



[GAM-310-JJ1: Special Topics in Game Design](#)
[Interactive Narrative Design – Fall 2022](#)
Course Syllabus

Meeting Time and Location: Friday, 1:10-4:10 PM, Fine Arts 249

Instructor: Matthew DiMatteo (he/him)

Email: mdimatteo@rider.edu

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 1:00-3:00 PM or by appointment, Fine Arts 214

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Mutual respect and a commitment to inclusiveness are crucial to a positive learning environment. In this course, we will honor the diversity of all members of the Rider community by fostering a learning environment that is respectful of other classmates based on their identities and past experiences, including race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexuality, age, religion, culture, veteran status, and disability. I encourage any student who has concerns about the climate of this classroom or the behavior of others in the class to discuss matters with the instructor or the chair of the instructor’s department.

Health and Wellness Resources

[Student Health Center](#): Poyda Hall – healthcenter@rider.edu **609-896-5060**

[Counseling Center](#): Zoerner House – counseling@rider.edu **609-896-5157**

[Healthy Broncs Portal](#) – Appointments, Medical Forms

National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **Dial 988**

Local Therapy Resources: <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

Tutoring and Accessibility Support

[Academic Success Center](#): Bart Luedeke Center, Suite 237, academicsuccesscenter@rider.edu

[Student Accessibility and Support Services](#): Bart Luedeke Center, Suite 201, accessibility@rider.edu

Course Description

[Interactive Narrative Design](#) covers processes and technologies related to the development of non-linear and interactive storytelling, as used in game design and experimental media. Focus will be placed on analysis and production techniques associated with creating game narratives and player experience, as a second-order design process.

Course Learning Goals

Students will:

1. Understand past implementations of interactive narratives.
 2. Demonstrate familiarity with non-linear narrative organization strategies.
 3. Apply narrative writing skills for interactive media.
 4. Understand the underlying structures of experience design.
 5. Create digital nonlinear interactive narrative experiences.
 6. Understand the interaction systems in alternate reality game experiences.
 7. Create an alternate reality game featuring an interactive narrative.
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Course Requirements

1. Students will be expected to arrive to class on time, participate in class discussions and workshops, present, discuss, and defend ideas, and complete assignments by the date due. In the event of absence, students are responsible for communicating with the instructor in a timely manner, catching up on material covered in class, and completing any missed assignments.
2. Students should expect to spend an average of six to eight hours per week outside of class time to complete assignments. Students are strongly encouraged to work consistently throughout the semester. Always take into account lab hours and possible technical problems when planning the time you will spend on assignments.
3. Students are responsible for saving and backing up their work, and are strongly encouraged to utilize multiple backup locations, such as external hard drives and cloud storage services (such as Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.) in addition to personal computers. Because students are expected to routinely back up their files, the loss of data is not considered an acceptable excuse for late or missing work.

Course Materials

1. **Canvas** – Resources such as [class slides](#), [readings](#), and other materials will be posted in the [Files](#) section. [Assignment instructions and submission](#) can be found in the [Assignments](#) section. The [Announcements](#) section will be used to post any announcements, such as weather-related scheduling changes or any other news relevant to the class.
2. **External Storage** – Highly recommended for storing and transferring files (useful not only for this course). A personal Google account includes 15 GB of free cloud storage. iCloud and Microsoft OneDrive offer 5 GB of free cloud storage. A physical external storage device is also recommended. A 1 TB drive can be a good personal investment for storing files beyond the scope of this course. Keep in mind that these drives may need to be formatted. [View these slides on Canvas for detailed instructions on the formatting process.](#)
3. **Sketchbook/Notebook** – Recommended for sketching out concepts, jotting down notes.

