

## IMM 270-02 Fall 2021 — Game Studies and Design Course Syllabus ([View on Canvas](#))

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**Meeting Time:** Thursdays 5:30-9:20 PM, AIMM 202

**Instructor:** Matthew DiMatteo ([dimatte4@tcnj.edu](mailto:dimatte4@tcnj.edu))

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

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### Course Description

Game Studies and Design aims to show you some ways to read games more deeply as cultural products that give meaning, and allow meaning to be formed through play. In practice, this means that we'll have discussions, debates, play sessions, and readings selected to give you the opportunity to have informed, intelligent reasons for liking or disliking a game and to write clearly and persuasively about what you've played and created. You'll also design, create, playtest, and iterate on games designed to address a theme, issue, or idea.

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### Required Course Materials

Students will be required to obtain the following materials:

1. **Textbooks** (available electronically as PDFs) - Course readings will be taken primarily from Tracy Fullerton's [Game Design Workshop](#) and Richard Rouse's [Game Design - Theory and Practice](#), both available on [Canvas](#) as PDFs. Additional course readings, including [Theory of Fun](#), will also be made available on [Canvas](#) through the [Files](#) section. [Individual chapters](#) are also available as PDFs.
2. **Digital Game Prototyping Tools** - Students will require digital game prototyping software in order to complete certain design challenges. Students with strong programming capabilities and experience are recommended to utilize [Unity](#) or [p5.js](#). The following options do not require programming (though many do offer it as an advanced feature): [Tabletop Simulator](#) ([\\$19.99 on Steam](#), cross-platform), [GameMaker Studio 2](#) ([\\$39 for 12-month license](#); [30-day free trial](#) also available, cross-platform). [RPG Maker](#) ([30-day free trial available](#); [prices vary by version](#), primarily Windows-compatible) and [Zelda Classic](#) ([primarily Windows-compatible](#), with [older versions for Linux, Mac](#)) are development tools with 2D level editing capabilities more targeted towards the role-playing and action/adventure genres. *Note: for students with financial difficulties, [EOF grants](#) may be used to purchase Visa Gift cards from the [TCNJ bookstore](#), which can then be used to purchase the*

above software. *If you have any questions or concerns about purchasing software, please [contact me](#) before doing so.*

- 3. Physical Game Prototyping Tools** - Students will require physical game components for completing physical game prototyping challenges. Please feel free to be creative; utilize common household objects such as pen and paper, index cards, tape, pipe cleaners, pieces of candy. You can also cannibalize pieces such as dice, tokens, chips, cards, play money, spinners, etc. from board or card games, provided you own those games. [The Game Crafter](#) is a website where you can purchase custom board game pieces, and even create your own board games. *Again, if you have any questions or concerns regarding purchasing anything for this class, please [contact me](#) before doing so.*

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## Recommended Course Materials

Students are strongly encouraged to obtain the following materials:

- 1. External Storage** - Highly recommended for storing and transferring files (useful not only for this course). Students have unlimited [Google Drive](#) cloud storage with their TCNJ account. Select “Google Apps” on the [TCNJ Today](#) page. [View these instructions on Canvas for information on setting up and using Google Drive](#). 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](#).
- 2. Sketchbook/Notebook** - Recommended for quickly jotting down playtest notes or sketching out concepts.

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## Electronic Course Resources

- 1. Canvas** - Resources such as [class slides](#) and other [files](#), including [textbooks](#) as PDFs, will be accessible online through Canvas.
- 2. medium.com** - Students will be required to create profiles on [medium.com](#) for posting written assignments, including bi-weekly game reviews and reflections on design challenges, on our class [publication](#) on [medium.com](#) ([TCNJ Game Studies Fall 2021](#)).
- 3. Adobe Creative Cloud** - Students currently enrolled in any IMM course will have full access to the Adobe Creative Cloud, and can download any software to personal computers by [logging in](#) with their TCNJ username and password [here](#).

