

RTA 928: Gaming Theory & Practice
Fall Semester 2014

Professor: Kris Alexander

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Office Location: Online

Office Hours: Immediately after class each week or by appointment only

About the Course

Course Description from the Ryerson University Undergraduate Calendar:

Computer games are increasingly recognized as important objects of cultural value. This class will look at how computer and console games are made, why they are made, and how users interpret and respond to them. This course will include discussions of formal game theory, the cultural theory and history surrounding computer games, as well as studies in issues regarding 3D modeling, animation, design and development of interactive narratives and storytelling, mobile gaming, and gaming in various online systems.

Course Goals (Learning Outcomes):

By the end of this course, students will:

- Critically engage in the iterative process of game design
- Demonstrate the link between good storytelling and good video games
- Connect gaming theory to commercially available video games
- Describe various components of game design
- Discern the difference between the iterative process of game design and the components detailed in a game design document
- Distinguish the various skills and roles involved in the creation of video games
- Demonstrate an understanding of the theory through a written document
- Demonstrate an understanding of multimedia design
- Demonstrate an understanding of user experience design
- Apply game theory to various video games of different style and genre

Weekly Outline

Week	Date	Topic	Activities	Assignment(s)* Due:
1	September 2 nd	Introduction to course	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Learn the course format Learn course goals Participate in the class format 	<p>Read: "01" Reading (Just one this week – <u>before</u> class begins)</p> <p>Complete: Attendance</p>
2	September 9 th	Game Genre	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Readings Review Live Video Game Deconstruction 	<p>Read: "02" Readings</p> <p>Complete: "Genre" Assignment</p>
3	September 16 rd	Gameplay	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Readings Review Live Video Game Deconstruction 	<p>Read: "03" Readings</p> <p>Complete: "Gameplay" Assignment</p>
4	September 23 th	Game Mechanics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Readings Review Live Video Game Deconstruction 	<p>Read: "04" Readings</p> <p>Complete: "Game Mechanic(s)" Assignment</p>
5	September 30 th	Story(telling)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Readings Review Live Video Game Deconstruction 	<p>Read: "05" Readings</p> <p>Complete: "Story" Assignment</p>
6	October 7 th	Game Setting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Readings Review Live Video Game Deconstruction 	<p>Read: "06" Readings</p> <p>Complete: "Setting" Assignment</p>
	October 14 st	Reading Week	Play video games	Work on your Final Project
7	October 21 th	Character(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Readings Review Live Video Game Deconstruction 	<p>Read: "07"</p> <p>Complete: Character(s) Assignment, TwitchTV Report & TwitchTV Database Submission</p>
8	October 28 th	Game Levels	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Readings Review Live Video Game Deconstruction 	<p>Read: "08" Readings</p> <p>Complete: "Levels" Assignment</p>
9	November 4 th	Game Interface	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Readings Review Live Video Game Deconstruction 	<p>Read: "09" Readings</p> <p>Complete: "Interface" Assignment</p>
10	November 11 th	Platform(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Readings Review Live Video Game Deconstruction 	<p>Read: Your GDD</p> <p>Complete: "Platform(s)" Assignment</p>

11	November 18 th	Game Levels	1. Lecture 2. Readings Review 3. Live Video Game Deconstruction	Prepare your Final Project
12	November 25 th	Challenger Appears!	1. Final Round 2. Live Video Game Deconstruction	Prepare your Final Project Prepare Questions for Kris: Live Course Deconstruction
Final Assignment Due December 2nd				
*Each week (following the first week), there are two readings to complete, and one section of your GDD to prepare for class. The format is the same each week - Complete the two readings before class, and complete the appropriate section Final Project accordingly. All necessary materials can be found on Blackboard				

Course Readings

Alexander, K. B. (2013). Review of Games, Learning and Society: Learning and Meaning in the Digital Age. *In Press* , 1-4.

Bogost, I. (2007). *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* p.59-64. The MIT Press.

Chang, C.-J. (2012, May 5-10). Tangibles and Storytelling. *ACM* , 1-7.

