

The Illinois Institute of Art-Chicago

Course Title:	GAD120 - Scriptwriting and Storytelling for Games
Session/Year:	Winter 2008
Class times:	Tuesday and Thursday, 8:00 AM – 11:50 AM
Instructor:	Lindsay Grace
Contact info:	LGrace@aia.edu

Course description:

Digital storytelling takes new tools and techniques—computers and software - to update the ancient craft of telling tales. Students learn the fundamentals of scriptwriting setting the scene, dialogue, and character and camera movement and apply it to the construction of an interactive game story.

Good games are engaging. They are interactive experiences that encourage players to invest time, energy and emotion. The traditional techniques of scriptwriting employed by fiction and film fall short of the requirements for games. This course endeavors to teach the fundamentals of writing good video game scripts.

Students will learn the techniques of traditional storytelling as they relate to the particulars of writing game scripts. The class will complete exercises in analyzing video game storytelling, creative writing, and the process of turning good ideas into a great script.

Although this is mainly a writing class, students will have opportunities to produce supporting visual material, including character sketches, environments, and storyboards.

Course Length: 11 Weeks

Contact Hours: 66 (22 lecture and 44 lab)

Credit Value: 4 QHC

Prerequisites: GEN109, ART100

Competencies:

1. Develop ideas for entertaining and successful games.
2. Develop a critical framework to analyze existing examples.
3. Understand how games differ from other storytelling media.
4. Understand linear, branching, and modular systems in storytelling.
5. Understand how authorial control can be applied in emergent storytelling.
6. Identify and evaluate when cut scenes are necessary.
7. Develop interesting and engaging characters.
8. Write convincing dialogue for characters.
9. Understand character-specific dialogue.
10. Write an effective plot synopsis for a game.
11. Script a cut scene.
12. Script an interactive scene from a game.
13. Use drawing as a tool to express ideas.

Methods of Instruction: Lab and lecture

Methods of assessment:

Individual Assignments and Workshops:	30%
Individual Quizzes:	20%
Group Assignments:	20%
Participation and Preparedness:	5%
Final Project:	25%

Grading criteria:

The following number points to letter grade scale will be followed for this course:

Point Score range	Letter Grade
93 and above	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
Below 63	F

Required Text:

Game Story and Character Development
Marianne Krawczyk & Jeannie Novak
ISBN# 978-1-4018-7885-6

Suggested Reading:

Character Development and Storytelling for Games, ISBN# 1-59200-353-2
Creating Emotion in Games, ISBN# 1-5927-3007-8

Supplemental materials:

<http://aii.lgrace.com>

Required Materials:

- Three-Ring Binder (2)
- Notebook with Perforated Edge (1)
- Pocket-sized notebook (1)
- 8.5" x 11" sketchpad (1)
- Pens, Pencils, Markers (as needed for artwork)
- A USB drive, floppy disk or other electronic means of saving writing assignments

Technology:

Computer for word processing

Classroom policy and procedures:

Attendance: Professionals in the industry are expected to be on time and to meet all deadlines. With this in mind, attendance of all classes is mandatory. There are no excused absences; however, emergencies and illnesses documented may be taken into consideration. Roll will be taken at the beginning and end of each class. When late to class or missing a class, the student is responsible for getting missed information. Students with 32% accumulated absence (a total of 21 hours) will fail the course; tardiness counts toward accumulated absence.

There will be a lecture and discussion for nearly every class session. Many classes will involve workshop activities that seek to enhance your writing abilities through practice and guidance. Some workshop activities evolve into homework assignments.

All assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class.

Students should always keep a backup copy of their work.

No late assignments are accepted. Every working professional is expected to provide their work on time. Failing to do so reflects poorly on that person's performance. Repeated failure to meet deadlines often results in firing. It is best to learn to meet deadlines now.

In this course, each assignment will build on the previous. Failure to complete the prior week's assignment will make each subsequent week more difficult. It is in your best interest to complete each assignment on time and to the best of your ability. Always hand in what you have, even if you want to revise it. Partial credit is better than no credit at all.