*Please note, however, that this access is only guaranteed for the duration students are enrolled in the course - be sure to back up any files saved to Creative Cloud storage prior to the end of the semester).*

4. [LinkedIn Learning \(Formerly Lynda.com\)](#) - Students enrolled in IMM courses also have access to LinkedIn Learning, a great resource for tutorials on digital media, coding, and other skills. [Sign in with your TCNJ credentials here.](#)
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### **AIMM Building Resources**

1. **Labs** - Students have access to all AIMM classrooms and labs by swiping in with a valid TCNJ ID. Workstations in these rooms have all a wide variety of digital media software (including the Adobe Creative Suite) installed on them. Keep in mind not to swipe in while another class is in session. You can see the schedule of classes held in a room posted outside its door. Students also will have access to resources such as scanners, printers, etc. in dedicated labs. The AIMM building itself is open for the majority of the day on weekdays, but locked on weekends. Art/IMM students can swipe in with their TCNJ to enter the building, however. [View the hours of availability for the AIMM building here.](#)
  2. **Ubiquitous Computing Lab (U-Lab)** - AIMM 206 contains several game consoles students can use. These are a good resource for playing games to get a firsthand look at the experience. Remember to check the schedule outside the door to see when the room is available, and avoid swiping in while a class is in session.
  3. **Equipment Cage** - Students can check out equipment including digital cameras, camcorders, tripods, lighting kits, and microphones at the “[equipment cage](#)” in room AIMM 204. Drawing tablets may also be available. Once I have submitted a list of student names to the cage administrators, you will be able to use the [CHEQROOM](#) online resource to make reservations. Checkout length is two business days; refer to the cage [policies](#) for more detailed information about the checkout process, including renewals and late penalties.
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### **Course Learning Goals**

Students will:

1. Understand the fundamental principles of game design.
2. Analyze and critique games in terms of mechanics and content.
3. Examine games as cultural products that produce meaning through interactive play.

4. Discuss and debate the merits of particular games through informed readings and play sessions.
  5. Write clearly and persuasively about their opinions on games.
  6. Design, create, playtest, and iterate on original game concepts designed to address a theme, issue, or idea.
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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 weekly assignments. In the event of absence, students are responsible for catching up on material covered in class and completing any assignments.
  2. Students should expect to spend an average of four to eight hours per week outside of class time in order to complete assignments. Students are strongly encouraged to work consistently throughout the semester. Always take into account the lab hours and possible technical problems when planning out the time you will spend on these 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, personal computers, and cloud storage services such as Google Drive or Dropbox. Lab machines and network storage drives should never be depended on, and should be treated as temporary, as they are routinely cleaned. Because students are expected to habitually back up their files, the loss of data is not considered an acceptable excuse.
  4. Students are expected to abide by TCNJ policy aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19. As of August 16, 2021, this includes wearing a face covering while indoors, regardless of vaccination status. Because this is a fluid situation, policy and guidelines are subject to change. You can see the latest updates on the [TCNJ Fall 2021 page](#).
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## Assignments and Grading

- [40%] [Design Challenges](#)
  - Small game prototyping projects based on prompts (4 at 10% each)
  - Due Week (Sep. 16), Week 8 (Oct. 21), Week 11 (Nov. 11), Week 14 (Dec. 9)
  - For physical games, bring all necessary materials to class and playtest

- For digital games, submit gameplay footage and workspace screenshots to [Canvas](#)
- [20%] [Reflections](#)
  - Mini postmortems on Design Challenges (4 at 5% each)
  - Due Week 4 (Sep. 23), Week 9 (Oct. 28), Week 12 (Nov. 18), Dec. 16
  - Submit story to [TCNJ Game Studies Fall 2021](#) on [medium.com](#) and submit link to [Canvas](#)
- [15%] [Game Reviews](#)
  - Game reviews posted to [medium.com](#) (5 at 3% each)
  - Due Week 4 (Sep. 23), Week 7 (Oct. 14), Week 10 (Nov. 4), Week 13 (Dec. 2), Dec. 16
  - Submit story to [TCNJ Game Studies Fall 2021](#) on [medium.com](#)
  - Submit link to story via [Canvas](#)
- [15%] Standalone Assignments (3 at 5% each)
  - [5%] [Personal Gaming History](#) - Due Week 2 (Sep. 9)
  - [5%] [Game Deconstruction](#) - Due Week 5 (Sep. 30)
  - [5%] [Feature Design](#) - Due Week 6 (Oct. 7)
  - Submit any and all files to [Canvas](#)
- [10%] [Participation](#)

[Download a schedule with assignment due dates](#)

[View Assignments Page on Canvas](#)

[View medium.com publication for this class](#)

All assignments (unless otherwise specified) are to 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 every day they are late. Assignments not handed in at all will receive a grade of 0.

Students are encouraged to have their assignments submitted prior to class time so that their work may be included as part of a group discussion. While sharing one's work is optional, it is highly recommended, as students will have the opportunity to generate creative discussion and receive constructive feedback.

