

## ANGM 6356: Anatomy of a Game

Mondays 1:00 PM – 3:45 PM

ATC 3.705

Fall 2025

### Contact Information

<i>Professor</i>	Dr. Monica Evans
<i>Office Location</i>	ATC 3.705
<i>Lab Location</i>	ATC 1.917
<i>Email</i>	mevans@utdallas.edu

### Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

Instructor consent required.

### Course Description

This graduate course focuses on exploration and analysis of digital and analog games as artistic expressions, technological systems, cultural artifacts, and community platforms. The course introduces students to the core mechanical structures for the understanding of digital and analog games. Students in this course will play, analyze, and critique multiple games that are considered seminal in the field, as well as related games and texts in other media. Students will be expected to pursue research and/or creative practice in digital and analog game development and critical analysis, informed by their individual research interests and graduate area.

### Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Student learning objectives include: critical analysis of digital and analog games as well as related media in other fields; creative practice in digital and analog game development; deep exploration of the mechanics, systems, aesthetics, and technologies that create gameplay experiences; and multidisciplinary communication and collaboration.

### Required Textbooks and Materials

All readings and course materials will be provided online in eLearning and/or Box.com by the instructor. Students are expected to purchase, install, and play digital games as part of this course; some digital games will be provided through the Narrative Systems Research Lab and at the instructor's discretion. Students can expect to be assigned the following games:

- *Portal* (2007) or *Shadow of the Colossus* (2005/2018)
- One of the following: *Clair Obscur Expedition 33* (2025), *Cuphead* (2017), *Hades* (2020), *Hi-Fi Rush* (2023), *Hollow Knight* (2017), *Outer Wilds* (2019), *Prince of Persia: The Lost Crown* (2024), *Sea of Stars* (2023), *Spiritfarer* (2020), *Stray* (2023), *Subnautica* (2018); or similar
- One of the following: *Alan Wake 2* (2023), *Baldur's Gate 3* (2023), *Black Myth Wukong* (2024), *Cyberpunk 2077* (2023), *Elden Ring* (2022), *Ghost of Tsushima* (2020), *Kingdom Come Deliverance II* (2025), *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom* (2023), *Star Wars: Jedi Survivor* (2023); or similar
- One independent game released between 2018 and 2025
- One remake or remastered game released between 2018 and 2025

## Course Schedule

Class meets Mondays 1:00 PM – 3:45 PM in person only in ATC 3.705. The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the professor; all changes will be provided to students in writing.

Week 1: Aug. 25 – Introduction to the Course

*Week 2: Sept. 1 – No class due to Labor Day*

Week 3: Sept. 8 – Emotion, Mechanics, and Expectations: Introduction to Game Design

- Due: Academic Interests Survey

Week 4: Sept. 15 – Games History 1978-2025; Anatomy of a Historical Game

- Due: Analysis of *Portal* (2007) or *Shadow of the Colossus* (2005/2018)

Week 5: Sept. 22 – Art, Entertainment, and Education: Introduction to Game Studies and Academic Writing

Week 6: Sept. 29 – First Workshop Session; Introduction to Game Development

- Due: Proposal for Final Project or Paper

Week 7: Oct. 6 – Anatomy of a Double-A Game

- Due: Analysis of *Clair Obscur Expedition 33* (2025), *Cuphead* (2017), *Hades* (2020), *Hi-Fi Rush* (2023), *Hollow Knight* (2017), *Outer Wilds* (2019), *Prince of Persia: The Lost Crown* (2024), *Sea of Stars* (2023), *Spiritfarer* (2020), *Stray* (2023), *Subnautica* (2018); or similar

Week 8: Oct. 13 – Games, Narrative, and Interactive Experiences

Week 9: Oct. 20 – Lots of Little Pieces: Introduction to Analog Game Design

- Guests: Dr. Tim Christopher and Dr. Jack Murray

Week 10: Oct. 27 – Anatomy of an Indie or Triple-I Game

- Due: Analysis of a Modern Indie Game (game to be analyzed must be approved by Dr. Evans on or before Oct. 13)

Week 11: Nov. 3 – It's Party Time! Introduction to Tabletop Role Playing Games

- Guests: Trevor Miller and Bella Mays, professional Dungeon Masters (“Gone Rollin”)