Cheating and Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Consult the school catalog for more info in the section on Academic Honesty on page 73.

Special accommodations:

The Illinois Institute of Art-Chicago special needs coordinator, Jamey DiVietro, organizes services for qualified students requiring reasonable accommodations. Notifying the Illinois Institute of Art-Chicago that you have a disability or special needs is optional and confidential. However, in order for the school to accommodate your needs, we need advance notice of the services you require. For more information please contact Jamey DiVietro at 312-777-8616.

Counseling: If during the semester you have problems with stress, just need to talk to someone or need a referral to alternative resources, contact Jamey DiVietro the school counselor. He can be reached in the Student Services offices, or by phone at the services you require. For more information please contact Jamey DiVietro at 312-777-8616 or by e-mail at divetrj@aii.edu.

Weekly Schedule*

- Week 1: Chapter 1: History of Storytelling (pages 3-11)
Overview of Storytelling
Basics of Plot, Character, Perspective, Setting, Style and Theme
Analyzing Storytelling in Games
Assignment: Present an Unreleased Game with Great Story
- Week 2: Chapter 3 (pages 43-57), Suggested: Chapter 2: Game Genre
Writing Workshop: Turning your ideas to writing
Overview of game types and genres
In Class: Design and Diagram an Interactive Plot for a Game Level
Assignment: Outline Your Individual Game: Concept/Premise
- Week 3: Chapter 3 (pages 57-79): Building Your Story: Concept to Execution
Good Game / Bad Game Case Studies
In Class: Game Companies formed / Teams Picked
In Class: Basic Market Research: Demographics
Assignment: Team Commitment Document: Single Game Concept
- Week 4: Chapter 4: Game Storytelling Devices
Cinematic Sequences / Obligatory Cuts
Plot Synopsis, Plot Scripting and Scenario Scripting
Cut Scenes/Cinematic Sequences and the Language of Camera
In Class: Demo Language of Camera
In Class: Start Cinematic Shot Plan
Assignment: Create Team's First Treatment for One Game
Assignment: Script a Cinematic Sequence that Sets up the Game
- Week 5: Chapter 5: Overview of Character Types, Chapter 6 (pages 127-139)
Developing Character and Non-Player characters
Writing Dialogue and Dialogue Script
In Class: Sketch Storyboards
Assignment: Create Character Descriptions for 3 Characters

Midterm (No Exam) – Grades Posted Online

- Week 6: Chapter 6: Describing Character (Pages 139-151)
Developing Character and Non-Player characters
In Class: Critique
In Class: Team Evaluation / Team Critique
Assignment: Create Additional Character Description(s)
- Week 7: Chapter 7: Character Dialogue
Writing Dialogue and Dialogue Script
In Class: Record Dialogue
In Class: Redesign Dialogue
Assignment: Describe Dialogue System (1-2 paragraphs)
Assignment: Samples Dialogue (1-3 minutes)
- Week 8: Chapter 8: Gameplay
How to build a game
Developing an Interactive Script
Assignment: Describe Level Structure
Assignment: Describe 5 Elements of Gameplay
- Week 9: Chapter 9: Putting it all Together
Creating the documentation
Assignment: Outline Final Document Sections and Needs
- Week 10: Work Week
Create and Refine Final Document
- Week 11: Final Presentations
Sell, sell, sell

Estimated Homework Hours:

3-4 Homework hours are expected. Reading and research will take 1-2 hours, with the remainder set aside for writing activities. This number is based on the average student and does not include time for high-caffeine beverages, phone conversations with your significant other, and battles to save the Earth. If you are disciplined and studios, 3–4 hours is reasonable. If you are not studios and disciplined – sky's the limit _.

This syllabus is subject to change with the needs of the course and at the discretion of the instructor.

Syllabus acceptance signature page

I have read the entire syllabus carefully and understand the attendance policies and class policies concerning assignments. I understand that the class runs for six hours each week and I am personally responsible to be present for each session from start to finish. I am now informed that both late arrivals and early exits are noted in the attendance log.

Name (Print) _____

Phone Number _____

Current email _____