



## NYC iSchool

### Game Design

Christina Jenkins / 2011-12

#### Course Description

From schools where students face “boss levels” instead of taking tests, to public health experts who have looked to games as a way of slowing flu outbreaks, to the idea that “gamification” can be used to change human behavior, it’s indisputable that games have emerged as an area of serious academic inquiry. At their best, games are *fun* – but creating game experiences that are fun, challenging, sufficiently complex and somehow addicting is extraordinarily difficult. In this class, we will examine the “mechanics” of game design. How are games created? What makes games fun? What *is* a game?

#### Course Objectives

Through this course, students will build their own board games (and digital games, if they choose) to understand the complex systems that make games “work.” Students will learn to engage with the iterative process of design, which involves prototyping a concept, testing it, and making changes to improve it. Students will develop their own definition of what a game is based on their own prototypes, and will be able to articulate their position on whether games have the potential to change the world – as Jane McGonigal and other academics have claimed.

#### Required Materials:

We will be using a lot of materials to prototype (build) our new games. I would like to build a library of game pieces and other objects that we can work with during this process. **Please contribute at least two of the objects below to our class collection, which will be open to all students to use.** If you have more of these objects at home (or if you have other games that you can donate), they would be welcome additions to the class.

- A deck of regular cards.
- A deck of Uno cards.
- A Go board.
- A Checkers board.
- A half dozen six-sided dice.
- A set of polyhedral dice.
- A large stack of differently colored index cards.
- A bag of differently colored beads.
- Wooden pieces, like you can find at the craft store. This might be “pawn” pieces, wooden circle chips, flat squares, cubes, etc.

Because the deck of cards is probably the easiest to acquire – and because we don’t want 60 decks of cards and no other materials – I encourage you to be creative with your donations. They do not need to be on this list, they just have to be something that you can see “game-making” potential in.

#### Student Requirements and Expectations:



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Students are expected to care for our shared classroom environment by returning furniture and objects to their established “homes” (as identified with labels), taking care to not waste materials, and contributing to a creative, collaborative and supportive culture in room 402. We will engage with at least one game design challenge per week and one major challenge at the end of the course. Creative thinking can be frustrating and difficult, and students are expected to approach these challenges with persistence and open minds.

### Course Timeline

The course is based on Ian Schreiber’s Game Design Concepts, a free class he offered online in 2009. The website is <http://gamedesignconcepts.wordpress.com/>. We also use the book he co-authored with Brenda Brathwaite: Challenges for Game Designers. It’s an incredible collection of non-digital activities for game-makers.

Week	Topic	Major Assignments
1	What is a game? Game design as process	Defining a game;; Challenge #1
2	Formal elements of games	Challenge #2
3	Introducing prototyping	Challenge #3
4	Elements of chance and skill	Challenge #4
5	Games + stories	Challenge #5
6	Games as art	Challenge #6
7	Designing a complete game: Brainstorming, concept feedback + prototyping	Final Concept
8	Designing a complete game: Prototyping and playtesting with designers and non-designers	Prototype
9	Designing a complete game: Iterating and blindtesting	Feedback + 2 <sup>nd</sup> Iteration
10	Designing a complete game: User Interface	3 <sup>rd</sup> Iteration
11	Designing a complete game: Final iteration	Final presentation

### Grading

#### OFFICIAL ISCHOOL GRADING POLICY:

- Work Habits include home work assignments, in class assignments, notes, notebook checks, being prepared for class, organization, supplies, flash cards, etc.



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- Contributing Factors includes attendance, participation, lateness to class and turning in late assignments, behavior, effort, etc.

Grading Policy for 9<sup>th</sup> grade:

Mastery: 60%

Work Habits: 30%

Contributing Factors: 10%

Grading Policy for 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade:

Mastery: 70%

Work Habits: 20%

Contributing Factors: 10%

### Incomplete Grades:

Students who receive below a 65% will receive an incomplete in the class. The student's work habits and contributing factors percentage grades will be locked in place at the end of the course, but a grade can be improved through demonstration of mastery (prior to the end of the following quarter).

For Example: John receives an incomplete in humanities. He had a 9% in contributing factors, a 15% in work habits and a 30% in mastery. During the next quarter John worked and raised his mastery to 60%. Therefore his final grade for the class is  $60+9+15 = 84\%$ .

Students who receive an incomplete will be required to attend an after school class each week at a time to be determined by student and teacher.

### Grading Policy for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students:

Mastery	60%
<i>Compositions/Scores (including peer evaluations)</i>	
Work Habits	30%
<i>Out of class assignments</i>	
<i>Daily preparation and performance</i>	
Contributing Factors	10%
<i>Participation, punctuality/attendance, effort</i>	

### Grading Policy for 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grade students:

Mastery	70%
<i>Compositions/Scores (including peer evaluations)</i>	
Work Habits	20%
<i>Out of class assignments</i>	
<i>Daily preparation and performance</i>	
Contributing Factors	10%
<i>Participation, punctuality/attendance, effort</i>	

### Incomplete Grades

Students who receive below a 65% (or higher and chooses this option) will receive an incomplete in any specific class. For module courses, any student who does not complete the final product will automatically receive an "incomplete." The student's work habits and contributing factors percentage grades will be locked in place. The students will then have the next quarter to work towards raising their mastery percentage grade.



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Students who receive an incomplete will be required to attend an after school class each week at a time to be determined by student and teacher.

### **Late Assignments**

[**OFFICIAL iSCHOOL POLICY:** Teachers will accept late assignments 5 school days after the original due date. The assignment must be completed in the presence of the assigning teacher (i.e. during Office Hours, or by appointment). At this time the teacher has the option to assign additional work before deeming the original assignment complete.]

All coursework is due on the date given at the beginning of the assignment/project. Late work will be accepted up to five days after the due date, with a penalty of 10% off per day late. The assignment must be completed in my presence during my posted Office Hours, or by appointment.

### **Student Absences**

If a student is absent, it is his/her responsibility to come to Office Hours the day he/she returns back to school find out what was missed the day he/she was absent. The student is expected to turn in any assignments due on the day absent on the day immediately following the absence. During an absence, students are expected to continue to check the course website and/or contact a classmate to keep up with course work.

### **Resources**

- Students should get in the habit of checking iSchool email regularly, as teachers will communicate instructions, project feedback, etc. through email.
- Students should check the course Moodle daily, as assignments, templates, and resources will be posted there.
- Additional help is available during Office Hours or by appointment; My office hours are: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, from 3:20 – 4pm.
- If you have additional concerns please e-mail me at: [cjenkins@mail.nycischool.org](mailto:cjenkins@mail.nycischool.org)