Assignments and Grading

Individual student grades are determined by the following:

- **[10%] [Group Project #1 – Collaborative Story](#)** – In small groups, students will create a story line by line, each individual adding onto the previous sentence. This story should be transcribed as it is assembled, with a length of 3-5 pages. Groups will narrate their stories in class.
- **[50%] [Individual Assignments \(5 at 10% each\)](#)**
 - **[10%] [Assignment #1 – Historical Presentation](#)** – Students will individually choose and research a particular historical implementation of interactive storytelling.
 - **[10%] [Assignment #2 – Nonlinear Story Flowchart](#)** – Students will individually create a flowchart mapping the possible outcomes of a nonlinear story.
 - **[10%] [Assignment #3 – Twine Text Adventure](#)** – Students will use [Twine](#) to create an interactive, nonlinear text adventure game.
 - **[10%] [Assignment #4 – Bitsy Game](#)** – Students will use [Bitsy](#) to create a short, dialogue-driven video game.
 - **[10%] [Assignment #5 – Alternate Reality Game Analysis](#)** (Paper and Presentation) – Students will individually research and analyze the systems of interaction in an Alternate Reality Game.
- **[30%] [Group Project #2 – Alternate Reality Game](#)** – In small groups, students will produce and publish an Alternate Reality Game featuring a fully interactive narrative that unfolds in the real world.
- **[10%] [Participation](#)**

[Download Assignment Instructions and Calendar](#)

[View the Assignments section on Canvas for full assignment instructions](#)

All assignments (unless otherwise specified) must be submitted electronically to [Canvas](#) by 11:59 PM on the date due. Assignments handed in late, without a proper excuse, will receive a grade penalty each week they

are late. Assignments not handed in at all will receive a grade of 0. Students are encouraged to have their work submitted prior to class time in order to participate in group discussions and workshops.

Grading Scale

A	94-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	60-69
A-	90-93	B	83-86	C	73-76	F	0-59
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72		

Assignments by Category

Group Project #1 – Collaborative Story (10% of Semester Grade)

Due Sep. 23

Individual Assignments (50 % of Semester Grade)

Due Sep. 30: [Assignment #1 – Historical Presentation](#)

Due Oct. 7: [Assignment #2 – Nonlinear Story Flowchart](#)

Due Nov. 4: [Assignment #3 – Twine Text Adventure](#)

Due Nov. 18: [Assignment #4 – Bitsy Game](#)

Due Dec. 2: [Assignment #5 – Alternate Reality Game Analysis](#)

Group Project #2 – Alternate Reality Game (30% of Semester Grade)

Due Dec. 16

Participation (10% of Semester Grade)

Assignments Calendar

<u>Date Due</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>% of Semester Grade</u>
Sep. 23:	Group Project #1 – Collaborative Story	10%
Sep. 30:	Assignment #1 – Historical Presentation	10%
Oct. 7:	Assignment #2 – Nonlinear Story Flowchart	10%
Nov. 4:	Assignment #3 – Twine Text Adventure	10%
Nov. 18:	Assignment #4 – Bitsy Game	10%
Dec. 2:	Assignment #5 – Alternate Reality Game Analysis	10%
Dec. 16:	Group Project #2 – Alternate Reality Game	30%

Assignment Instructions

[Group Project #1 – Collaborative Story](#)

Due Sep. 23

10% of Semester Grade

In a small group, create a short story one line at a time by having **each individual contribute a sentence that builds on the previous one**. Each individual should **include their name or initials** with their contributed sentences. Aim to include a **beginning, middle, and end** using at least **ten (10) sentences per team member**. To get started, you may find it helpful to [generate a random prompt](#). Groups should be prepared to **narrate** their stories in class.

Submitting Your Work

Each group member should upload to Canvas the finished story as a **text document** or **any other format** you choose by 11:59 PM on the due date listed above.

Grading Criteria

- **50 pts: All Members Contribute** – each team member contributes at least **10 sentences** to the story.
- **25 pts: Beginning, Middle, End** – the story includes a beginning, middle, and end.
- **25 pts: Direction** – the plot of the story has a clear direction, with a **conflict** and **resolution**.

Assignment #1 – Historical Presentation

Due Sep. 30

10% of Semester Grade

Individually, choose and research a particular historical implementation of interactive storytelling. Create a presentation including a **synopsis** of the implementation, **media** examples, and a discussion of how the implementation **contributed** to the area of interactive storytelling. Organize your presentation as a slideshow and be prepared to spend approximately **15 minutes** discussing your topic in class. There will be **5 minutes of Q&A** after each presentation, so be prepared to answer questions on your topic.