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

Week 01	(09/02)	Course Overview
Week 02	(09/09)	Why We Play Games

Week 03	(09/16)	Analyzing Games
Week 04	(09/23)	Formal and Dramatic Elements
Week 05	(09/30)	Brainstorming and Conceptualization
Week 06	(10/07)	Physical Prototyping and Playtesting
Week 07	(10/14)	Game Engines and Digital Prototyping
Week 08	(10/21)	Fun and Accessibility
Week 09	(10/28)	Difficulty and Balance
Week 10	(11/04)	Storytelling and Narrative
Week 11	(11/11)	Team Structures and Dynamics, Stages of Development
Week 12	(11/18)	Development and Design Documentation
	(11/25)	<i>No Class (Thanksgiving Break)</i>
Week 13	(12/02)	Industry, Marketing, and Presentation Strategies
Week 14	(12/09)	Semester Postmortem

Final Exam Period TBA via [PAWS](#)

Final [assignment](#) submissions due 12/16

[Download a detailed schedule](#) with agendas, assignment due dates, and readings

## TCNJ Policies

Browse all TCNJ Policies here: <https://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php/?docId=9136>

## [Attendance](#)

Every student is expected to participate in each of his/her courses through regular attendance at lecture and laboratory sessions. It is further expected that every student will be present, on time, and prepared to participate when scheduled class sessions begin. At the first class meeting of a semester, instructors are expected to distribute in writing the attendance policies which apply to their courses. While attendance itself is not used as a criterion for academic evaluations, grading is frequently based on participation in class discussion, laboratory work, performance, studio practice, field experience, or other activities which may take place during class sessions. If these areas for evaluation make class attendance essential, the student may be penalized for failure to perform satisfactorily in the required activities. Students who must miss classes due to participation in a field trip, athletic event, or other official college function should arrange with their instructors for such class absences well in advance. The Office of Academic Affairs will verify, upon request, the dates of and participation in such college functions.

In every instance, however, the student has the responsibility to initiate arrangements for make-up work.

Students are expected to attend class and complete assignments as scheduled, to avoid outside conflicts (if possible), and to enroll only in those classes that they can expect to attend on a regular basis. Absences from class are handled between students and instructors. The instructor may require documentation to substantiate the reason for the absence. The instructor should provide make-up opportunities for student absences caused by illness, injury, death in the family, observance of religious holidays, and similarly compelling personal reasons including physical disabilities. For lengthy absences, make-up opportunities might not be feasible and are at the discretion of the instructor. The Office of Academic Affairs will notify the faculty of the dates of religious holidays on which large numbers of students are likely to be absent and are, therefore, unsuitable for the scheduling of examinations. Students have the responsibility of notifying the instructors in advance of expected absences. In cases of absence for a week or more, students are to notify their instructors immediately. If they are unable to do so they may contact the Office of Records and Registration. The Office of Records and Registration will notify the instructor of the student's absence. The notification is not an excuse but simply a service provided by the Office of Records and Registration. Notifications cannot be acted upon if received after an absence. In every instance the student has the responsibility to initiate arrangements for make-up work. View this policy online: <https://policies.tcnj.edu/?p=77> (PDF)

### [Academic Integrity](#)

Academic dishonesty is any attempt by the student to gain academic advantage through dishonest means, to submit, as his or her own, work which has not been done by him/her or to give improper aid to another student in the completion of an assignment. Such dishonesty would include, but is not limited to: submitting as his/her own a project, paper, report, test, or speech copied from, partially copied, or paraphrased from the work of another (whether the source is printed, under copyright, or in manuscript form). Credit must be given for words quoted or paraphrased. The rules apply to any academic dishonesty, whether the work is graded or ungraded, group or individual, written or oral. View this policy online: <https://policies.tcnj.edu/?p=130> (PDF)

### [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)

Any student who has a documented disability and is in need of academic accommodations should notify the professor of this course and contact the Office of Differing Abilities Services (609-771-2571). Accommodations are individualized and in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992. View this policy online: <https://policies.tcnj.edu/?p=145> (PDF)

[Final Examinations](#) (PDF)

#### Accessibility and Accommodations

Students who experience barriers in this course are encouraged to contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible. The Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) is available to facilitate the removal of barriers and to ensure reasonable accommodations. For more information about ARC, please visit: <https://arc.tcnj.edu/>.

#### Access to IT support

If you have technology issues or needs during the semester, please contact the IT Helpdesk at 609-771-2660 or [helpdesk@tcnj.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tcnj.edu).

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