Course: DMED 502: Improvisation for Collaboration (3 Credits)
Term: Fall 2024
Instructor: Dr. Dave Fracchia
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Acknowledgement of Coast Salish Peoples and Land

We respectfully acknowledge the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples on whose unceded traditional territories our campus resides.

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 improv 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 digital media production pipelines.

By the end of the course learners 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 skills (within teams, with clients, with others).
- Improve presentational skills (speaking, presence, focus, confidence).

Format of the Course
This 13-week course will be delivered in-person. <u>You are required to register accounts for Canvas prior to the first class</u>. You are expected to go to Canvas regularly for any course updates, materials, readings, discussions, exercises, and assignments. Weekly updates (such as which group students are in) may also be emailed prior to each class.

This course will consist of:
- ***Learn-by-doing:*** Experiential learning is the key, <u>making attendance and participation a must</u>.
- Weekly 3-hour workshop-oriented sessions integrating aural, visual and kinesthetic exercises.
- Assigned readings, discussions and exercises that support the ideas presented in class.
- Assignments that may intersect with other courses.

Course Schedule

The course will run on Fridays, September 13 – December 6, 2024, either from 9am – 12pm or 1pm – 4pm. The cohort will be divided into rotating groups throughout the term. ***Learners will be placed at the discretion of the instructor and cannot choose which slot to participate in.*** Learners will likely be organized according to their Projects I or Game Design project teams. The following schedule outlines the proposed topics covered during the course. Based on the interaction with students, some topics may be added, modified, or swapped during the semester at the discretion of the instructor.

Note: Group A and Group B will CHANGE during the term and students MUST stay in their assigned group.
Students will be notified which group they will be in by email and/or Canvas no later than the <u>day before the class</u>.

Class	Group A	Group B	Topic
Week 1 (Friday, Sept 13)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Intro to Improv (Yes, And)
Week 2 (Friday, Sept 20)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Divergence & Convergence
Week 3 (Friday, Sept 27)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Prototyping
Week 4 (Friday, Oct 4)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Presentation Skills I
Week 5 (Friday, Oct 11)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Feedback
Week 6 (Friday, Oct 18)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Creativity & Co-Creation
Week 7 (Friday, Oct 25)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Client Communication
Week 8 (Friday, Nov 1)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Conflict Resolution I
Week 9 (Friday, Nov 8)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Conflict Resolution II
Week 10 (Friday, Nov 15)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	User Testing
Week 11 (Friday, Nov 22)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Presentation Skills II
Week 12 (Friday, Nov 29)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Leadership
Week 13 (Friday, Dec 6)	9:00am-12:00pm	1:00pm-4:00pm	Retrospective & Improvability

Assignments

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

Mid-term grades are provided as a barometer of progress and to give each learner 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	Percentage of Total Grade	40%
	Evaluated based on: ● Class attendance and punctuality ● Presence (attention and focus) ● Participation in class discussions ● Participation in Canvas discussions ● Active participation in all exercises / games ● Collaborative engagement in teams ● Taking direction and feedback and applying it ● Risk-taking beyond comfort zone (ex. first to volunteer)	
Team Assignments	Percentage of Total Grade	30%

	Evaluated based on:
	● **2 Assignments:** (15% each) to be completed outside of class. These will be **team-based** and will be assigned in Canvas. Criteria include:
	    o Timely completion
	    o Meeting all assignment criteria
	    o Quality (content and grammar)	

Individual Assignments	Percentage of Total Grade	30%

	Evaluated based on:
	● **3 Assignments:** (10% each) to be completed outside of class. These will be **individual** and will be assigned in Canvas. Criteria include:
	    o Timely completion
	    o Meeting all assignment criteria
	    o Quality (content and grammar)	

TOTAL		100%

Required Readings:

All assigned readings will be made available digitally via Canvas as pdf files. Learners may be prompted to answer specific questions about the readings within a Canvas discussion thread, exercise, or assignment by the instructor.

Optional readings that will provide those interested with a broader context of improvisation in culture and management as well as conflict resolution:

- 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.
- Creativity, Inc. by Catmull with Wallace

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.

- You are expected to attend every class on the schedule (based on your 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 as does class attendance and full presence. 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. Arriving late will result in the deduction of participation marks.

- Texting, checking your email, using your smart phones or laptops for any other reason besides a guided class activity will be noticed and your grade impacted negatively.

- Failure to contribute to Canvas discussions, complete exercises, or assignments will also impact your grade based on the evaluation criteria.

- Dress comfortably for all improvisation classes. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes as you will be moving around, sitting on the floor, and maybe playing with fun materials. You are expected to participate in all activities and wearing clothes that prohibit this will impact your participation grade.

https://www.sfu.ca/students/enrolment-services/policies-and-procedures/academic-concessions.html

Grading Profile

A+	95-100	Exemplary expectations
A	90-94	Exceeding expectations
A-	85-89	Meet expectations
B+	80-84	Approaching expectations
B	75-79	
B-	70-74	Below expectations
C	60-69	Far below expectations
F	0 – 59	Fail (Students must retake the course).

A student in a master's or doctoral program must maintain a CGPA of 3.0. Under no circumstances will a student whose CGPA is below 3.0, be awarded a graduate degree.

https://www.sfu.ca/students/advising-resources/calculators/gpa-calculator.html

Laptops & Cell Phones
The use of laptops and cell phones during class is at the discretion of the instructor. *Please respect your classmates and instructors and refrain from text messages, social media, games and videos during class and workshop times.* Please note you should always bring pen and paper to class.

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 it and it's up to each learner to seek that support.

Accommodations
The university accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably the first week of class, if you will 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: Your Work, Your Success
SFU's Academic Integrity website http://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity.html is filled with information on what is meant by academic dishonesty, where you can find resources to help with your 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 you are using any technology, including generative AI, to produce or edit content that will be part of your graded work in the course, you must be transparent about the tools that you use. Undeclared use of the tool/technology will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. Be aware that any tool used will require you 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.