

Computer Games for Social Change Spring 2011

Tuesdays 9-11:30am (Tufts students)

Locations:

Curriculum Lab at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development

Prof. Marina Bers

Marina.Bers@tufts.edu

Office hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course offers a unique opportunity to collaborate in the design and prototype implementation of a computer game for social change. The course will be run as a workshop in which student teams develop their games and showcase them at an open house. We will have guest speakers from academia and industry as well as the non-profit sector and the gaming community.

Course Requirements

Readings (On-going—10% of grade): All students are expected to do the readings, and to participate in discussions of the readings in class. Most readings will be available on-line linked from the syllabus.

Class presentations (On-going--20% of grade): Most class time will be organized as discussions, not lectures. To help get discussions started, on some session, students will be asked to summarize the readings and describe one question or provocative issue.

Design studio (On-going---10%): Students will work in teams to develop a proposal for a computer game for social change and a prototype.

Mid-term proposal (Due March 15---15%): Each team will write a short proposal for their video games for social change to be discussed in class.

Final project presentations (April 19---20%): Students will present their final projects.

Final paper (Due April 26---25%): Each team will write a final paper about their video games and will present a demo prototype. Although the paper will be written as a team, each student needs to be explicit about their contribution to the project and his or her own learning experience. Papers should be e-mailed to Prof. Bers by noon. A hard copy should be left in her mailbox.

Tentative Schedule

Note: This schedule may vary to accommodate the availability of the guest speakers. Check the course website for an up to date schedule.

January 25: Introduction and course overview

Course introduction.

[Kaiser report](#)

Design studio:

1. List all the games you know (exercise in categorizing games).
2. Game playing timeline

February 1: What is in a game?

[Koester, R \(2004\) Theory of fun for Game Design](#) (book)

Brown, S.(2009) Play: How it changes the brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul . [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 2](#)

Guest speaker: Scot Osterweil, MIT CMS program (10-11)

February 8: Games for moral development

Guest speaker: Ashley Sandvi, Harvard Graduate School of Education (9-10:30)

Schulzke, M (2009) [Moral decision making in Fallout](#). *The International Journal of Computer Game Research*. 9(2)

Klopfers, E, Osterweil, S & Salen, K (2009) [Moving Learning Games Forward](#) . The Education Arcade, MIT

February 15: Let the game begin....

Starr, P (1994) [Seductions of Sim: Policy as a Simulation Game](#)

Bers, M. (2010). [Let the Games Begin: Civic Playing on High-Tech Consoles](#). *Review of General Psychology*, 14(2), 147–153.

[Klimmt, C Serious Games and Social Change: Why They \(Should\) Work](#). Serious Games, Mechanisms and Effects. Ritterfeld, Cody and Vorderer; pp 248 - 270

Guest speaker Ming Chow, Tufts University (10-11:30)

February 22: Group work

Playing games for social change

peacemaker <http://www.peacemakergame.com/demo.php>

mcdonalds game <http://www.mcvideogame.com/index-eng.html>

darfur is dying <http://www.darfurisdying.com/>

3rd world farmer <http://www.3rdworldfarmer.com/>

The Redistricting Game <http://www.redistrictinggame.org/>

watch out for popup blockers - game won't load

March 1: Learning Games

Just a game

Kafai, Y. B. (2006). [Playing and making games for learning: Instructionist and constructionist perspectives for game studies.](#) *Games and Culture*, 1(1), 36-40.

Gee, James Paul. "[Learning and Games.](#)" *The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*. Edited by Katie Salen. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008. 21-40.

Guest speaker: Josh Sheldon, MIT Teachers Education Program(9-10:30)

Team work I

March 8: Let the game continue

Guest speaker: "Is it Real, Or is it Bacon?" Bill Shribman, Senior Executive Producer, WGBH (9-10:30)

[Murray, J \(2006\) Toward a Cultural Theory of Gaming.](#) *Popular Communication*, 4(3), 185-202.

Bogost, I (2008) [The Rhetoric of Video Games](#) *The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*. Edited by Katie Salen. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008. 117-140.

Team work II

March 15: Games everywhere

Assignment due: Mid-term group proposal in class presentation

March 22: Spring break. No class

March 29: More on games

Guest Speaker: Dan Roy, Learning Games Network (9:00am)

[ESA Facts about the computer games industry](#)

Guest Speaker: Nick Maynard, Director of Innovation, D2D Fund (10:30am)

www.financialentertainment.org

Team work III

April 5: Lessons learned

Guest speaker: Nick Montford, Associate professor of digital media, Writing and Humanistic Studies, MIT

Class feedback

April 12: Lessons learned

Guest speaker: “*Learning about the Gameworld in Adventure Games*” Clara Fernandez, MIT Singapore Gambit Lab (9-10:30)

Team work IV

April 19: Debriefing and game presentations

Guest Speaker: Don Rawitsch, Co-Creator of the Oregon Trail Computer Game (9 – 10)

Article -- <http://www.citypages.com/2011-01-19/news/oregon-trail-how-three-minnesotans-forged-its-path>

Interview -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSN-Z1tsFJw>

Each team will present its game

April 26: Final team papers due to Prof. Bers (no meeting)