Course: DMED 520: Projects 1 (6 credits)
Term: Fall 2025
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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
Building Virtual Worlds is the first project course. Teams of students from different backgrounds and disciplines design and implement a digital artifact. These projects have an explicit role in teaching human-centered iterative design, project management, team collaboration, and project execution skills. This hands-on immersion into a team-based problem solving environment is designed to break down student inhibitions and to foster rapid project planning and prototyping.

This course will focus on design thinking, production pipeline, user experience and project management techniques based on real-world examples. This course is extremely hands-on, heavily emphasizing critical thought, design, applied problem-solving, and rapid prototyping. The team-based projects will give students the necessary tools, background and experience to be successful at medium and large-scale digital media projects and will prepare students as they move into Projects II.

All MDM project courses are group-independent studies, where teams of three to six students work on digital projects during that semester. Projects I focuses on the design and implementation of artifacts (digital or physical) in order to solve a client's problem. This rapid immersion into a group problem-solving environment is designed to engage a student in project planning, management and execution. The course aims to provide a solid foundation of problem-solving, critical thinking and methodologies that will apply to future industry projects.

Course Objectives
Upon completion of the Projects 1 course students will be able to:

Define and create solutions with value:
- Define the problem space and the project goals
- Identify user pain points/needs
- Understand and apply user-centred and/or technology-driven design methods
- Effectively articulate the problem statement/business challenge
- Apply appropriate user research techniques to validate your solution
- Identify different prototyping approaches and their strengths/weaknesses
- Rapidly iterate design(s) and prototype(s) that solve the identified problem
- Effectively document the rationale for design decisions
- Successfully complete team-based assignments

Understand and Apply Effective Collaboration Skills:
- Understand and implement production methodologies
- Effectively apply strategies for team communication, conflict management, production process and project planning under time constraints

- Produce effective, well-written, and professional (i.e. appropriate for sharing with a client) documentation that provides context, project goals, and rationale for key decisions
- Demonstrate the ability to work in an interdisciplinary team

Apply Project Management Concepts:
- Explain and apply the key principles of production management
- Create an effective, load-balanced project pipeline
- Demonstrate project planning in their projects
- Deliver a professional project within time and resource constraints

Format of the Course
Projects I is a course in which student teams design and implement artifacts in a digital environment. The projects have an explicit role in teaching project management, iterative design/development, and best practices for team- based creation. The course will include lectures, in-class exercises and workshops that will illustrate techniques.

Students are assigned to groups that balance disciplinary backgrounds. Working together, they will develop a project that meets defined user needs and client expectations. Evaluation in project courses is based on both group and individual work.

Course Schedule
The course will run on Thursdays, September 11 – December 4, 2025 from 9AM – 4PM. Your instructors will confirm the schedule.

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

Class	Topic
Week 0 (Thursday, Sept 4)	Design Jam
Week 1 (Thursday, Sept 11)	Design Jam Retro, Project 1-A Assigned
Week 2 (Thursday, Sept 18)	Project 1-A Development
Week 3 (Thursday, Sept 25)	Project 1-A Development
Week 4 (Thursday, Oct 2)	Project 1-A Presentation, Project 1-B Assigned
Week 5 (Thursday, Oct 9)	Project 1-B Development
Week 6 (Thursday, Oct 16)	Project 1-B Development
Week 7 (Thursday, Oct 23)	Project 1-B Presentation, Project 1-C Assigned
Week 8 (Thursday, Oct 30)	Project 1-C Development
Week 9 (Thursday, Nov 6)	Project 1-C Development

Week 10 (Thursday, Nov 13)	Project 1-C Development
Week 11 (Thursday, Nov 20)	Community Playtesting
Week 12 (Thursday, Nov 27)	Project 1-C Development and Retro
Week 13 (Thursday, Dec 4)	Project 1-C Presentation, Course Retro

Course Topics

- Production and pipeline methodologies
- Developing business value through primary and secondary research
- User-centred design (UCD) and Technological-driven design (TDD)
- Iterative design/ideation/development
- User research and testing to validate design decisions
- Project management tools and techniques
- Effective communications and documentation
- Presentations, pitches, sprint reviews and demos

Course Assignments

Note: Assignments, due dates, and weighting are subject to change before the start of the semester

Design Jam	5%
Project 1-A	15%
Individual 1-A	10%
Project 1-B	15%
Individual 1-B	10%
Project 1-C	30%
Individual 1-C	10%
Self and Peer Review 1-C	5%

Suggested Readings/Materials

- Patrick Parra Pennefather , *Mentoring Digital Media Projects: Project-Based Learning and Teaching for Professional Development*, Apress, 2022
- Vernor Vinge, *Rainbow's End*, Tor Books, 2006

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.
- Due dates: Late assignments will not be accepted without the explicit permission of the instructors and may be subject to a late penalty.

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 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
If you are using generative AI to produce 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.

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.