Course: DMED 502: Improvisation for Collaboration – 3 credits
Term: Fall 2023
Delivery Method: In person
Instructor: Dr. Dave Fracchia
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Requirements: Canvas account, a journal (provided) and pen

Course Description

This course provides students with the practical skills to improve collaboration with others, for the end goal of creating successful projects together. From improving their performance in team based scenarios and developing strong presentation skills, to creating stories and characters on the fly, improvisation is an essential skill in a digital media industry that demands increasing flexibility and creativity, relies on innovative minds for its evolution and depends on rapid prototyping and iterative product creation for its survival.

Course Objectives

The goal of the course is to identify the situations in which improvised interactions occur on collaborative projects and, through the practice of specific activities, cultivate and develop improvisation abilities that will support individuals and teams. Improvisational exercises are drawn from many creative disciplines and can be used strategically to support how teams *innovate, collaborate, manage, and design*.

By the end of the course students will be able to:
- Identify where and when improvised behaviors manifest in their and the team's workflow.
- Exercise targeted activities to support how they collaborate, manage, design and innovate.
- Practice problem solving with others through scenario-based activities.
- Reflect on specific activities in order to deepen how improvisation can support collaboration.
- Develop their own vocabulary of exercises to improve their team-based work.
- Develop better communication and presentation skills (within teams, with clients and others).

Format of the Course

- Classes are weekly on Thursdays with students being assigned to either the morning or afternoon group (the assignment of students to groups changes on a weekly basis).
- Classes are 3-hour workshop-oriented sessions integrating aural, visual and kinesthetic exercises.
- Assigned readings may be provided to support the ideas presented in class.
- Participation in improvisation exercises and discussions is expected in each class.
- Assignments will be required that may intersect with other courses.
- Weekly self-reflective journal assignments will occur in class, unless otherwise stated.
- Experiential learning is the key, <u>making attendance and participation a must</u>.
- Course materials, required reading, assignments, and grading will be through Canvas.

Course Schedule

The following schedule outlines the proposed topics covered during the course. *Based on the interaction with students as well as the topics covered by other parallel courses, some topics may be added, modified, or swapped during the semester at the discretion of the instructor.*

Note: The cohort will be divided into groups (morning/afternoon) at the discretion of the instructor. **Group A and Group B will CHANGE during the term and students MUST stay in their assigned group.** <u>Students will be notified which group they will be in by email and/or Canvas no later than the day before the class.</u> Groups will likely be organized according to Projects I or Game Design project teams.

Class	Date	Group A	Group B	Topics
1	September 14th	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Introduction to Improv (Yes, And)
2	September 21st	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Focusing + Divergence / Convergence
3	September 28th	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Team Bonding + Prototyping
4	October 5th	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Energy + Divergence / Convergence + Presentation
5	October 12th	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Listening + Feedback
6	October 19th	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Dynamics + Co-Creation / Creativity
7	October 26th	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Team Bonding + Client Communication
8	November 2nd	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Listening + Leadership
9	November 9th	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Focusing + User Testing
10	November 16th	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Conflict Resolution
11	November 23rd	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Energy + Presentation Skills
12	November 30th	9am-12pm	1pm-4pm	Retrospective
13	December 7th	1pm-4pm	1pm-4pm	Panel Q&A

Required Readings and Materials
All assigned readings will be made available digitally via Canvas. Students may be required to answer specific questions about the readings within a canvas thread, in-class reflection, or assignment.

<u>Students are required to register accounts for Canvas, prior to the first class</u>, and expected to login to Canvas regularly for course updates, materials, and readings. Weekly updates (such as which group students are in) may also be emailed prior to each class.

A blank-paged journal is supplied to each student who is expected to take responsibility and ownership of it. <u>Students will be writing and drawing in the journals for the course and expected to have them for every class.</u> Unless otherwise stated by the instructor, reflections will be completed in-class and journals collected at the end of class and returned the next class.

Recommended Readings
Optional readings that will provide those interested with a broader context of improvisation:
- Getting to "Yes And": The Art of Business Improv by B. Kulhan
- Yes, And: Lessons from The Second City by K. Leonard and T. Yorton
- The Improv Handbook: The Ultimate Guide to Improvising in Comedy, Theatre, and Beyond by T. Salinsky and D. Frances-White
- Group Improvisation: The Manual of Ensemble Improv Games by P. Gwinn
- Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes are High by Patterson et al.

