Due date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serious Game Analysis Essay</td>
<td>2000 words +/- 10%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1, 2, 5</td>
<td>29/03/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Seminar</td>
<td>500 words plus discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1, 2, 4</td>
<td>3, 4, 5</td>
<td>various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game Prototype</td>
<td>In-class presentation, game prototype video, game rule-book and 800 word individual diary.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>1, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>various</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Task 1: Serious Game Analysis Essay (individual)

Task Description (full brief on the course website):
Using the concepts from weeks 1-4 analyse ONE of the serious games listed on the course website brief for task one in a 2000 word essay (+/- 10%). In order to do this you will need to play the game yourself. Play it first without accessing any additional tutorial or help features other than what occurs in normal gameplay. Then play it again after reading all that is on offer.

Think about: How easy was it to learn to play the game? How did the game “teach” you how to use it? Did you draw on any of your existing knowledge of interactive media the first time you played? What game mechanics and dynamics have the game designers designed into this game? What kind of player experience does it evoke? Identify the ‘serious’ purpose of the game and critically assess whether it has been successful at achieving this, particularly in light of the audience that it is aimed at. Consider also how successful the game is as a game. Would you play it more than once? Does it matter if you wouldn’t? Was it engaging?

Now write an essay using your analysis of your chosen game to argue your position on the question:

**How do you achieve the balance between ‘serious’ and ‘game’ in a serious game?**

You may reference other games from the list as points of comparison. Due to the relatively short word length you can assume that the reader already understands LeBlanc’s model of Mechanics, Dynamics, Aesthetics. You can also use tables and/or bullet points to list game mechanics and use screen grabs to illustrate aesthetics.

Task Objectives:
This task will encourage you to think critically about the form and content of serious games. You will also develop a deeper and applied understanding of the theories covered in class. These conceptual tools will help you to successfully complete tasks 2 & 3.

Task Criteria:
- Your ability to critically analyze and interpret the game.
- Evidence of engagement with ideas and practices addressed in the course.
- Evidence of critical thinking beyond mere description.
- Evidence of personal engagement i.e. clarification of the aspects of the game you found useful, or intriguing, or frustrating, or engaging etc and why;
- Generic aspects of scholarly writing i.e. writing style, citation practice, structure.

Task 2: Online Seminar (individual)

Task Description (full brief on the course website):
You will be assigned a week and a topic to make a 500 word seminar contribution on the course website during weeks 6-11. Include references and links within your post where appropriate. Conclude your post with a question for discussion and respond to any discussion that your post generates.

Task Objectives:
This task is an opportunity to conduct research on a specific area of game design. In completing this task you will engage more deeply with theories of game design practice and develop your communication skills.

Task Criteria:
- Evidence of critical thinking beyond mere description.
- Evidence of engagement with ideas and practices addressed in the course.
- Generic aspects of scholarly writing i.e. writing style, citation practice, structure.
- Ability to respond to questions and discussion points raised by others.

Task 3: Game Prototype Package 45% (individual and group)

Task Description (full brief on the course website):
Working in self-selected teams of 2-4 create a well-developed “paper” prototype for a serious game based on the brief that will be distributed via the course website in week 2. Your group will need to deliver (worth 30%):
• A draft paper prototype for play-testing in week 8 or 9 (specific weeks will be assigned in class). Note: This component is not graded but is an essential part of the process.
• A short presentation of your final game in week 12 or 13 (specific weeks will be assigned in class).
• A max 8-minute video that is either a game trailer and/or a documentation of a play-through of your final game prototype. This video should focus on showing the game dynamics and aesthetics.
• A rule-book for your final game mechanics.

Each individual group member will need to deliver (worth 15%):
• An 800 word (approx) online game design process diary. Include images, videos and references where appropriate.

Task Objectives:
This task is designed to give you practical experience in the creation of a serious game. In completing this task you will also gain applied knowledge of the methods of user-centred design. The task will provide you with opportunities to interact professionally with real-world clients and will provide you with opportunities to practice and improve your presentation skills.

Task Criteria Group Components:
• Overall creativity of response to the design problem.
• Usability of the project (taking into consideration intended audience and goals of chosen brief).
• Evidence of creativity and thoughtful experimentation in design of the game’s mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics.
• Meeting the technical requirements of both the brief and the handing in instructions.
• Ability to present the project orally and to respond to questions face-to-face.