You may create and give your presentation using Google Slides, PowerPoint, or Keynote, but please **export** your completed slideshow as a **PDF** file for the Canvas submission.

Submitting Your Work

Upload to [Canvas](#) your presentation in **PDF format** by 11:59 PM on the due date listed above.

Grading Criteria

- **25 pts: Synopsis** – the presentation includes a clear description of how the interactive storytelling implementation functioned.
- **25 pts: Media Examples** – the presentation includes media examples to support the synopsis.
- **25 pts: Contribution** – the presentation includes a thoughtful discussion of how the implementation contributed to the area of interactive storytelling.
- **25 pts: Clarity** – speech and presentation visuals are clear and communicate the interactive storytelling implementation successfully.

Assignment #2 – Nonlinear Story Flowchart

Due Oct. 14

10% of Semester Grade

Individually, use draw.io to create a **flowchart** mapping the **possible outcomes** of the nonlinear story you intend to implement using Twine for Assignment #3. Use **shapes** and **symbols** to represent **story points**, **decision options**, and **outcomes**. **Connect** decisions and their resulting outcomes using **lines** or **arrows**. Include **one-line summaries for plot points** and **brief phrases to label decision options**. **Include at least five (5) decisions** throughout your story.

Export your flowchart as a **PNG, JPEG, or PDF file** or **publish** and create a **link** to your flowchart.

Submitting Your Work

Upload to [Canvas](https://canvas.com) your **exported flowchart** as an **PNG, JPEG, or PDF file** (or include the **link** to your published flowchart) by 11:59 PM on the due date listed above.

Grading Criteria

- **50 pts: Story Points** – shapes/symbols represent **all story points, decision options, outcomes** with **5 or more total decisions**.
- **50 pts: Connections** – **lines** connect all decisions and outcomes.

[Assignment #3 – Twine Text Adventure](#)

Due Nov. 4

10% of Semester Grade

Individually, use [Twine](#) to implement the nonlinear story you mapped for the previous assignment. You may use whichever story format you prefer, but you may find [Harlowe](#) the easiest to use. [SugarCube](#) is a good option for students familiar with HTML.

Include **at least 5 decisions** for the player to make and add links between passages to implement a branching story structure. **Test** your story to make sure a player can navigate through it successfully to each possible outcome. **Archive** your story as an **HTML** file for Canvas submission.

Submitting Your Work

Upload to [Canvas](#) your Twine story as an **HTML archive** by 11:59 PM on the due date listed above.

Grading Criteria

- **50 pts: Decisions** – the story includes **at least 5 decisions** for the player to make, with branching outcomes.
- **50 pts: Links** – the story includes **links** between all passages.

[Assignment #4 – Bitsy Game](#)

Due Nov. 18

10% of Semester Grade

Individually, use [Bitsy](#) to create a short, dialogue-driven video game.

Submitting Your Work

Upload to [Canvas](#) your Bitsy game as an **HTML archive** by 11:59 PM on the due date listed above.

Grading Criteria

- **40 pts: Choices and Outcomes** – the game offers multiple instances where the player's choice affects the outcome.
- **30 pts: Discovery** – players can speak to NPCs and inspect aspects of the environment to learn secrets, obtain items, or change the game world
- **30 pts: User Experience** – players can navigate without getting stuck, and the goal of the game is clear.

