

# **ATEC 3356: Games & Narrative I**

Mondays, 1:00 – 5:00 PM

ATEC 2.101

Summer 2016

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

Office Hours: by appointment only

Email: Mbreault@utdallas.edu

## **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 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 are expected to improve the quality of their writing as well as their understanding of narrative structures for digital games.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

To improve students' writing and cooperative feedback skills.

- To familiarize students with the role of a narrative designer in the game industry.
- To demonstrate the complex interactions between story and design in games.
- To help interested students develop a narrative design or game design portfolio.

## **TEXTS AND MEDIA**

Recommended: Lee Sheldon, *Character Development and Storytelling for Games*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Cengage  
Additional online readings may 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 that assignments and readings are due the following week.*

***All assignments are listed in the e-Learning/Blackboard app under this course's entry. See more details for each assignment there.***

**Mon. 5/23** – Introductions, Class Goals & Expectations, Syllabus, Concept/pitch doc discussion

Assignment 1: Concept/pitch doc, 1 page (template provided). Due 5/29.

Suggested Reading: Sheldon, Part I: Background, Ch. 1, Ch. 2.

**Mon. 5/30 – NO CLASS – Memorial Day.**

Assignment 2: Arcade game short story, 2-3 pages (examples given). Due 6/5.

Reading: Arcade game story examples.

**Mon. 6/6** – Discussion: Fiction writing for games. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 3: Short story, 1-3 pages, game-like setting (example given). Due 6/12.

Reading: Sample short stories.

**Mon. 6/13** – Discussion: Game adaptations. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 4: Choose a (non-graphic) novel or movie that hasn't had a game adaptation and create a treatment for it (use template provided). Due 6/19.

Suggested Reading: Sheldon, Chapter 3.

**Mon. 6/20** – Discussion: Concept to design. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 5: Develop your concept (from Assignment 1) into an outline for a game design document (GDD) from the template given. If you choose to develop another concept, be sure to create a concept doc for it and send it to me for approval first. Due 6/26.

Suggested Reading: Sheldon, Chapter 4.

**Mon. 6/27** – Discussion: Hero's Journey, story and characters in games. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 6: Develop Story section of GDD more fully, populate with characters, explore motivations, roles, and relationships. Due 7/3.

Suggested Reading: Sheldon, Chapter 7.

**Mon. 7/4 – NO CLASS – Fourth of July.**

Assignment 7: Write a 3-5 page short story about your game's Shadow. If your game has no Shadow, write it about another major character (not the Hero). Due 7/10.

Suggested Reading: Sheldon, Chapters 5 and 8.

**Mon. 7/11** – Discussion: Cinematics, starting and ending games. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 8: Write two cinematic scripts in screenplay format (example given). These scripts are for the opening and ending cinematics of your game. Due 7/17.

**Mon. 7/18** – Discussion: Integrating story with gameplay. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 9: Develop three quests/missions that complement game's story. Due 7/24.

Suggested Reading: Sheldon, Chapter 10, 12

**Mon. 7/25** – Discussion: The gameplay/story feedback cycle. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 10: Revise and expand upon all sections of your GDD. Turn in final version of complete GDD on 7/31.

**Mon. 8/1** – Discussion: The revision process. Workshop reading & feedback.

Assignment 11: Revise the short story you wrote for Assignment 3. This needs to be a major rewrite, hitting the word count goal I provide to each of you. This final assignment is due by 8/7.

**Mon. 8/8 (FINAL CLASS)** – Discussion: Course and content wrapup. Course post-mortem.

## GRADING

- 1,000 total points awarded, as follows:
- 50 points each: Assignments 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9
- 100 points each: Assignments 5, 6, 11
- 150 points: Assignment 10
- 200 points: Participation/discussion
  - 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.
- 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.***