Coffin, D. C. (1990). Tetris: A Metaphor for Life. *Media Supplement: Review* , 72-76.

LTD, DMA Design; Hamilton, K. R.; (n.d.). Race 'n' Chase Game Design. New York, New York, United States of America.

Robbins, B. M. (2012, February 15). Essential First-Person Shooters. *Library Journal* , 75.

Shokrizade, R. (2013, June 06). *The Top F2P Monetization Tricks*. Retrieved August 09, 2013 from Gamasutra: www.gamasutra.com/blogs/RaminShokrizade/20130626/194933/

Sirlin, D. (2008, 10 17). *Sirlin.net*. Retrieved August 15, 2013 from Sirlin.net: www.sirlin.net/articles/balancing-multiplayer-games-part-1-definitions.html

Steinkuehler, Squire, & Barab. (2012). *Games, Learning, and Society: Learning and Meaning in the Digital Age* (1st ed.) p. 104 -107, p.480-484. Cambridge University Press.

Evaluation

Components of the TwitchTV™ Report (Due October 21st):

Game Deconstruction	5%
Channel Deconstruction	10%
Monetization Deconstruction	5%
Critique	10%
Suggestions for Improvement	9%
Total Report Value	39%

Components of the Twitch Database Submission (Due October 21st):

Game Information	5%
TwitchTV Information	5%
Theoretical Information	5%
Database Contribution	7%
Total Report Value	22%

Components of the Final Project (Full Package Due December 2nd):

Project Cover Page	1%
Genre	2%
Gameplay	5%
Game Mechanic(s)	10%
Story	5%
Setting	5%
Character(s)	2%
Level(s)	5%
Interface	2%
Target Platform	2%
Total Report Value	39%

More details about each of the above assignments will be covered in class.

Appendix (General information for all RTA students)

Student Codes of Conduct

All students are required to adhere to all relevant University policies, such as the Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct (see <http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol61.pdf>) and the Student Code of Academic Conduct (see <http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol60.pdf>).

The Ryerson University Undergraduate Course Calendar

This is your resource for all information relating to academics, including curriculum, course descriptions, significant dates (including last date to drop a course without academic penalty), academic standings, The Student Code of Academic & Non-Academic Conduct, etc. The Ryerson University Undergraduate Course Calendar is available online at <http://www.ryerson.ca/undergraduate/calendars/>.

RTA Website

At www.ryerson.ca you will find information about the curriculum, course outlines, scholarships, student groups, staff & faculty, studios & facilities, etc.

Blackboard Course Website

Blackboard is an online course tool which may include an online discussion board, course documents such as the syllabus and lecture notes, announcements, an area where your grades are posted, etc. If your professor has set up a Blackboard site for this course, you'll find it at <http://my.ryerson.ca>.

RTA Online

RTA Online is an Organization on Blackboard that contains templates for storyboards, production paperwork, etc., as well as online tutorials for software and equipment used in classes and labs. Find it under 'Organizations' on your my.ryerson.ca homepage.

Your Ryerson Email Account:

The RTA School of Media will often send you important information by email (e.g. scholarship information, reminders of important dates, notification of meetings and/or events, internship opportunities and job postings, etc.). Correspondence from RTA and from your professors will be sent ONLY to your Ryerson email account. It is your obligation to ensure that you activate your account and check it regularly, or have it forwarded to an account you check regularly. Please use only your Ryerson account for sending emails to staff & faculty. See below for accessing your Ryerson email account.

Activating Your Ryerson Online Identity

To access many of Ryerson's online resources, you must first activate your Ryerson online identity by completing a series of web forms available via <http://www.ryerson.ca/accounts/>. During the activation process, you will obtain a username and create your initial password. Once activated, your Ryerson online identity provides you with access to:

- Google Apps
- Ryerson email
- The Central Computer Labs including the Library and KHW71
- The my.ryerson portal and learning system
- RAMSS (via <https://my.ryerson.ca>)
- Other servers and applications needed

Notice to Students with Disabilities:

Students with any disability (e.g. learning, medical, physical, sensory), illness, or condition that requires academic adaptations should discuss the situation with the professor and/or contact the Access Centre (<http://www.ryerson.ca/accesscentre>).

