



ACADEMIC PROGRAM

NARRATIVE AND VISUAL STORYTELLING

B.F.A. IN INTERACTIVE PRODUCT DESIGN

MODALITY: ON CAMPUS

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2023-2024

Name of the course:	Narrative and Visual Storytelling
Degree :	Interactive Product Design
Location:	Centro Universitario de Tecnología y Arte Digital
Modulo:	Ideation and Concept Design
Area:	Design of interactive products
Year:	2º
Teaching period:	1º
Type:	B
ECTS credits:	6
Teaching modality:	On campus
Language:	English
Lecturer / Email	Jaime Fernando Barahona Martínez/jaime.barahona@u-tad.com
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SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

Area description

This subject belongs to the module of Conceptual Design and Ideation and, within this, to the area of Design of Interactive Products. This area allows students to acquire knowledge of audiovisual narrative, game and player psychology, visual and artistic design and, above all, the design of the mechanics and dynamics that define the playability of the interactive product.

Subject description

The basic knowledge of audiovisual communication is related to the alma mater of the degree in question. The scope of the subject is tangential and, at times, directly related to the subject matter of other first-year subjects, such as Perception and Visual Expression, Literary Foundations and History and Artistic Tradition, and also with Art Direction in the second year.

It provides essential knowledge for the analysis, understanding and production of audiovisual products.

COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Competencies

BASIC AND GENERAL

GC1 - Lifelong learning through self-study and continuous training.

GC2 - Knowing how to adapt to change and new situations with flexibility and versatility.

GC4 - Exercise leadership and negotiation skills.

GC6 - Demonstrate motivation for quality.

GC7 - Show interest and sensitivity in environmental and social issues, as well as the ability to analyse the social dimension of the activity and corporate social responsibility.

GC8 - Demonstrate the ability to work in a team.

GC12 - Express a critical and self-critical sense and the ability to analyse in order to evaluate different alternatives.

CG14 - Know how to work in a team in multidisciplinary environments.

GC17 - Demonstrate the ability to analyse, synthesise and gather information from different sources.

GC18 - Manage information appropriately.

CB1 - That students have demonstrated possession and understanding of knowledge in an area of study that builds on the foundation of general secondary education, and is usually at a level that, while relying on advanced textbooks, also includes some aspects that involve knowledge from the cutting edge of their field of study.

CB2 - Students are able to apply their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional manner and possess the competences usually demonstrated through the development and defence of arguments and problem solving within their field of study.

CB3 - Students have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) in order to make judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues.

CB4 - Students are able to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

CB5 - That students have developed those learning skills necessary to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.

SPECIFIC

SC1 - Know the language necessary to communicate and structure a coherent discourse in the field of sociology, philosophy and psychology in relation to the design of interactive products.

SC3 - Analyse the social and cultural aspects that favour the usability of interactive products.

SC5 - Understand the influence of sociology, philosophy and psychology in their correlation with the history of art, literature and games as a reference in the creative process.

SC6 - Apply the practical fundamentals of mathematics and physics to the creation of an interactive digital product.

SC9 - Understand the principles of audiovisual narrative to develop discourses and stories applicable to interactive products.

SC11 - Apply creativity in the digital content environment.

SC12 - Knowing the elements involved in the design of an interactive work in relation to the user.

SC13 - Applying basic knowledge of human-machine interaction to an interactive digital product.

SC16 - Understand the processes of the elements involved in interactive artistic production.

SC17 - Apply the fundamentals of animation on computer-generated models.

SC18 - Apply theoretical and practical knowledge of product design for content development.

SC19 Understand the design principles that enable the use, accessibility and usability of interactive products and their philosophical implications.

Learning outcomes

Understand interactive application design as a global process

Build stories that can visually capture the literary elements they are based on

Categorize the different types of video games according to their design elements

Manage 2D design concepts in the development of a game

Apply game design knowledge to building a basic 3D game

Apply Methodology and Standards in Game Design

Design an entire character according to its physical, behavioral, and communication aspects.

