

ATEC 3356: Games & Narrative I

Wednesdays, 7:00 – 9:45 PM

ATC 2.101

Fall 2015

Instructor: Prof. Mike Breault (office: ATC 2.710)

Office Hours: by appointment only

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on practical aspects of writing for digital games, including but not limited to story structure, character creation, dialogue, theme, subtext, cinematics, and the interactive nature of the medium. Students in this course will analyze narrative and the writing process to better understand the unique challenges of digital game narrative. Students will also apply principles of game design, development, and production to the narrative process. Students in this course will improve the level and quality of their writing as well as their understanding of narrative structures for digital games.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MEDIA

Lee Sheldon, *Character Development and Storytelling for Games*, 2nd Edition, Cengage Learning

The Walking Dead, Season 1, Telltale Games, 2012

Additional online readings will be assigned.

SYLLABUS

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor (all changes will be furnished to students in writing). **Note: All assignments are to be submitted both via Blackboard (eLearning)**

AND to the box.com folder for that week's assignment. Ask me if this isn't clear!

Weds. 8/26 – Introductions, Class Goals & Expectations, Concept/pitch doc discussion

Assignment 1: Concept/pitch doc, 1-2 pages (entertainment genre, template provided), due 9/1.

Reading: Sheldon, Part I: Background, Ch. 1, Ch. 2; be prepared to discuss on 9/1.

Weds. 9/2 – Discussion: Purposes of game stories. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 2: Arcade game short story, 2-3 pages (examples given), due 9/8.

Reading: Arcade game story examples.

Weds. 9/9 – Discussion: Fiction writing for games. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 3: Short story, 3-5 pages, game-like setting (example given), due 9/15.

Reading: Sample short story.

Weds. 9/16 – Discussion. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 4: Play & analyze S1E1 of *The Walking Dead* game, paper due 9/22

Reading: *Sheldon*, Chapter 3; be prepared to discuss on 9/23.

Weds. 9/23 – Discussion about *Walking Dead*, story-heavy games.

Assignment 5: Create second concept/pitch doc, 1-2 pages (educational), due 9/29

Weds. 9/30 – Discussion: Game adaptations. Workshop reading & feedback. **Guest lecturer: Monica E.**

Assignment 6: Choose a (non-graphic) novel or movie that hasn't had a game adaptation and create a treatment for it (use template provided), due 10/6.

Reading: *Sheldon*, Chapter 4; be prepared to discuss on 10/7.

Weds. 10/7 – Discussion. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 7: Create third game concept/pitch doc, 1-2 pages (training), due 10/13.

Reading: *Sheldon*, Chapter 5; be prepared to discuss on 10/14.

Weds. 10/14 – Discussion: Concept to design. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 8: Choose one of your three game concepts and develop it into an outline for a game design document (GDD) from the template given, due 10/20.

Reading: *Sheldon*, Chapter 7; be prepared to discuss on 10/21.

Weds. 10/21 – Discussion: Story, characters, roles. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 9: Develop Story section of GDD more fully, populate with characters, explore motivations, roles, and relationships, due 10/27.

Reading: *Sheldon*, Chapter 8; be prepared to discuss on 10/28.

Weds. 10/28 – Discussion: Cinematics. Workshop reading & feedback. **Guest Lecturer: Noah Z.**

Assignment 10: Write two cinematic scripts, in screenplay format (example given); opening cinematic is required, due 11/3.

Weds. 11/4 – Discussion: Integrating story with gameplay. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 11: Develop three quests/missions that complement game's story, due 11/10.

Reading: *Sheldon*, Chapter 10; be prepared to discuss on 11/11.

Weds. 11/11 – Discussion: Ending games. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 12: Write two more cinematic scripts; ending cinematic is required, due 11/17.

Weds. 11/18 – Discussion: The revision process. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 13: Revise and integrate all story components, expand game's story, remove all story components into separate Story doc (linked to GDD), due 12/1.

Reading: *Sheldon*, Chapter 12; be prepared to discuss on 12/2.

Weds. 12/2 – Discussion: The gameplay/story feedback cycle. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 14: With story more developed, revise and expand upon non-story elements in GDD. Turn in final version of GDD on 12/8.

Weds. 12/9 – Discussion: Course and content wrapup. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 15: Revise the short story you wrote for Assignment 3. Be sure to refer to the word count target I gave you earlier and either hit that or be darn close!

Workshop: This week's workshop focuses on reviewing each other's short stories from Assignment 3, to provide helpful suggestions for completing Assignment 15.

GRADING

- Assignments: 80% of final grade
 - Each assignment is worth 5%, except for Assignment 14, which is worth 10%
- Participation/discussion: 20% of final grade
 - Class participation and discussion are critical to the learning process in this course.
 - Discussion may also occur in BlackBoard or online dbs at the instructor's discretion.
- Late work will be docked a letter grade for each day late.
- All students must attend each class for its full duration. Each absence after the first will result in the drop of a letter grade, unless prior instructor approval is obtained.
- Attendance will be taken for each 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."

UT DALLAS SYLLABUS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.