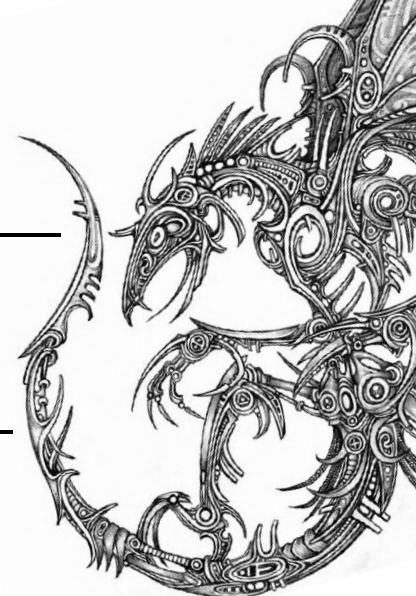## *Course Syllabus: ATEC 4373*
History and Design of RPGs

Course Information
Topics in Game Development: History and Design of RPGs
ATEC 4373.001 W 4:00 p.m. - 6:45 p.m., MC 1.608

Class Blog: http://dallasrpg.blogspot.com/

Professor Contact Information
Adam L. Brackin, Ph.D - Visiting Assistant Professor, ATEC - University of Texas at Dallas
OFFICE: **JO 3.506** (OFFICE PHONE: **972-883-4350**) Alternate: 214-354-6161 / 972-516-8844
OFFICE HOURS: **Monday 10-12, 1:15-3:30 & Wednesday 10-12, 1:15-3:30** (& other times by apt)

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions
ATEC 4373may be repeated for credit as topics vary (9 hours maximum). Prerequisite: Permission of instructor. Students must be actively enrolled in this class (ATEC 4373) in order to attend it due to UTD policy fire code, and very real seating restrictions. (No lurkers!)

Course Description
ATEC 4373 Topics in Game Development (3 semester hours) Course offers an in-depth exploration of the origins, history, principles, elements, development, and theory of Role Playing Games. Topics include tabletop and computer game RPGs and other similar forms of interactive storytelling as well as: player motivation, game dynamics, gamer culture, and the formation of compelling experiences within increasingly complex, open-ended technology. Students will first examine "Interactive Fiction" in various forms, including tabletop games ranging from *D20, Cortex, Burning Wheel* and other RPG systems with an explicit social component to *Choose Your Own Adventure*-style novels and its more traditional author-reader interaction. Students will then examine computer-based playable structures that are designed for solo interaction, as well as those which explore the intersection of the social spaces of play and the real world, considering, among other topics, the virtual communities of MMORPGs and other less conventional uses of digital gaming and role-playing techniques such as Alternate Reality Games.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes
Students will learn to think critically about RPG games and RPG gaming issues and gain exposure to the major writers and researchers in the genre. Students will familiarize themselves with RPG elements and will learn how to critique historical and contemporary RPG games and the ideas of others. Students will learn how to design and develop an original game mechanic and how to present that idea in a concise, coherent format.

Required Textbooks and Materials
TEXTBOOKS (Required Reading)
1) Quests: Design, Theory, and History in Games and Narratives by Jeff Howard, A K Peters Ltd (February 26, 2008) 1568813473
2) Dungeons and Desktops: The History of Computer Role-playing Games by Matt Barton, A K Peters Ltd (March 3, 2008) 1568814119
3) Shared Fantasy: Role Playing Games as Social Worlds by Gary Alan Fine, University Of Chicago Press (August 14, 2002) 0226249441
4) Second Person: Role-Playing and Story in Games by Pat Harrigan & Noah Wardrip-Fruin, The MIT Press (February 28, 2007) 0262083566

RPG RULEBOOKS (Required for D1) ***Available at Madness Games and Comics in Plano for a discounted UTD price with your SID***
1) Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook: Roleplaying Game Core Rules, 4th Ed. by Wizards RPG Team, WotC (June 6, 2008) 0786948671
2) The Burning Wheel (Two Volumes) Revised Edition: Character Burner and Fantasy Roleplaying System by Luke Crane and Dan Abram
   Cushing-Malloy, Inc. (October 18, 2005) 0975888900
3) Serenity Role Playing Game by Jamie Chambers & Margaret Weis, Margaret Weis Productions (September 19, 2005) 1931567506 – THIS
   TITLE IS OUT OF PRINT – but available used online or for download on PDF at http://www.margaretweis.com so get it while you can because
   it's awesome.

Additional Selected Online Readings (TBD) and given on the blog.