Week 12: Nov. 10 – Anatomy of a Remaster

- Due: Alternate Assignment: Analysis of *Dead Space* (2008/2023), *The Elder Scrolls V: Oblivion* (2006/2025), *Final Fantasy VII Remake* (1997/2020), *Grim Fandango* (1998/2018), *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening* (1993/2019), *Metroid Prime Remastered* (2002/2023), *Resident Evil 4* (2005/2023), *Silent Hill 2* (2001, 2024), *System Shock* (1994/2023), or similar

Week 13: Nov. 17 – Dealer’s Choice Day

- Due: Dealer’s Choice Analysis (game to be analyzed must be approved by Dr. Evans on or before Nov. 3)

*Week 14: Nov. 24 – No class due to Fall Break*

Week 15: Dec. 1 – Anatomy of a Triple-A Open World Game

- Due: Analysis of *Alan Wake 2* (2023), *Baldur’s Gate 3* (2023), *Black Myth Wukong* (2024), *Cyberpunk 2077* (2023), *Elden Ring* (2022), *Ghost of Tsushima* (2020), *Kingdom Come Deliverance II* (2025), *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom* (2023); *Star Wars: Jedi Survivor* (2023), or similar

Week 16: Dec. 8 – Last day of class. How to be a Professional in the Field.

- Due: Final Project

### **Grading Policy**

Five game analysis papers (10% each)	50%
Final paper or project	40%
Participation and short writing assignments	10%

### **Course Policies**

#### *Late Work*

It is each individual student's responsibility to keep track of the goals and deadlines and to turn in finished work on the specified dates. Written assignments are due each week by the start of class, in electronic form only, unless otherwise noted by the instructor in writing. Late work may be accepted for full or partial credit only at the instructor’s discretion.

#### *Attendance and Participation*

Students are expected to take part in online discussions and collaborate with online peer groups once they are assigned. Students are encouraged to attend synchronous class discussions in MS Teams, but attending these discussions is not required to receive full credit for participation. Synchronous course attendance, either in-person or online, is optional for this course and will not be graded.

#### *Digital and Analog Game Assignments*

Students in this course are expected to have a basic level of gaming literacy such that they can purchase, install and/or set up, and play digital and analog games without assistance from the instructor. Students are expected to maintain a level of maturity in dealing with semi-anonymous online game spaces, including handling potential encounters with griefers and trolls.

### *Policy on Generative AI*

In accordance with the UT Dallas Student Code of Conduct, students are expected to uphold honesty, integrity, and service in all that they do, including when using generative AI in academic work. Students should understand that academic work produced by generative AI does not replace the student's understanding and interpretation of the course material.

This course permits the use of generative AI for assignments when appropriate. Students are expected to use generative AI ethically and responsibly. Students must document and attribute the use of generative AI as appropriate to the academic style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) or equivalent and must validate or verify the output from generative AI.

All submitted assignments must clearly and openly mark whether generative AI was used, and where and how it was used. If generative AI is used but not clearly and openly marked, the assignment in question will not be graded. Assignments may be revised and resubmitted only at the instructor's discretion.

### *Academic Dishonesty*

Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Students can find university rules and regulations on Academic Dishonesty at [conduct.utdallas.edu/dishonesty/](https://conduct.utdallas.edu/dishonesty/)

### **Class Materials**

The Instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Email Use**

Only UT Dallas email accounts will be used for this course. All email communication from the instructor will be mailed to students UT Dallas email accounts and no other. Students are responsible for checking their UT Dallas email regularly for course information and updates.

### **Class Attendance and Participation**

Regular class attendance and participation is expected. Students who fail to attend class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. A portion of the grade for this course is directly tied to your participation in this class. It also includes engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in the lectures.

Class participation is documented by faculty. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that prohibits diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and activities at public universities in Texas, does not in any way apply to

academic course instruction; and students should not feel the need to self-censor or limit their participation in academic courses.

### **Class Recordings**

Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

The instructor may record meetings of this course. These recordings will be made available to all students registered for this class if the intent is to supplement the classroom experience. If the instructor or a UTD school/department/office plans any other uses for the recordings, consent of the students identifiable in the recordings is required prior to such use unless an exception is allowed by law.

### **Additional Policies and Procedures**

#### *Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

Please review [the section](#) within the UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures webpage.

#### *Academic Support Resources*

Please visit the [Academic Support Resources](#) page to view the University's academic support resources for all students.

#### *UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures*

Please visit the [Syllabus Policies](#) page to view the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please review the catalog sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) or [pass/fail](#) grading option and withdrawal from class.

### **Comet Creed**

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

*“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”*

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