Use character design principles and dialogues in creating consistent visual stories and dialogues

CONTENTS

- Visual analysis approach
- Visual analysis development
- Aesthetic modification of the product
- Selection of the design elements
- Fundamentals of narrative
- The need for a visual language
- Conflict and process
- Archetypes and reality

SUBJECT SYLLABUS

Topic 1. Introduction to Storytelling and to classic and interactive storytelling

- 1.1 Origin and evolution of storytelling - What is storytelling?
- 1.2 Effects of storytelling
- 1.3 What is narrative? – Key elements
- 1.4 Narrative vs. story vs. plot
- 1.5 What is a story?
- 1.6 Why do stories happen? How is a story shaped?
- 1.7 Introduction to interactive storytelling
- 1.8 The narrative designer and models of interactive storytelling

Topic 2. Procedures, techniques and resources for story construction

- 2.1 The central dramatic question
- 2.2 Objective, conflict and central theme
- 2.3 Story building blocks: Title, Premise and Synopsis
- 2.4 Linear narrative structure
- 2.5 Complex narrative structure
- 2.6 The Three Acts
- 2.7 Narrative pulse and arc

Topic 3. Characters

- 3.1 The character as a narrative vehicle.
- 3.2 Evolution of the character as a function of the narrative.
- 3.3 The character's arc of transformation.
- 3.4 Secondary characters and NPCs

Topic 4. Narrative in videogames

- 4.1 Relationship between classical narrative and ludonarrative
- 4.2 Narrative games and interactive narrative structures
- 4.3 Player agency
- 4.4 Parallel and integrated structures
- 4.5 Embedded and emergent narratives
- 4.6 Dialogue and multiple choice trees
- 4.7 CYOA (Choose your own adventure) branching models

4.8 Designing interactive stories with Twine

Topic 5. Dialogues

5.1 Fundamentals of fictional dialogues

5.2 Show don't tell

5.3 Scripting of cinematics (scene building)

5.4 Non-verbal communication - Scripted communication

5.5 Environmental dialogues

Topic 6. Worldbuilding and Environmental Narrative

6.1 Introduction to worldbuilding

6.2 Basis for building a fictional universe

6.3 Environmental storytelling

6.4 Foreshadowing

TRAINING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING ACTIVITIES	Total hours	Hours of presence
<i>Theoretical classes</i>	50,00	50,00
<i>Seminars and workshops</i>	0,00	0,00
<i>Practical classes</i>	20,00	20,00
<i>Tutorials</i>	3,43	3,43
<i>Evaluation Activities</i>	6,29	6,29
<i>Group work and study</i>	10,29	0,51
<i>Autonomous and individual study and work</i>	60,00	0,00
TOTAL	150	80

Teaching methodologies

Expository method/Master lecture

Case studies

Exercise and problem solving

Problem-based learning

TEMPORAL DEVELOPMENT

Topic 1. Introduction to Storytelling and to classic and interactive storytelling: 2 weeks

Topic 2. Procedures, techniques and resources for story construction: 3 weeks

Topic 3. Characters: 2 weeks

Topic 4. Narrative in videogames: 4 weeks

Topic 5. Dialogues: 2 weeks

Topic 6. Worldbuilding and Environmental Narrative: 2 weeks

EVALUATION SYSTEM

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM	MINIMUM SCORE RESPECT TO THE FINAL ASSESSMENT (%)	MAXIMUM SCORE RESPECT TO THE FINAL ASSESSMENT (%)
<i>Assessment of participation in class, exercises or projects of the course</i>	10	30
<i>Assessment of assignments, projects, reports, memos</i>	30	60
<i>Objective test</i>	30	70

GRADING CRITERIA

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM	ORDINARY EVALUATION	EXTRAORDINARY EVALUATION
<i>Assessment of participation in class, exercises or projects of the course</i>	10	10
<i>Assessment of assignments, projects, reports, memos</i>	40	40
<i>Objective test</i>	50	50

