IMM 271-06
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA - A CASE STUDY IN GAME DESIGN
SPRING 2020 MINI COURSE SYLLABUS

Meeting Time and Location: Every other Thursday 2:00 PM – 5:20 PM, AIMM 222
Instructor: Matthew DiMatteo (dimatte4@tcnj.edu)
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description
This course provides a detailed unpackaging of one of the most respected game franchises ever. Students will examine critically-acclaimed titles such as *Ocarina of Time*, *Breath of the Wild*, *A Link to the Past*, and others to learn what makes them strong interactive experiences, applying those strategies to create their own original game concepts. This course will evaluate the games from the perspective of mechanics, world-building, plot, and character, as well as fun, difficulty, and balance, attempting both to find common themes and also to highlight how different approaches can be successful.

Course Materials
Students are strongly encouraged to obtain the following materials:
1. **External Storage** - Highly recommended for storing and transferring files (and 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 100 GB - 1 TB drive, while pricier, is 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** - If you plan on including concept art, such as character designs, world maps, or any other form of visual artwork in your final game concept submission, a sketchbook (along with a nice set of colored pencils, markers, pens, or other drawing tools) will come in handy.

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 Room 206 contains several game consoles students can use. These are a good resource for playing any of the *Zelda* 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. At the beginning of the semester, the class roster is submitted to the cage administrators, granting students access to the CHEQROOM online reservation system. Checkout length is two business days; refer to the cage policies for more detailed information about the checkout process, including renewals and late penalties.

Electronic Course Resources
1. Canvas - Resources such as class slides and other files will be accessible online through Canvas. Canvas Conferences will be used to hold remote meetings as necessary.
2. 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).*
3. LinkedIn Learning (Formerly Lynda.com) - Students enrolled in IMM courses also have access to LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com, a great resource for tutorials on digital media, coding, and other skills. Sign in with your TCNJ credentials here.

Additional Resources
The games themselves, as cartridges, discs, digital downloads, etc. for the *Zelda* series are optimal for getting a firsthand experience of each game. Students who own copies are encouraged to play through portions relevant to their research. The Ubiquitous Computing Lab (U-Lab) in AIMM 206 contains several game consoles that can be used to play these games. However, students will not be expected or required to have firsthand access to any of the games. YouTube is a great resource for finding video reviews, analyses, retrospectives, walkthroughs, let's plays, longplays, etc. that can convey an understanding of the nature each game. While certain video resources will be presented during class sessions (and linked to in the slides for each session, found on Canvas), students are encouraged to search independently for videos to fill in any knowledge gaps they have regarding the lengthy series.

Online *Zelda* Resources
● Zelda Dungeon - news, walkthroughs, articles, discussions, video analyses, let's plays, etc. on YouTube channel
● Zelda Universe - news, walkthroughs, articles, essays, forums
● Zelda Wiki - comprehensive encyclopedia
● Zelda Reddit - news, reviews, opinions, fan art, humor, comics

Course Learning Goals
Students will:
1. Examine the *Legend of Zelda* series, distilling its design philosophies from across the various installments, from the perspectives of game mechanics, world-building, plot, character, theme, fun, difficulty, and balance.
2. Consider the strengths and weaknesses, along with successes and failures, of the franchise.
3. Engage in class discussions regarding the merits and shortcomings of the games, along with personal opinions and experiences related to the series.
4. Complete small session-to-session assignments consisting of questions focused on different aspects of the design of games in the *Zelda* series. Students will be asked to provide positive and negative examples.
5. Create a rough original game concept utilizing the design principles present in the *Zelda* series.

Course Requirements
1. Students will be expected to arrive to class on time, participate in class discussions, and present, discuss, and defend ideas. In the event of absence, students are responsible for catching up on material covered in class.
2. 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.

Assignments and Grading
The mini course utilizes a Pass/Not Pass grade basis, determined by the following:
● [50%] Final Deliverable
● [30%] Small Assignments
● [20%] Participation

Grading Scheme
● 70% or higher = Satisfactory (Pass)
● Lower than 70% = Unsatisfactory (Not Pass)

Final Deliverable [50%]
Students are expected to work towards a final deliverable consisting of a rough original game concept based on their findings in studying the strengths and weaknesses in the design of *The Legend of Zelda* games. This may include some combination of the following:
● A (rough) game design document
● A world map
● Level designs for a particular area or areas in the hypothetical game that are representative of its design philosophy

- Character design sketches, descriptions, and backstories
- Any other form of concept art, sketched or digital
- A brief promotional video introducing the game concept
- Anything else that expresses the game concept

Small Assignments [30%]

Three small session-to-session assignments constitute 30% of the overall grade (10% each). These consist of questions regarding different aspects of the design of games in the *Zelda* series. Students will be asked to write brief responses (approx. 250-500 words) explaining their answer and including examples. Students will be encouraged to share their responses during class discussions.

Participation [20%]

Participation in this mini course is evaluated based on students' attitude, effort, and contributions throughout. In general, students are expected to display a positive attitude - showing a willingness to pay attention during lectures and discussions, treating classmates and the instructor respectfully, and taking assignments seriously.

It is fully understood that speaking publicly is something with which everyone may have differing levels of comfort. If students are less comfortable speaking in class, this will not be held against them. Contributing to class discussions by offering questions or comments is not mandatory, but is certainly appreciated. If you have something to add, please do share it!

Course Schedule *
- 4/09/20 [Session 1] An Overview of the *Legend of Zelda* Series
- 4/16/20 [Session 2] Mechanics - Fun, Difficulty, and Balance
- 4/23/20 [Session 3] World Building, Plot, Character, and Theme
- 5/07/20 [Session 4] Your Ideal *Zelda* (or *Zelda*-inspired) Game
- 5/14/20 - Final Deliverable Due (via Canvas submission)
* subject to change

Please Note: Class meetings will take place remotely via Canvas Conferences due to the COVID-19 situation until further notice

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)