



MAS 111

Introduction to Video Games

S2 Day 2014

Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies

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General Information

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Credit points

3

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Co-badged with COMP111

Unit description

Video games provide the only real example of the promise of interactive entertainment held out by modern technologies. Video games provide a rapidly growing form of entertainment and are also used for educational and business purposes. This unit provides an introduction to the design and study of computer and console games. Topics covered include: the history of games; the cultural and aesthetic study of games; and the game development process. The assessment includes a project using a game development package.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Demonstrate a good knowledge of the video games studies discipline

Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms

Identify and distinguish different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis

Apply game design skills and methodologies to the production of basic video games

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Participation</u>	10%	Ongoing
<u>Practical Exercises</u>	10%	Weekly
<u>First Game Proposal</u>	3%	Week 4
<u>First game project</u>	12%	Week 7
<u>Second Game Proposal</u>	5%	week 10
<u>Second Game Project</u>	20%	Week 13
<u>Presentation</u>	15%	In Class Weeks 3 - 12
<u>Final Essay</u>	25%	5pm Friday Week 11 (Oct 31st)

Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **10%**

The purpose of tutorials is for students discuss the weekly topics and readings to enrich their understanding. All students are required to participate in tutorial discussion. This means arriving at tutorials having completed set readings and being prepared to discuss issues arising.

The format of tutorials is based around student-led discussions. Your responses to your peers will form the basis of your participation mark.

You will be assessed on four criteria:

- Engagement with the readings
- Engagement with lecture material
- Ability to relate key theoretical ideas to previous readings and/or independent research
- Willingness to contribute to class discussion by asking relevant questions, answering other students questions, treating other students with respect and behaving appropriately (e.g. not talking whilst tutor or other students talking)

Attendance is not the same as participation. Students receive no marks for simply attending tutorials.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a good knowledge of the video games studies discipline
- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms
- Identify and distinguish different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis

Practical Exercises

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **10%**

In class exercises using a game creation tool. For 2014 this is the Kodu game engine. These exercises are designed to test and increase students ability to use this engine.

You will be judged against the following criteria (please also consult the section on unit-level standards):

- Able to implement small game projects, with small elements of design
- demonstrate knowledge of and ability to use the game engine
- Demonstrates some limited ability to apply basic game design concepts such as difficulty progression, challenge hierarchy, player engagement and world coherence

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Apply game design skills and methodologies to the production of basic video games

First Game Proposal

Due: **Week 4**

Weighting: **3%**

Proposal document for game that students will submit for their first assignment. Students will describe the game that they intend to implement. This is intended to focus their thoughts and to allow them to obtain feedback on the suitability of their ideas. As well as the actual report, students will be required to verbally describe their proposal to the practical demonstrator.

1-2 pages in length

To be submitted via ilearn, but only marked after in-class discussion with practical demonstrator.

You will be judged against the following criteria (please also consult the section on unit-level standards):

- Able to design and document small game projects
- Demonstrate in the game design ability to apply basic game design concepts such as difficulty progression, challenge hierarchy, player engagement and world coherence

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms
- Apply game design skills and methodologies to the production of basic video games

First game project

Due: **Week 7**

Weighting: **12%**

Submission of first game and its accompanying design documentation. The game may be anything you choose, with the following limitations

- it must have a fixed camera
- the entire play area must be visible on screen at all times
- it must be implemented in the Kodu Game Engine

Game documentation: 3-4 pages in length

Submission will be via ilearn, but will only be marked after in-class discussion with practical demonstrator.

You will be judged against the following criteria (please also consult the section on unit-level standards):

- Able to design, implement and document small game projects
- Demonstrate in the game design/implementations noticeable ability to apply basic game design concepts such as difficulty progression, challenge hierarchy, player engagement and world coherence

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms
- Apply game design skills and methodologies to the production of basic video games

Second Game Proposal

Due: **week 10**

Weighting: **5%**

Proposal document for game that students will submit for their first assignment. Students will describe the game that they intend to implement. This is intended to focus their thoughts and to allow them to obtain feedback on the suitability of their ideas. As well as the actual report, students will be required to verbally describe their proposal to the practical demonstrator.

1-2 pages in length

To be submitted via ilearn, but only marked after in-class discussion with practical demonstrator.

You will be judged against the following criteria (please also consult the section on unit-level standards):

- Able to design and document small game projects
- Demonstrate in the game design ability to apply basic game design concepts such as difficulty progression, challenge hierarchy, player engagement and world coherence

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms
- Apply game design skills and methodologies to the production of basic video games

Second Game Project

Due: **Week 13**

Weighting: **20%**

Submission of first game and its accompanying design documentation. The game may be anything you choose, with the following limitations

- it must be a first or third person game (or one level of such a game)
- it must be implemented in the Kodu Game Engine

Game documentation: 4-6 pages in length

Submission will be via ilearn, but will only be marked after in-class discussion with practical demonstrator.

You will be judged against the following criteria (please also consult the section on unit-level standards):

- Able to design, implement and document small game projects
- Demonstrate in the game design/implementations noticeable ability to apply basic game design concepts such as difficulty progression, challenge hierarchy, player engagement and world coherence

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms
- Apply game design skills and methodologies to the production of basic video games

Presentation

Due: **In Class Weeks 3 - 12**

Weighting: **15%**

Task: You will give a 5 minute presentation based upon one of the recommended readings from the unit (you will be assigned a reading and a presentation week in week 2). Your task is to pick one key concept from that reading and explain or demonstrate it to the class. You must not just summarise the reading you must analyse, explain, expand, and contextualise it within its disciplinary framework.

All students must use a visual aid (PowerPoint or compatible equivalent) and slides must be submitted prior to your presentation. Failure to do this will incur late penalties. You cannot have more than 6 slides, including a title slide which must have your full name and student number. You must present using the slide submitted to iLearn.

There is a strict 5 minute time limit. Think very carefully about what information is important and how best to communicate it. You will be assessed on how well you aid your classmates' understanding of the reading.

This task will be assessed on four key criteria:

- Understanding of reading
- Expansion of core concept/s from reading
- Time Management
- Use of Visual Aids

Late penalties for not submitting Powerpoint slides before tutorial, or missing presentation (without special consideration) are 10% per day.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a good knowledge of the video games studies discipline
- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms
- Identify and distinguish different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis

Final Essay

Due: **5pm Friday Week 11 (Oct 31st)**

Weighting: **25%**

Write a 1500 word essay critically analysing a video game of your choosing (your choice must be approved by your tutor) in context of one the follow key themes from the unit:

- Game Design and Dynamics
- Genre
- The Academic Analysis of Gaming
- Game Essentialism
- The Magic Circle
- The Games Industry (Traditional and New Economic Models)
- Gender
- Politics and Meaning
- Social, Casual, and Mobile Gaming

Identify the key theoretical ideas and assumptions associated with your theme and apply them to your chosen game. Using unit readings and your own research explain how and why your chosen game exemplifies, challenges, or expands upon this theoretical framework.

For example, you could choose to look at how and why Angry Birds became such a successful casual/mobile game, or analyse how gender is represented in the new Tomb Raider game.

Your analysis should be written in a scholarly form (with references), drawing on material covered in the lectures and readings, as well as other sources you have researched. Given this is a relatively short piece of writing, you need to focus on deeper analysis rather than description. You don't need to comprehensively analyse the entire game, it may be preferable that you focus on a particular section or element of the game.

Students must reference at least three academic sources, including at least one from the unit reader/textbook and at least one from their own research.

This task will be assessed on five criteria:

- Understanding of the theoretical contexts of the chosen topic
- Strength and clarity of argument
- Depth of engagement with appropriate academic material
- Referencing
- Style, structure and presentation

To Be Submitted Via iLearn only.

Late Penalties are 10% per day.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a good knowledge of the video games studies discipline
- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms
- Identify and distinguish different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis

Delivery and Resources

Classes

Each week you should attend a one hour lecture, a one hour tutorial and a two hour practical. For details of days, times and rooms consult the timetables webpage.

<http://timetables.mq.edu.au>

Note that practicals and tutorials commence in Week 2.

You should have selected a tutorial and a practical at enrolment. You should attend the tutorial and practical you are enrolled in. If you do not have a class, or if you wish to change one, you should see the enrolment operators in the E7B courtyard during the first two weeks of the semester. Thereafter you should go to the Student Centre.

Please note that you are required to attend and participate in at least nine tutorials. Failure to do so without providing appropriate documentation explaining your absence may result in you failing the unit.

