Course: DMED540 Future of Worldbuilding (3 Credits)
Term: Spring 2025
Delivery Method: In Person
Instructors: Jason Lee Elliott
Pre-requisites: None

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 is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of developing fictional worlds, with a focus on applying it towards multi-platform storytelling and integrating Generative AI as part of the ideation process. Through a combination of lectures, discussions, hands-on exercises, and project-based learning, students will explore the fundamental principles of worldbuilding, including geography, history, culture, and character development. They will learn to craft immersive and believable fictional universes that span multiple mediums, such as literature, film, television, games, and comics. Additionally, students will delve into the cutting-edge realm of Generative AI technology, leveraging advanced algorithms to assist in the creative ideation process and enhance the depth and richness of their fictional worlds. By the end of the course, students will have developed their own original fictional story universes and will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to embark on their own creative projects in worldbuilding and multi-platform storytelling.

Course Objectives

After completing **Future of Worldbuilding**, each student will be able to:

- Design and develop multi-platform narratives and experiences.
- Be able to apply a platform's unique characteristics to tell a story.
- Identify the potential pros and cons of generative AI tools.
- Integrate generative AI technologies into a prototyping pipeline.
- Implement art and code assets into an interactive digital artifact.

Format of the Course

The course will run for 12 weeks with 3-hour weekly class sessions scheduled consisting of lectures, in-class activities, and student presentations.

Assignments

Throughout the semester, we will be applying our worldbuilding concepts towards two projects: a single fictional storyworld that the class will develop together and another project of the student's own design. As part of this worldbuilding process and throughout the entire semester, students will be exploring a variety of generative AI tools to identify their utility, potential uses within a pipeline, comparative analyses between similar tools, and apply it towards their own projects.

In-Class Worldbuilding Project

During the middle of the course, we will primarily focus on developing a fictional storyworld together as a class. Each student will be assigned a nation within this world and will apply the worldbuilding concepts covered in class towards various prototypes. This will lead to a final short "tourism" promo video where students will sell the nation, the people, culture, etc. that they have created.

Franchise IP Project

Over the semester, students will work, alone or in small, instructor-approved teams, to develop a Franchise IP concept. The primary deliverables will be a concept proposal document that will detail the world that they are building, including story ideas, look and feel, interactive design, etc., a variety of different prototypes to suit their worldbuilding needs, and a final presentation where students will pitch the idea, explain how it will work, and what they learned. Students are required to use generative AI tools as part of this process.

Course Evaluation

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

Exploratory Research	
AI Tools and News Exploration	10
In-Class Worldbuilding	
Prototypes	20
Tourism Promo Video	20
Franchise IP Project	
Reference Style Guide	10
Prototypes & Documentation	20
Presentation	20
Total	**100**

Course Schedule

Class	Topic
Week 1	CORE QUESTION: WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF WORLDBUILDING?
Week 2	CORE QUESTION: HOW DO WE ENVISION THE WORLD?
Week 3	CORE QUESTION: WHO INHABITS YOUR WORLD?
Week 4	CORE QUESTION: HOW DOES THE ENVIRONMENT AFFECT THE WORLD?
Week 5	CORE QUESTION: HOW DO SOCIETIES IMPACT THE WORLD?
Week 6	CORE QUESTION: HOW DOES KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCE THE WORLD? *Reference Style Guide DUE*
Week 7	CORE QUESTION: HOW IS LANGUAGE A REFLECTION OF CULTURE?
Week 8	CORE QUESTION: WHAT IS OUR WORLD LIKE? *In-Class Worldbuilding: Tourism Promo Video DUE*
Week 9	CORE QUESTION: DO YOUR PLATFORMS SUPPORT THE STORY?
Week 10	CORE QUESTION: HOW WELL ARE WE EXPLAINING THE STORY?
Week 11	CORE QUESTION: HOW DOES THE USER EXPERIENCE YOUR WORLD?
Week 12	CORE QUESTION: CAN WE SELL OUR FRANCHISE CONCEPT? *Franchise IP Project Due*

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 based on the schedule (and their assigned group) and be fully present. Unreported lateness/absence also informs grading.
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

Ethics

You are required to use course ethics to do user/play testing. Please speak to your supervisor regarding the steps and policies.

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'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.