Additional Course Materials
One other playable tabletop RPG book of your choice will be required to be borrowed or purchased for analysis as a part of one of the deliverables. Free options are available online. For recommendations ask me or a game store employee!

Assignments & Academic Calendar

Students will complete reading assignments throughout the semester followed by group discussion and individual analysis. Students will also prepare three deliverable "projects" – a series of character sheets for three given systems and a short comparative analysis of the systems, an RPG game analysis document with presentation on a game of your choice, and a detailed write-up for a working full-length, original RPG game mechanic of your design. This course is partially designed as a crash course in both creative storytelling and systems design for aspiring RPG game designers; as such, assignments should reflect an emphasis on concept, vision, and ideas over current technological capabilities. (Course requirements or due-dates may be amended or changed; such changes will be given with sufficient advance notice for completion.)

A more detailed description of the weekly reading assignments and other requirements will be posted each week on the Class Blog: http://dallasrpg.blogspot.com/

JAN 18	WEEK 1	*Course introduction and expectations*
JAN 25	WEEK 2	*"RPG" theory and models (Quests)*
FEB 1	WEEK 3	*GAME STUDY: Story Board Games*
FEB 8	WEEK 4	*GAME STUDY: D&D*
FEB 15	WEEK 5	*GAME STUDY: Serenity RPG*
FEB 22	WEEK 6	*GAME STUDY: Burning Wheel*
FEB 29 (!)	WEEK 7	***(Deliverable 1 DUE)*** *(Second Person I)*
MAR 7	WEEK 8	*CRPGs (Second Person II)*
MAR 14	-----------	SPRING BREAK / MIDS AVAIL
MAR 21	WEEK 9	*CRPGs Cont. (Dungeons & Desktops)*
MAR 28	WEEK 10	*D2 Presentations [part 1]*
APR 4	WEEK 11	***(Deliverable 2 DUE)*** *D2 Presentations [part 2]*
APR 11	WEEK 12	MMOs and Pervasive Worlds *(Shared Fantasy)*
APR 18	WEEK 13	*Real Worlds and Alternate Realities (Second Person III)*
APR 25	WEEK 14	*D3 Presentations [part 1]*
MAY 2	WEEK 15	***(Deliverable 3 DUE)*** *D3 Presentations [part 2]*

Attendance and Grading Policy

This class will be graded entirely based on your final "level" as determined by awarded Experience Points (XP). Feel free to keep track of it below. If you have a special circumstance which causes you to be absent on a given week, I request that you contact me in advance by phone or email. Participation XP will be awarded only **for signing the roll sheet. Any student who misses more than one class session has the option to do an additional project to make up the points**. **Late work will be dropped by -30 XP for each week it is late. No Exceptions!**

There are 3 deliverables and 2 short presentations for this class NOT including any weekly homework or small assignments I may give to you on the blog which will count towards the daily (attendance) XP. Experience Points will be determined as follows:

Weekly Participation --	*+15 XP per wk (225 possible)*
Game Master Bonus ---	*+10 XP*
Perfect Attendance Bonus --	+5 XP
Make up Paper for Attendance ---	*+15 possible XP*
Deliverable 1: Comparative Game Analysis ----------------------	*+200 possible XP*
Deliverable 2a: Game System Analysis ----------------------------	*+150 possible XP*
Deliverable 2b: System Analysis Presentation -----------------	*+50 possible XP*
Deliverable 3a: New RPG System Document --------------------	*+350 Possible XP*
Deliverable 3b: New RPG Game Presentation -----------------	*+50 Possible XP*
	= TOTAL

100-600 XP (LEVEL 1-6)	=> F	(G-J?)
700 XP (LEVEL 7)	=> C	
800 XP (LEVEL 8)	=> B	
900 XP (LEVEL 9)	=> A	
1000+ XP (LEVEL 10)	=> EPIC WIN!	

This class relies heavily on discussion and class participation. We will be playing various games in groups and together as a class. A high level of professionalism and good citizenship is expected. You will be asked to volunteer to GM a session, but are not required to do so. Attention should be given to the speaker/GM at all times and respect shown as expected within the university classroom environment. Appropriate multi-tasking such as note-taking is permitted only so long as it does not interfere with the high expectations described above. This DOES NOT include personal use of the lab computers, social media sites, games, etc unless directly related to instruction at that moment. Any student who attends all classes, completes all coursework on time, and whose deliverables all meet the high standards expected of a UTD grad student, will receive enough XP for an A in this course.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information found at the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of course syllabi. Be aware that all information contained at this link are considered to be fully a part of this syllabus herein without exception as if it were printed below. http://provost.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies/