

**Course:** DMED 540: Worldbuilding with Generative AI (3 credits)  
**Term:** Summer 2026 – Term 3  
**Instructor:** Jason Lee Elliott  
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#### *Acknowledgement of Coast Salish Peoples and Land*

We respectfully acknowledge the x̣ʷməθkʷəỵəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səliwətał (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 and creative 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

Upon completion of this course, students 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.



## Course Schedule

The course will run on Thursdays, 4pm – 7pm, May 14th – July 30th, 2026. 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	CORE QUESTION: WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF WORLDBUILDING?
Week 2	CORE QUESTION: HOW DOES THE ENVIRONMENT AFFECT THE WORLD? <b><i>Storyverse: IP Concept DUE</i></b>
Week 3	CORE QUESTION: HOW DOES KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCE THE WORLD?
Week 4	CORE QUESTION: HOW DO SOCIETIES IMPACT THE WORLD? <b><i>In-Class Worldbuilding: Reference Style Guide DUE</i></b>
Week 5	CORE QUESTION: HOW IS LANGUAGE A REFLECTION OF CULTURE?
Week 6	CORE QUESTION: WHAT IS OUR WORLD LIKE? <b><i>In-Class Worldbuilding: Final Deliverables DUE</i></b>
Week 7	CORE QUESTION: WHO INHABITS YOUR WORLD? <b><i>Storyverse: Lookbook DUE</i></b>
Week 8	CORE QUESTION: HOW DO WE ENVISION THE WORLD?
Week 9	CORE QUESTION: DO YOUR PLATFORMS SUPPORT THE STORY?
Week 10	CORE QUESTION: HOW DOES THE USER EXPERIENCE YOUR WORLD?
Week 11	CORE QUESTION: HOW WELL ARE WE EXPLAINING THE STORY?
Week 12	CORE QUESTION: CAN WE SELL OUR STORYVERSE CONCEPT? <b><i>Storyverse: Final Deliverables Due</i></b>

## Course 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 first half of the course, we will primarily focus on developing a common fictional storyworld together as a class. Each student will be assigned a portion of the storyworld and will apply the worldbuilding concepts covered in class towards various prototypes. This will lead to a final short promo video to highlight their part of the world, the peoples, cultures, etc. that they have created.

### *Storyverse Project*

Over the semester, students will work, alone or in small, instructor-approved teams, to develop their own storyverse concept. This project must not be the same world they created during the in-class worldbuilding, but is an original concept developed by the students. Every student is required to come up with an IP Concept at the start of the semester, but will be able to change the idea or form a team later in the semester. This project will take the concepts learned in the first half and will have higher expectations in regards to polish. During this part of the semester we will continue to apply worldbuilding concepts and understanding generative AI pipelines. This will lead to a final presentation of their storyverse concept with a detailed story compendium.

## Evaluation

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

<b>In-Class Worldbuilding</b>	
Reference Guide	5
<i>Visual Prototype Archive</i>	5
<i>World Compendium</i>	10
<i>Planet Promo Video</i>	20
<b>Storyverse Project</b>	
IP Concept	5
Lookbook	10
<i>Prototype Archive</i>	10
<i>Story Compendium</i>	15
<i>Presentation</i>	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## 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>

## 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](http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/current/important_dates/guidelines.html).