Assignment #5 – Alternate Reality Game Analysis

Due Dec. 2

10% of Semester Grade

Individually, choose and **research a particular Alternate Reality Game (ARG)**. [Here is a list of some popular ARGs](#), but feel free to research others. Prepare a **15-minute presentation** analyzing how the ARG was implemented, with media examples where possible. Include a **brief synopsis** of how the ARG unfolded and address the following points:

- How is the “**Puppet Master**” implemented, and what is its role?
- How is the “**Curtain**” implemented?
- What is the “**Rabbit Hole**” that gets players into the game?
- How successfully does the game implement the sentiment that “**This Is Not A Game**”?
- How does the game use **reality** as a platform?
- In what **order** is the **story** of the game told? How do players piece the story together? How does this contribute to the overall experience?
- How many **players** are involved? In what ways do they **interact** with each other to progress in the game? Are there any **obstacles** that players must **work together** to overcome?
- Is there room for **players** to **add** to the **story**? How?
- What **viral marketing** initiatives are used? What **physical or digital artifacts** relate to the game, and what is their role?
- What role does **locative technology** (such as geotagging, QR codes, Google Earth, etc.) play in the game? What technologies do players need to participate?

Organize your presentation as a slideshow and be prepared to spend approximately **15 minutes** discussing your topic in class. There will be **5 minutes of Q&A** after each presentation, so be prepared to answer questions on your topic.

You may create and give your presentation using Google Slides, PowerPoint, or Keynote, but please **export** your completed slideshow as a **PDF** file for the Canvas submission.

Submitting Your Work

Upload to Canvas your **presentation** slideshow in **PDF format** by 11:59 PM on the due date listed above.

Grading Criteria

- **10 pts: Synopsis** – the presentation summarizes how the ARG unfolded chronologically.
- **70 pts: Analysis** – the presentation successfully analyzes how the ARG was structured and implemented.
- **20 pts: Clarity** – speech and presentation visuals are clear and communicate the topic successfully.

Group Project #2 – Alternate Reality Game

Due Dec. 16

30% of Semester Grade

As a group, produce and publish an alternate reality game. Team members must collaborate to produce an **interactive narrative**, allowing **audience members to participate** in the story and work together to progress in the game. The use of **locative technologies** such as geotagging, QR codes, Google Earth, etc. is strongly recommended. Include a **flowchart** mapping the different potential **interactions** between players and each other, the environment, and the game system. **Physical or digital artifacts** should be used to tell the story in pieces, offer clues about the game, or serve as players' entry to the game. **Reality is the platform** for this game; as such, any email addresses, phone numbers, websites, etc. mentioned in the game must be **real** and **function** accordingly.

You'll have class time to brainstorm, workshop, and test this ARG. You'll present your project by having your peers participate in the game.

Submitting Your Work

Each team member should upload to Canvas:

- **images** of any **physical artifacts**
- documentation of **digital artifacts** in whatever form is necessary (screenshot, URL, media file, recording, etc.)
- a **flowchart** mapping the game's **player-player, player-environment, and player-game interactions**
- a **flowchart** communicating how a **nonlinear narrative** is told in pieces (if your game is structured in such a way that it makes sense to combine these two flowcharts, you may submit one cohesive flowchart)

Grading Criteria

- **30 pts: IRL** – the game **functions** using the **real world as a platform**. Any email addresses, phone numbers, website addresses, etc. mentioned in the game must be real and function accordingly.
- **30 pts: Player Interactions** – players can **interact** with each other, the **environment**, and the game system to **participate**. A "puppet master" uses **player input** to direct the story, allowing players some degree of authorship.
- **30 pts: Artifacts** – **Physical** or **digital artifacts** are used to engage players, either as clues, an entry to the game, or to express pieces of the narrative.
- **10 pts: Flowcharts** – **flowcharts** mapping **potential player interactions** and the **nonlinear narrative** are included. If it makes sense to combine these into a single flowchart, you may do so.

Each team member will share the same grade for this project, so please divide work evenly and hold each other accountable.

[Course Schedule](#) (subject to change)

Week 1 (Sep. 9) – Course Overview

Lecture/Discussion:

- Introductions
- Course Materials, Expectations, Schedule
- The History of Interactive Storytelling: An Overview

Readings:

- [“Why Good Writers Won’t Save Games”](#)
- [Birthland](#)
- [Exquisite Corpse](#)
- [Two Great Myths of Interactive Storytelling](#)

[OPTIONAL Student Stress Factors Survey](#) – this will help me understand any challenges you may be facing outside of class but will not factor into your grade

Week 2 (Sep. 16) – Collaborative Storytelling

Workshop: Collaborative Storytelling Techniques – [Exquisite Corpse](#), [Consequences](#), [Mad Libs](#)

Lecture/Discussion: [Boook.land](#) – [The Speaking Machine](#), [Birthland](#)

Workshop: Collaborative Story Practice

Readings:

- [Revisiting love in the age of social distancing: 2005’s Façade](#)
- [What Depression Quest taught me about dealing with mental illness](#)
- [Wired: It Began as an AI-Fueled Dungeon Game. It Got Much Darker](#)

Assignment: [Group Project #1 – Collaborative Story](#) (Due Week 3, Sep. 23)

Week 3 (Sep. 23) – Interactive Fiction

Due: [Group Project #1 – Collaborative Story](#)

Workshop: Collaborative Story Presentations

Lecture/Discussion:

- [Key Implementations of Interactive Fiction: Façade, Depression Quest, AI Dungeon](#)
- The Potential for Serious Games in Interactive Fiction
- Social Responsibility and Interactive Fiction – The Unintended Consequences of *AI Dungeon*

Assignment: [Assignment #1 – Historical Presentation](#) (Due Week 4, Sep. 30)

Week 4 (Sep. 30) – Historical Presentations

Due: [Assignment #1 – Historical Presentation](#)

Workshop: Historical Presentations

Assignment: [Mid-Semester Student Feedback Survey](#) (Due Week 5, Oct. 7)

Week 5 (Oct. 7) – Nonlinear Experience Design

Due: [Mid-Semester Student Feedback Survey](#)

Lecture/Discussion:

- Linear vs. Nonlinear Story Systems
- Flowcharts, [draw.io](#)
- Introduction to Adobe XD

Assignment: [Assignment #2 – Nonlinear Story Flowchart](#) (Due Week 6, Oct. 14)

Week 6 (Oct. 14) – Twine

Due: [Assignment #2 – Nonlinear Story Flowchart](#)

Lecture/Discussion:

- Introduction to [Twine](#)
- [Installing Twine](#) – Browser vs. Desktop App
- [Basic Concepts](#) – Stories, Passages, Story Formats
- [Using the Story Library](#)
- [Navigating the Story Map](#)
- [The Harlowe Story Format](#)
- [Editing Passages](#)
- [Linking Passages](#)
- [Testing a Story](#)
- [Archiving and Exporting a Story](#)
- [Publishing a Story](#)
- [Example Story: Quack of Duckness \(parody\)](#)

Assignment: [Assignment #3 – Twine Text Adventure](#) (Due Week 9, Nov. 4)

Week 7 (Oct. 21) – Bitsy

Lecture/Discussion:

- Dialogue-Driven Video Games
- [Undertale](#)
- Introduction to [Bitsy](#)
- Workspace and Panels
- Paint
- Rooms
- Playing Your Game
- Managing Game Files – Download, Upload
- [Tutorial Link](#)
- [Play Bitsy Games](#)

Assignment: [Assignment #4 – Bitsy Game](#) (Due Week 11, Nov. 18)

Week 8 (Oct. 28) – Interactive Film

Discussion: Adding Interactivity to Film

Workshop: [Black Mirror: Bandersnatch](#)

Discussion: Reaction to *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*

Week 9 (Nov. 4) – Alternate Reality Games

Due: [Assignment #3 – Twine Text Adventure](#)

Critique: Twine Text Adventure

Lecture/Discussion:

- What is an ARG ([Alternate Reality Game](#))?
 - ARG Components – Puppet Master, Curtain, Rabbit Hole, TINAG
 - Real Life as a Medium
 - Hive Mind, Collaborative Storytelling
 - [Popular ARGs](#)
 - [Live Action Role-Playing \(LARP\)](#)
-

Week 10 (Nov. 11) – Locative Technologies

Lecture/Discussion: Locative Technologies for ARGs

- [Geotagging](#), [Geocaching](#), [QR Codes](#), [Google Maps](#), [Google Earth](#)

Workshop: Group Project #2 Team Formation and Brainstorming/Informal Project Proposals

Assignments:

- [Assignment #5 – Alternate Reality Game Analysis](#) (Due Week 12, Dec. 2)
 - [Group Project #2 – Alternate Reality Game](#) (Due Finals Week, Dec. 16)
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Week 11 (Nov. 18) – ARG Structure and Mapping

Due: [Assignment #4 – Bitsy Game](#)

Critique: Bitsy Game

Workshop: Alternate Reality Game Project Interaction Map and Narrative Structure

No Class Nov. 25 (Thanksgiving)

Week 12 (Dec. 2) – ARG Analysis Presentations

Due: [Assignment #5 – Alternate Reality Game Analysis](#)

Presentations: Alternate Reality Game Analysis

Week 13 (Dec. 9) – Alternate Reality Game Trial Runs

Workshop: Alternate Reality Game Trial Runs
Course Evaluation (Available via Canvas 12/1 – 12/16)

Final Exam Period (Dec. 16) – Alternate Reality Game Presentations

Please note that this class meeting will take place Friday, Dec. 16 from 1:00-3:00 PM

Due: [Group Project #2 – Alternate Reality Game](#)

Workshop: Alternate Reality Game Presentations
Course Evaluation (Available via Canvas 12/1 – 12/16)

[Download Schedule as PDF](#)

Academic Policies

Policy on Academic Integrity and Cases of Academic Dishonesty

This class will follow the policies of Rider University regarding Academic Integrity, as well as the procedures in addressing cases of Academic Dishonesty. The College's policies on such matters can be found in their entirety at: <http://catalog.rider.edu/policies/code-academic-integrity/>. Academic Dishonesty refers to a misrepresentation of the source or permissions related to the submission of written and creative works. In the area of digital design, this includes visual work, audio work, and written work. If in doubt, feel free to discuss sources with me before submission of work.

Academic Success Center

Students needing supplemental help beyond the scope of this class are encouraged to contact the [Academic Success Center](#) in Suite 237 of the Bart Luedeke Center. The center's services include a writing studio, success coaching and the potential for tutoring services. Email academicsuccesscenter@rider.edu.

Academic Disability Policy

Rider University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all students with disabilities. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of Sample Syllabus Statements-Disabilities April 2021 1973, you are required to register with [Student Accessibility and Support Services](#) office (SASS) at the Bart Luedeke Center, Suite 201. SASS can be contacted by email at accessibility@rider.edu or by phone at 609-895-5492, To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper accommodation form from SASS and meet with me at the beginning of the semester to discuss your accommodations.

Class Absence Notice

It is the student's responsibility to inform instructors of the nature and extent of an actual or anticipated absence. If that is impossible, or if the absence is or will be more than three (3) consecutive class sessions (seven (7) calendar days), the student should contact the Office of the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@rider.edu or 609-896-5101. Then the dean's office will notify the appropriate faculty member. More information about the procedure for notifying the dean's office of absences can be found at

<https://www.rider.edu/about/offices-services/student-affairs/dean-of-students/info-for-students/class-absence-notice>

Courses – Adding, Dropping, Withdrawing, Auditing, Repeating

Students may add courses through the first week of the regular semester at their own discretion provided the course is still open for registration. Students may drop courses through the second week of the regular semester at their own discretion. In such cases, the courses are deleted from the student's record. After the second week of the semester, a withdrawal from the course is necessary and a 'W' is recorded on the transcript.

Students may withdraw from courses and receive a grade of 'W' during the third through tenth weeks of the semester. The student's academic advisor and financial aid counselor will be notified of class withdrawals by email. View the course drop/withdrawal policy:

<https://www.rider.edu/tuition-aid/financial-aid/payment-billing/drop-withdrawal-policy>

Fall 2022 withdrawal dates can be found here:

<http://catalog.rider.edu/undergraduate/calendar/#Fall%20withdrawal>

More information on course processes can be found here:

<http://catalog.rider.edu/policies/undergraduate/courses-add-drop/>

Registrar forms can be found here: <https://www.rider.edu/academics/academic-support/registrar/forms>



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