General comments on the evaluations/assessments

- Class participation will account for 10% of the final grade of the course, this grade will be kept for the extraordinary call in case of failure of the course. Attendance must be at least 80% to be eligible for the ordinary call.
- At a global level, students will demonstrate through their class attendance, their work and participation in the classroom, their reading and viewing of materials proposed by the teacher and the handing in of assignments, and their general attitude towards their learning, whether they are able to develop the competences expected of them in this subject.
- The course consists of a series of topics whose content will be worked with practices designed for this purpose. Likewise, the theoretical content will be part of the objective assessment, whose final numerical grade is from 0 to 10, it will be an indispensable requirement to achieve a minimum grade of 5 points any of them (SE3) in order to pass the course. The objective assessment may consist of a theoretical exam and a practical test, or only one of the two tests. The teacher will notify the student with sufficient time of the final decision in this regard. The questions of the exam will revolve around: what is exposed in the class slides, elements explained in class that do not appear explicitly in the slides and other concepts that must be assimilated in the realization of the class work, the homework and the readings and viewings proposed by the teacher.
- It is MANDATORY to submit and pass ALL the assignments in the SE2 category in order to pass the course in the regular exam. If not all the papers of this category are submitted before the deadline or the courtesy period, the student must go directly to the extraordinary call. The late acceptance period will be three days, with its initial 10 minutes of courtesy in which it will be considered sent on time, and if it is delivered during the rest of the period there will be a penalty of one to three points of the grade. The approved assignments will be kept for the extraordinary call and each submission of an SE2 paper will be considered as an exam and will be subject to revision.
 - o In the SE2 category work there may be a group grade and an individual grade, the grade for each student will be placed by making a weighted average between the group and individual delivery, the percentage of the weighting will be announced in the requirements of the work.
 - o In the case that a student of the group does not carry out the corresponding part of the work, that student will have a zero in the work, and that grade will not be taken into account to calculate the group percentage of the work. The work must maintain a clear unity and coherence, which means that if the individual parts of each student do not work as a whole and each part does not add up to the other, it may be considered that there has been no communication with the rest of the group members, resulting in a grade of zero for all group members regardless of their individual performance.
- Honours: Students who wish to obtain an HONOUR GRADUATE for the course must obtain a grade of 9 or more in the overall final mark for the course.
- IMPORTANT WARNING: In ALL activities, assignments, tests, exams, etc... carried out throughout the course, SPELLING, FORMAT and SYNTHATOGRAPHY FAILURES will deduct points, and may be graded with a direct zero due to an unacceptable number of faults (from 25 or more serious faults).

- A file that cannot be opened or whose link is broken will have a grade of 0. Subsequent submissions (beyond the three-day margin from the deadline) or "attempts to prove that it was there, but disappeared" will not be accepted, so the student is advised to check the status of the file after uploading it to his or her support page.
- Excused absences are processed by the academic secretary via Zendesk.
- Any detection of plagiarism, copying or use of malpractice (such as the use of AIs) in a paper or exam will result in the failure of that paper with a zero, a report to the faculty and academic coordinator and the application of the current regulations, which can lead to very serious penalties for the student.
- The use of SmartWatches or any type of phones is not allowed during the exams. Such devices will have to be put away and out of the student's sight during the exam.
- The use of smartphones or any type of phone is not allowed during classes.

LIST OF REFERENCES (BOOKS, PUBLICATIONS, WEBSITES):

Key references

Heussner, Tobias (2015). The Game Narrative Toolbox. Focal Press.

Skolnick, Evan (2014). Video Game Storytelling: What Every Developer Needs to Know about Narrative Techniques.

Robert Denton, Bryant & Giglio, Keith (2015). Slay the Dragon: Writing Great Video Games.

Recommended references

Heussner, Tobias (2019) - The Advanced Game Narrative Toolbox

The continuation of the first book recommended in this bibliography, as recommendable as the first one.

Bell, James Scott - Plot and Structure

An excellent book to learn how to structure a story, designed for novels but applicable to other media, such as video games. It's a good resource if you have trouble turning your general idea into a coherent plot.

Despain, Wendy - Writing for Video Game Genres. From FPS to RPG-CRC (Press. 2009) Anytime game writers get together and start debating the minutiae of the craft, someone invariably throws up their hands saying, "But writing for an FPS is completely different from writing for an MMO." And that kills the conversation just as surely as if they had mentioned Hitler. This book offers an alternative to drowning our sorrows and crying in our beer. I approached writers who have non-trivial experience in each video game genre, and I've asked them to go there. Sit down and put on paper exactly what it is that makes writing for an FPS so different from writing for an MMO. Instead of moping about how alone we are, I've asked these writers to talk about what makes these genres unique from a writing perspective.

Freeman, David E. - Creating Emotions in Videogames

Focused on videogames exclusively, and on the aspect of how to give more dramatic packaging to the characters (it has a great development on NPCs), and in particular how to create emotional bonds with the player. It is a somewhat more advanced manual, with many techniques easily applicable and large in size, but the tone is very accessible.

Schell, Jesse - The Art of Game Design: A Book Of Lenses

More than a manual, it is a toolbox with multiple "lenses" through which we can consider the design of our game. Although it focuses more on design than on narrative design, it contains many very valid lessons.

Dille, Flint and Platten, John - The Ultimate Guide to Video Game Writing and Design Dille and Platten focus on their experience as writers for AAA games, but some of their lessons are applicable to independent development as well. It's a resource much more focused on the realities of the professional world than on narrative theory.

Mark J.P. Wolf (2012) - Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation

Solarski, Chris - Interactive Stories and Video Game Art: A Storytelling Framework for Game Design.

Koster, Raph - Theory of Fun for Game Design

Fullerton, Tracy - Game Design Workshop - A playcentric approach to create innovative games.

Rogers, Scott - Level Up! The Guide to Great Video Game Design. Isbister, Katherine (2017) - How Games Move Us. Emotion by Design. Vogler, Christopher - El viaje del escritor.