Task Criteria Individual Process Diary:
• Evidence of critical thinking beyond mere description.
• Evidence of creativity and thoughtful experimentation in game design process.
• Evidence of engagement with ideas and practices addressed in the course.
• Generic aspects of scholarly writing i.e. writing style, citation practice, structure.

Assessment Policy
Assessment Submission
There are three assessment tasks to complete. You must complete and hand in all three tasks in order to pass this course. This means that you will fail if you do not hand in one task even if you have a total grade of over 50 from the other two assignments.

Late Work
If your assignment is submitted after the due date, a penalty of 3% per day (including Saturday, Sunday and public holidays) will be imposed for up to 2 weeks. For example, if you are given a mark of 72 out of 100 for an essay, and your essay were handed in two days late, it would attract a penalty of 6% and the mark would be reduced to 66%. If the same essay were handed in seven days late (i.e. a penalty of 21%) it would receive a mark of 51%. If your assignment is not submitted within 2 weeks of its due date, it will receive 0 marks. Late work will not receive detailed feedback.

See the SAM website https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/ for information on applying for extensions, special consideration and other assessment issues.

Keep a Copy
It is extremely important that you keep a copy of ALL assignments. Assignments do sometimes go missing and when this occurs the onus is on the student to prove that they have completed the assignment and to provide another copy for marking. With this in mind, please ensure that you collect all marked assignments promptly and keep them until after you have received your official results for the course.

All assessment tasks in this course must be either created completely by you OR if they include material created by others such as words, music, sounds, videos or images, they must be scrupulously referenced. Taking the work of others and passing it off as your own is regarded as plagiarism and is a type of intellectual theft. The School will impose severe penalties on any student who is identified as plagiarising the work of others.
Copyright
The works that you are creating for this course are being made for public broadcast either via the web or via public exhibition. This means that you must hold copyright over every element of the media productions that you create for this course. If you wish to use the work of another within your assignment then you must get the copyright holder’s permission to do so. The copyright holder could sue you if you fail to get their permission. There are two forms for doing this. These forms can be downloaded from the current student resources section of the school website:
https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/media-students/production/
You can find out more about copyright at the Australian Copyright Council website:
http://www.copyright.org.au/

10. Academic honesty and plagiarism
Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s thoughts or work as your own. It can take many forms, from not having appropriate academic referencing to deliberate cheating. The SAM Essential Guide for Students provides information on plagiarism and can be downloaded here:
https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/. See also the Learning Centre information on plagiarism and academic integrity: http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism/
All assessment tasks in this course must be either created completely by you OR if they include material created by others such as words, music, sounds, videos or images, they must be scrupulously referenced. Taking the work of others and passing it off as your own is regarded as plagiarism and is a type of intellectual theft. The School will impose severe penalties on any student who is identified as plagiarising the work of others.

11. Course Resources for students
Essential Information for SAM students:
https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/
Please ensure that you read the essential information for SAM students. You can find this information on the school website in the resources section (see link above). This document details the SAM policies and procedures for late assignments and for obtaining assignment extensions. It also contains information about plagiarism and links to useful resources for learning about referencing and essay writing.
Website: http://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au
The course website will contain weekly updates on the information contained in this outline. You should make sure that you check it at least once a week. It is also a space where you can post comments and feedback about the course and where you can go to ask and find answers to your questions about the technical or creative aspects of the course.
Lecture Readings:
The readings for the lectures are available online via the course website.

12. Your Feedback is Important
Periodically student evaluative feedback on the course is gathered, using among other means, UNSW’s Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) process. Student feedback is taken seriously, and continual improvements are made to the course based in part on such feedback. You will find out in the first lecture any changes that have been made based on last year’s feedback.
13. Email Policy

If any of the course staff need to contact you they will use your student email account (the one with the format z[student number]@student.unsw.edu.au). If you do not use this account then make sure that you set it to redirect mail to the account that you do use. You can do this at https://www.it.unsw.edu.au/students/zmail/index.html

All correspondence re this course should be sent with the subject line MDIA3001. Email correspondence should be used only for administrative matters and personal issues. The course website will have a discussion area for issues to do with assignments and technical problems. Any questions about such matters should be posted there. Before posting, please make sure that you look through the previous posts to see if your question has already been answered.