Evaluation
Grades are highly individualized, impacted by their interaction with others, and directly proportional to conscious attendance and participation, and timely delivery of quality assignments.

Mid-term grades are provided as a barometer of progress and to give each student the ability to improve their performance in the course.

Grades will be based on the following criteria (subject to instructor revision if deemed necessary):

Participation / Responsivity	Percentage of Total Grade	40%
	Evaluated based on: • Class attendance and punctuality • Class attendance / punctuality • Presence (attention / focus) • In-class discussion and Q&A • Participation in Canvas discussions • Active participation in all exercises / games • Risk-taking (e.g. first to volunteer) • Collaborative engagement in teams • Taking direction and feedback	
Reflection	Percentage of Total Grade	25%

	Evaluated based on:
	• **Journal**: Reflection in a journal based on in-class content and exercises. Completed in-class and due at the end of each class. Criteria include:
	    ○ Understanding of in-class material
	    ○ Depth of reflection
	    ○ Textual and/or visual detail
	    ○ Improvement based on feedback
	    ○ Legibility	

Assignments	Percentage of Total Grade	35%

	Evaluated based on:
	• **4 Assignments:** (5-10% each) to be completed outside of class. These may be individual or team-based and will be assigned in Canvas. Criteria include:
	    ○ Timely completion
	    ○ Meeting all assignment criteria
	    ○ Quality (content and grammar)	

TOTAL		100%

Grading Profile

A+	95-100	Very Good, Excellent, or Outstanding Performance
A	90-94	
A-	85-89	
B+	80-84	Good Performance
B	75-79	Satisfactory Performance
B-	70-74	Marginally Unsatisfactory Performance
C+	65-69	Unsatisfactory Performance
C	60-64	
F	0 – 59	Unsatisfactory Performance (students must retake the course)

Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance is expected of students in all their classes (including participation, group work, tutorials, seminars, online etc.). Students who are unavoidably absent due to illness or disability should notify their instructors of their situation.

- Students are expected to attend every class on the schedule (based on their assigned group) and be fully present. While sickness is sometimes inevitable, understand that due to the experiential nature of the material, classes cannot be made up.
- Lateness also informs grading. Classes start punctually every week according to the schedule. Instructions will not be repeated, nor will it be tolerated if a latecomer bothers another student for instructions. If arriving later than half an hour into a class, a student may be marked as absent.

Laptops and Cell Phones

The use of laptops and cell phones during class is at the discretion of the instructor. Students should respect their classmates and instructors and refrain from text messages, social media, games and videos during class and workshop times. Please note the students should always bring a pen and journal to class.

Dress Comfortably

Students should wear comfortable clothes and shoes as they will be moving around a lot, sitting on the floor, etc. Students are expected to participate in all activities and wearing clothes that prohibit this will impact their participation grade.

Written & Spoken English

English is the official language of the school and all communication (written and spoken) is expected to be conducted in English. SFU and the MDM Program provide a wide range of free language support for those who need and it is up to each student to seek that support.

Accommodations

The university accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Students should let the instructor know in advance, preferably the first week of class, if they require any accommodations on these grounds.

The Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) will make every effort to assist students with disabilities so that they achieve their educational goals.
https://www.sfu.ca/students/accessible-learning/establishing-accommodations/accommodation.html

Academic Integrity

SFU's Academic Integrity website http://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity.html is filled with information on what is meant by academic dishonesty, where students can find resources to help with their studies and the consequences of cheating.

Each student is responsible for their conduct as it affects the university community. Academic dishonesty, in whatever form, is ultimately destructive of the values of the university. Furthermore, it is unfair and discouraging to the majority of students who pursue their studies honestly. Scholarly integrity is required of all members of the university. http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student/s10-01.html

Inappropriate use of technology in coursework: If students are using generative AI to produce content that will be part of their graded work in the course, they must be transparent about the tools used. Undeclared use of the tool/technology will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. Be aware that any tool used will require students to evaluate the output for accuracies and be responsible for making the appropriate corrections.

Graduate Studies Notes

Important dates and deadlines for graduate students are found here: http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/current/important_dates/guidelines.html.