Resources to assist your learning

Textbook

The textbook for this unit is *Adams, E. (2010) Fundamentals of game design*. It can be purchased through the Co-Op Bookshop.

You must also purchase the MAS111/COMP111 reader through the Co-Op Bookshop.

Website

The website for this unit is provided through the University's iLearn system. iLearn can be found at <http://ilearn.mq.edu.au>. If you are enrolled in this unit you should have access to the material on iLearn once you log on.

Discussion Boards

The discussion board for this unit can be accessed through the iLearn site.

Technologies Employed:

Game Design Environment: the Kodu game engine from Microsoft will be used to create your game. This is a free download and runs on both PCs and the Xbox360.

Changes Made to Previous Offerings of the Unit

The topics in this unit have been updated to reflect the changing nature of contemporary video gaming. Recent academic material has been added to this unit in order to best offer students up-to-date insights into this media form.

Consultation Times

The full contact details and consultation times of convenors Rowan Tulloch and Michael Hitchens are available on the iLearn site.

Unit Schedule

The week by week schedule and details of the readings are available through the MAS111/COMP111 iLearn site: <http://ilearn.mq.edu.au>.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Late Submission of assessment tasks

No extensions will be granted. Late tasks will be accepted up to 1 week after the submission deadline. There will be a deduction of 10% of the total available marks made from the total awarded mark for each working day or part thereof that the submission is late (for example, 25 hours late in submission – 20% penalty). This penalty does not apply for cases in which an application for special consideration is made and approved.

Graduate Capabilities

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate a good knowledge of the video games studies discipline
- Identify and distinguish different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- Practical Exercises
- First Game Proposal
- First game project
- Second Game Proposal
- Second Game Project
- Presentation
- Final Essay

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate a good knowledge of the video games studies discipline
- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms
- Identify and distinguish different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- Presentation
- Final Essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate a good knowledge of the video games studies discipline
- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms
- Identify and distinguish different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis
- Apply game design skills and methodologies to the production of basic video games

Assessment tasks

- Practical Exercises
- First game project
- Second Game Project
- Presentation
- Final Essay

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Apply game design skills and methodologies to the production of basic video games

Assessment tasks

- Practical Exercises
- First Game Proposal
- First game project
- Second Game Proposal
- Second Game Project

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Communicate clearly and effectively, a range of ideas, in a variety of media forms

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- First Game Proposal
- First game project
- Second Game Proposal
- Second Game Project
- Presentation
- Final Essay

Unit-level Standards

The following standards will be applied in determining your final grade in this unit

Pass

- Demonstrate an understanding of a range of the different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis
- Demonstrate noticeable evidence of being able to critically evaluate and analyse ideas and concepts in video games using the approaches presented in the unit
- Able to design, implement and document small game projects
- Demonstrate in the game design/implementations noticeable ability to apply basic game design concepts such as difficulty progression, challenge hierarchy, player engagement and world coherence

Credit

- Demonstrate breadth and depth of understanding of the different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis
- Demonstrate sustained evidence of being able to critically evaluate and analyse ideas and concepts in video games using the approaches presented in the unit.
- Able to successfully design, implement and document small game projects
- Demonstrate in the game design/implementations sustained ability to apply basic game design concepts such as difficulty progression, challenge hierarchy, player engagement and world coherence
- Demonstrate at least some creativity and innovation in design

Distinction

- Demonstrate breadth and depth of understanding of the different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis
- Demonstrate sustained evidence of being able to critically evaluate and analyse ideas and concepts in video games using the approaches presented in the unit.
- Demonstrate noticeable originality and insight in evaluation and analysis
- Able to successfully design, implement and document small game projects
- Demonstrate in the game design/implementations sustained ability to apply basic game design concepts such as difficulty progression, challenge hierarchy, player engagement and world coherence
- Demonstrate substantial creativity and innovation in design

High Distinction

- Demonstrate breadth and depth of understanding of the different disciplinary approaches to video game analysis
- Demonstrate sustained evidence of being able to critically evaluate and analyse ideas and concepts in video games using the approaches presented in the unit.
- Demonstrate substantial originality and insight in evaluation and analysis
- Able to successfully design, implement and document small game projects
- Demonstrate in the game design/implementations sustained ability to apply basic game design concepts such as difficulty progression, challenge hierarchy, player engagement and world coherence
- Demonstrate sustained, high-level, creativity and innovation in design