Course: DMED 503 Game Design & Gamification (3 credits)
Term: Fall 2025 – Term 1
Instructor: Jason Lee Elliott
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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
Game Design and Gamification explores what motivates people, what constitutes "fun", and how through these principles we can create more meaningful and engaging experiences. Primarily, we will focus on video games, ranging from indie to AAA, mobile to VR, to understand the core concepts of game design and discuss how these can be applied to other interactive forms through gamification. We will cover various aspects of games including mechanics, emotion, agency, balance, and player motivation through practical in-class activities, game deconstructions, and projects.

In these projects, students will work in teams to design, prototype, and test their own games, with a focus on user-centred design and iteration. Projects will be iterative, with multiple rounds of feedback and revision, and will culminate in a final presentation where students will present their games to the class and invited guests.

Course Objectives
After completing DMED 503, each student will be able to:
- Articulate the principles and practices of game design and gamification.
- Analyze and deconstruct existing games and gamified experiences.
- Apply game design and gamification techniques to create engaging, interactive experiences.
- Work collaboratively in teams to design and develop games.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of game design and gamification through playtesting.
- Effectively demonstrate designs and prototypes to faculty and students.

Format of the Course
This course uses a flipped classroom model, where each week students will have required reading materials assigned which will be relevant to the topics discussed in the following class. Each class will consist partly of lectures, various activities, workshop elements, and a lot of discussion.

Course Schedule
The course will run on Wednesdays, September 10 – December 3, 2025. There will be morning (9am – 12pm) and/or afternoon classes (1pm – 4pm). There will also be one Monday class on October 27 from 9am – 12pm. Your instructor 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 1 (Wednesday, Sept 10)	CORE QUESTION: WHAT IS GAME DESIGN ALL ABOUT?
Week 2 (Wednesday, Sept 17)	CORE QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE CORE CONCEPTS OF GAME DESIGN?
Week 3 (Wednesday, Sept 45)	CORE QUESTION: HOW DO WE MAKE A GAME? **TEAM SELECTION DAY**
Week 4 (Wednesday, Oct 1)	CORE QUESTION: HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT TO BUILD?
Week 5 (Wednesday, Oct 8)	CORE QUESTION: HOW DO WE GET THE PLAYER TO UNDERSTAND?
Week 6 (Wednesday, Oct 15)	CORE QUESTION: HOW DO WE KNOW IF IT IS WORKING?
Week 7 (Wednesday, Oct 22)	CORE QUESTION: ARE WE READY TO TEST?
Week 8 (Wednesday, Oct 29)	CORE QUESTION: WHAT CHANGES NEED TO BE MADE? **PLAYTEST DAY ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 27**
Week 9 (Wednesday, Nov 5)	CORE QUESTION: WHY DO PEOPLE WANT TO PLAY THIS GAME?
Week 10 (Wednesday, Nov 11)	CORE QUESTION: IS THE GAME ENGAGING? **IN-CLASS PLAYTEST DAY**
Week 11 (Wednesday, Nov 19)	CORE QUESTION: HOW DIFFICULT IS OUR GAME?
Week 12 (Wednesday, Nov 26)	CORE QUESTION: HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO BEING DONE? **IN-CLASS PLAYTEST DAY**
Week 13 (Wednesday, Dec 3)	CORE QUESTION: WHAT DID WE CREATE THIS SEMESTER? **FINAL PRESENTATIONS**

Course Assignments

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

Assignment	Due Date	Weight	Details
Deconstruction #1	Week 3	10%	MDA Theory & Core Loop
Deconstruction #2	Week 6	15%	Features & Rules of Design
Documentation #1	Week 2	5%	One Page Game Concept
Documentation #2	Week 6	5%	Features & CDD Skeleton
Documentation #3	Week 9	5%	Updated CDD & Test Plan
Documentation #4	Week 11	5%	Test Results & Analysis
Final Core Design Document	Week 13	15%	Formal written technical / functional documentation of the game
Final Digital Prototype	Week 13	20%	Final digital artifact of game or portions of thereof (scope refined throughout term)
Final Project Presentation	Week 13	10%	10min team presentation
Class Participation	Week 7 (5%) Week 13 (5%)	10%	Contribution to class discussion, participation in class and group activities

Evaluation

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

Deconstructions	**25**
Deconstruction #1 (MDA Theory & Core Loop)	
Deconstruction #2 (Features & Questions)	
Documentation Check-Ins	**20**
Documentation #1 - One Page Game Concept	
Documentation #2 - Features & CDD Skeleton	
Documentation #3 - Updated CDD & Test Plan	
Documentation #4 - Test Results & Analysis	
Final Deliverables	**45**

Final Core Design Document
Final Digital Prototype
Final Presentation

Participation   **10**
Class Participation
Total   **100**

Note on assessment:

Unless specifically specified a student's grade will be based on their INDIVIDUAL contribution to team assignments, presentations, and projects.

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, <u>classes cannot be made up</u>.
- 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

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

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.