An essential classic to understand the structure of the great majority of fictional stories... and if you don't believe me, ask George Lucas.

Field, Syd (2018) - The Essential Screenplay.

Don't fall for McKee's bore and let Syd Field take care of your scripts.

Truby, John - Script Anatomy.

This scholar of screenwriting has developed a book full of theories and writing techniques based on his thousands of hours of viewing classics and not so classics of film and television. Highly recommended.

Riley, Christopher - The Defining Moment: How Writers and Actors Build Characters Aimed at both the head and the heart, The Defining Moment plumbs the depths of the most memorable characters ever to appear on the screen, the stage or the page. The book focuses on those moments so pivotal in a character's formation that they create a distinct boundary of before and after, moments without which the character couldn't exist and moments through which characters can transform before our eyes. Writers, actors and storytellers of all stripes will discover a powerful new key to unlock any character they seek to develop, write or portray.

Corbett, David - The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV.

Former private investigator and New York Times notable author David Corbett offers a unique and indispensable toolkit for creating characters that come vividly to life on the page and linger in memory. Corbett provides an inventive, inspiring, and vastly entertaining blueprint to all the elements of characterization-from initial inspiration to realization-with special insights into the power of secrets and contradictions, the embodiment of roles, managing the "tyranny of motive," and mastering crucial

techniques required for memorable dialogue and unforgettable scenes. This is a how- to guide for both aspiring and accomplished writers that renders all other books of its kind obsolete.

Seger, Linda - Cómo crear personajes inolvidables.

A fundamental classic to establish the basis for the creation of fictional characters.

King, Stephen - As I Write.

Stephen King's autobiography that serves as an instruction manual to understand how one becomes a writer and the most useful techniques when sitting in front of a blank page. Whether you like Stephen King or not, it is a must if you are passionate about writing.

Gothan Writers Workshop - Fiction writing.

A book from the famous New York School of Writing, dedicated to writing techniques on a more global level. It can be used to write from a short story to a novel... and, of course, a screenplay.

RECURSOS WEB

AdventureX

Is an annual event held in London, focused on narrative games. It's okay if you can't attend, they usually post most of the talks on their YouTube channel.

Some examples:

- Jess Haskins - The Politics of World Building

On creating fictional worlds and how to avoid our own cultural biases when creating stories.

- Jon Ingold - Sparkling Dialogue: A Masterclass

Jon from Inkle Studios (80 Days, Heaven's Vault) explaining several tricks to create memorable dialogues in videogames.

TWINE

Tutorial and FAQ: <http://twinery.org/cookbook/>

Although Twine is versatile and useful as a tool to layout interactive narratives, it is not the only one. If you are interested in creating an interactive fiction of another style, here I explain some alternatives depending on the type of interactive fiction you have in mind. All of them are free and available online.

REN'PY

Designed for creating Japanese-style visual novels, but can be used for other genres. If you are thinking of creating a dialogue-centered story, with two characters on screen and options to choose from, it may be the most suitable. It requires the art elements typical of this genre (static characters and backgrounds, all in 2D).

INFORM 7

Possibly the dean of systems for creating interactive fiction, in development since the 1990s. It is intended for creating parser "conversational adventures"; that is, text-only games in which the player types instructions, such as OPEN DOOR or GET TREASURE.

It is a very simplified programming language based on natural English, so programming with Inform is relatively similar to writing in English. The program itself contains detailed, documentation with lots and lots of very useful examples.

INK (BY INKLE STUDIOS)

This is actually a mark-up language rather than a program. Therefore, we can "write in Ink" in any text document, and by means of a plugin import that file to the Unity engine and incorporate it into a game. So, although Ink itself is very easy to use, its applications may require more advanced programming.

PODCAST

- Podcast about storytelling in videogames: Writers Max and Nick Folkman sit down with other writers and developers to discuss storytelling in video games. <https://scriptlock.simplecast.com/>

- Podcast about videogame development: Deep game dev podcast interviews to help you | +30 yrs #gamedev industry vet

@JohnPodlasek <https://www.gamedevadvice.com/>

- Podcast about classic screenwriting (en inglés): Each week, screenwriters John August and Craig Mazin discuss screenwriting and things that are interesting to screenwriters, everything from the craft to the business to the best ways to get yourself writing.

<https://johnaugust.com/scriptnotes>

REQUIRED MATERIALS, SOFTWARE AND TOOLS

Type of classroom

Projection equipment and whiteboard

Materials:

Laptop

Software:

Word

Twine (twinery.org) Writersolo (writersolo.com)