Written Assignments:

All written assignments are expected to be properly formatted and cited using **MLA style** (unless otherwise indicated by your professor). Guides and references for using MLA style can be found through the Ryerson University Library as well as the Writing Centre. See <http://writingcentre.blog.ryerson.ca/files/2012/05/MLA.pdf>

English as a Second Language:

Ryerson University offers support to students who may require improvement in their overall English language communication skills. Please visit **English Language Support** at www.ryerson.ca/student-services/els/

Accommodation of Student Religious Observance:

At the start of the term, students who have religious observance obligations which will lead to absences from campus or academic activities during the semester should download the “Student Declaration of Religious Observance” form from <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/reobservforminstr.pdf>. Present a copy of the form to the professor **within the first two weeks of classes**. The professor and student will then consult to reach an agreement on a reasonable means to address the situation.

Learning Success

Learning Success (<http://www.ryerson.ca/learningsuccess>) helps students make the transition to university learning, develop sound learning strategies through tutoring options and course-based study groups, and achieve their academic potential by providing services in both traditional and virtual learning environments. Learning Success offers free workshops for students such as: Note-taking, Managing Tasks and Time, Ways of Learning, Critical Reading, Test Preparation and Test Anxiety, etc.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is defined by the University as “claiming the words, ideas, artistry, drawings, images or data of another person as if they were your own.” (Student Code of Academic Conduct, Ryerson University, 2006, p. 2). According to the Code, plagiarism includes:

- i. copying another person’s work (including information found on the Internet and unpublished materials) without appropriate referencing;
- ii. presenting someone else’s work, opinions or theories as if they are your own;
- iii. presenting another’s substantial compositional changes to an assignment as your own;
- iv. working collaboratively without permission of the instructor on an assignment, and then submitting it as if it was created solely by you; or
- v. submitting the same work, for credit, in two or more courses without the prior written permission of the instructor(s). (Student Code of Academic Conduct, Ryerson University, 2006, p. 2.)

Usually one associates plagiarism with written works but it can include any work such as photographs/artwork, Internet materials, video, audio, and digital media. **The University penalties for plagiarism can be severe, ranging from getting zero on the assignment up to, in cases of prior academic dishonesty, suspension or expulsion.** Please note that you may be required to submit some or all of your written assignments to www.turnitin.com. Students who do not want their work submitted to this plagiarism detection service must, by the end of the second week of class, consult with the instructor to make alternate arrangements.

Useful links to help you understand and avoid plagiarism:

Ryerson’s Academic Integrity web site: <http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/>

Student Code of Academic Conduct policy: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf>

Cheating:

Cheating is defined by Ryerson University as:

- i. using materials or aids not expressly allowed by the instructor in an examination or test;
 - ii. copying another person's answer(s) to an examination or test question; copying another person's answers to individually assigned projects;
 - iii. consulting with another person or unauthorized materials outside of an examination room during the examination period (e.g. discussing an exam or consulting materials during an emergency evacuation or when permitted to use a washroom);
 - iv. improperly submitting an answer to a test or examination question completed, in whole or part, outside the examination room unless specifically permitted by the examination format;
 - v. resubmitting altered test or examination work after it has already been evaluated;
 - vi. presenting falsified or fabricated material, including research results; or
 - vii. improperly obtaining, through deceit, theft, bribery, collusion or otherwise, access to examination paper(s) or set of questions, or other confidential information.
- (Student Code of Academic Conduct, Ryerson University, 2006, p. 2)

The University penalties for cheating can be severe, ranging from getting zero on the assignment or test up to, in cases of prior academic dishonesty, suspension or expulsion.

Use of Laptops, Cell Phones, and Other Mobile Electronic Devices in the Classroom

Students are advised that because various learning & teaching activities may be enhanced or diminished by use of mobile devices, it is up to each professor to determine when & how such devices can or should be used by students during any given class.

Students may not take pictures, video recordings, or sound recordings in class without express permission from the professor.