

# GRFX 1701: Principles of Game Design

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## Instructor

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## Email

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## Office Location

Fine Arts Center 123

## Office Hours

Friday 10a – 1p

## Course Overview

Introduction to the practice of moving from game concept through design documentation, prototyping, and testing, including elements of ideation, narrative, character and world development, game mechanisms, level design, and user experience design.

## Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Compose a design document with accompanying materials for a game proposal platform
- Create a physical board game prototype, including 3D printing, board printing, and rule publishing
- Examine existing and peer-designed games, assessing their qualities and identifying their problems using industry-standard terms
- Design and communicate a compelling ludonarrative and world for a board game

## Course Style

This course is uniquely designed to operate as a “board game design studio”, where students are tasked with creating one large project with accompanying materials over the course of the 9 weeks. Students will begin the project the very first week of class, and continue to refine, add, and modify the project.

Our class time will be devoted to demonstrations, lectures, and discussions. Students are expected to come to class with all work completed and any problems ready to discuss and solve.

Remember, this course is about refining and building the game design process skills. Projects may have problems, bugs, and other difficulties, but keep in mind this is all part of the “board game design studio” environment of the classroom.

## Resources

Rather than use a traditional textbook for this course, we will utilize several free online resources for reference and examples. If you ever need extra help for the

course, these resources will provide you with excellent starting places.

- <https://boardgamegeek.com>
- <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/characteristics-games>
- <http://berserk-games.com/tabletop-simulator/>

## Course Schedule

Week	Subject	Homework for Next Class
Week 1	Brainstorming as Problem-Solving and Identification	Create a MindMap for your board game project, considering specifically the “problem” your game solves.
Week 2	Board Game Case Study, Essential Characteristics of Successful Games	Play a board game, either by yourself or with another player. Create a brief description (300-900 words) of the game, the visuals, the mechanisms, the narrative, and the rule design.
Week 3	Wireframing a Mechanic, The Design Document, The Magic Circle	Continue working on and refining your board game by creating a design document including a mechanic wireframe.
Week 4	Ludonarrative, World, and Character Design	Add the following to your design document: a minimum of 5 sketches, 10 inspiration image references, and written descriptions of characters, world, and ludonarrative in your board game. You will present your designs next class.
Week 5	Midterm Critique, Peer-to-Peer Design	Taking the information gained from the midterm critique, make edits to your existing game concept and design documents. Begin building your prototype.
Week 6	Level Design, Narrative Flow, Viewer or Player?	Continue working on your prototype, finishing your board (or spatial design) prototype by next

<b>Week</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Homework for Next Class</b>
		class.
Week 7	Aesthetics as Information, Tutorial-izing the Narrative, 3D Printing	Add design swatches to your prototype, and complete your rule sheet prototype.
Week 8	The Pitch, What Works in Your Design?	Finish up your prototype, design document, and pitch for the final presentation next class.
Week 9	Final Presentations and Critique	

### **Grading Policy**

All work assigned in class is to be completed before the beginning of the next session. In the above schedule, each “Homework for Next Class” will be shown at the beginning of the following class. If a student does not have the homework completed, or has not made sufficient improvements to their project, they will receive a grade deduction for that week’s assignment.

All students are expected to participate in discussions both in class and on the class Slack channel. Students are encouraged to help each other (and ask for help) on the class Slack channel, and will be rewarded with extra credit points each time they do so.

The course uses the standard grading scheme:

100-90% = A

89-80% = B

79-70% = C

69-60% = D

59% and Below = F

The course grades are determined as follows:

#### **Participation**

Every class period, there are multiple group discussions. Students are

9 weeks, each worth 5%, **45% of total grade**

#### **Assignment**

7 homework checks, each worth 5%, **35% of total grade**

#### **Final Project**

1 Final Project presentation, **20% of total grade**

## Project Description

Over the course of the semester students will complete one final project with 7 intermediate checks. These checks act as milestones for certain content or conceptual additions and refinements to the project. These checks are detailed above in the **Homework for Next Class** column of our **Schedule**. Keep in mind students are expected to work on this project for the **entirety of the course**, it will be impossible to complete this project in a short timeframe. Time management is an essential element of this project's success.

For this class, you are tasked with creating a physical board game prototype. The prototype will use 3D printed pieces, a fully printed board, and a designed rule sheet/book. These elements can be created using **Fusion 360, Illustrator, and Photoshop**, but you are free to use any tools that suit you, such as **Affinity Designer**. All content will be created by you, and you are not allowed to use downloaded files/images.

The project must have the following:

- Printed Board
- 3D Printed pieces
- Printed rule sheet/book
- Design Document with accompanying materials
  - Sketches
  - Blueprints
  - Wireframe
  - Design process
  - Descriptions of play
  - Narrative description
  - World description
  - Color swatches
- Pitch

This project includes an important presentation aspect. In the final critique, your game will be played by other students, and we should be able to play a complete round/match of the game without issue. All rules should be explained in the rulebook, without additional input from the presenter.

## Rubric for Final Project

	<b>Insufficient</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>
<b>Technique</b>	0 Points Does not fulfill requirements	1 – 5 Points Student does not fully understand the techniques and does not utilize the tools to their full capacity	6 – 15 Points Project may lack refinement or only uses some of the tools, but otherwise the student understands the techniques	16 – 20 Points The project shows clear technical finesse and uses all the tools to their fullest capacity
<b>Presentation</b>	0 Points Does not fulfill requirements	1 – 10 Points The presentation of the project lacks cohesion and displays the student’s lack of knowledge of their project and process	11 – 29 Points The presentation of the project is complete, but does not use the language of game design and lacks overall cohesion	30 – 40 Points The presentation of the project is strong and cohesive. The student has full command of the language for game design
<b>Concept</b>	0 Points Does not fulfill requirements	1 – 10 Points The project lacks a solid concept or idea. The mechanics feel haphazard or last minute	11 – 29 Points The project has a concept, but it may be uninteresting or unintentional. It does not have a strong direction.	30 – 40 Points The project has a very strong concept. Each mechanic clearly indicates consideration of ludonarrative.