The Illinois Institute of Art, Chicago

Course Title: Scriptwriting and Storytelling for Games
Instructor: Lindsay D. Grace   **Office E-mail:** LG3311@fac.aii.edu
Course Number and Section: GAD120   **Session/Year:** Fall 2006
Course Length: 11 weeks   Credit Value: 4QHC

Contact Hours: 66   **Time:** Monday, Wednesday
Weekly Homework Hours: 3-4   Section A: 12:00 – 2:50 PM

Prerequisites: **Place:** 180 N. Wabash (Loop), Room 229

Methods of Instruction: Lab and Lecture

Technology Needed: Computer for word processing
Course Website: http://aii.lgrace.com
Office Hours: As needed

Course Description:

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.

Required Reading:

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

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

Some reading and materials are available for download at **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

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 ☺.

Prerequisites
- ❑ A passion for games
- ❑ *College-level* typing skills (no assignments may be handwritten)
- ❑ Ability to use Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel at the college level

Course Objectives:
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- ■ Develop ideas for entertaining and successful games.
- ■ Develop a critical framework to analyze existing examples.

- ■ Understand how games differ from other storytelling media.
- ■ Understand linear, branching, and modular systems in storytelling.
- ■ Understand how authorial control can be applied in emergent storytelling.
- ■ Identify and evaluate when cut scenes are necessary.

- ■ Develop interesting and engaging characters.
- ■ Write convincing dialogue for characters.
- ■ Understand character-specific dialogue.

- ■ Write an effective plot synopsis for a game.
- ■ Script a cut scene.
- ■ Script an interactive scene from a game.

- ■ Use drawing as a tool to express ideas.

Course Requirements and Policies

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.**

Grading System:

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**
60-62	**D**
Below 60	**F**

Score Breakdown:

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

Attendance / Absences:

Students are expected to attend each class and arrive on time. It is a student's responsibility to contact the instructor when they know they will be absent or have missed a class session. Students should notify the instructor of their planned absence as soon as they are capable. It is best to send an email.

Makeup exams and acceptance of late assignments will only be granted in the following circumstances; Medical excuse, emergencies, campus-sponsored activities.

All issues of attendance and tardiness will be handled as school policy dictates and at the discretion of the instructor.

Student Needs:
The Illinois Institute of Art-Chicago has a special needs coordinator who 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 the needs coordinator at 312-777-8616.

Cheating and Plagiarism:

Any student that cheats or plagiarizes will be reported to the academic standards committee and may be dismissed from the course.

You may not sue any work protected under copyright with the explicitly written consent of the copyright owner. This includes use of artwork or other creative assets.

While it is generally impractical to legally protect ideas, ideas are protected under a general code of ethics in academic environments. If your ideas for this class are clearly derived from those of another, you may be subject to scrutiny and accused of plagiarism. To protect yourself, give credit where credit is due.

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

*Schedule subject to change at the instructor's discretion.