Game Development Stories[1] (STS 390 102)

Meeting Location: CKB 206   **Class Time**: Mondays 6:00 – 8:50 pm

COURSE OVERVIEW

There are many ways to think about a story: What makes a good story? Can stories change us, and how? How much does the author's identity affect how we read a story? In the 21st century, another thing we have to think about is how interactivity affects storytelling. Branching storytelling is one of the primary ways video games tell interactive stories. Traditional, non-interactive stories are all linear (meaning events in the story always follow one another in the same order), but it is also possible to tell a linear story that still entails player interaction.

In this course, you will explore the ways in which linear storytelling has evolved and adapted to interactive contexts, primarily focusing on branching stories. The course will then present various story structures and writing tools designed to assist you in developing your own branching story. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to discuss, dissect, and analyze the works of others while continuously refining your story to meet different needs, challenges, and purposes.

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1. Prerequisites: HUM 102 with a grade of C or higher, and three credits at the 200-level History and Humanities GER with a grade of C or higher

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Construct effective writing critiques and receive feedback from peers.
2. Explain and analyze common story structures and identify the components of stories that follow one of these structures.
3. Define and describe the different styles of videogame narratives: linear, branching, and modular.
4. Apply tools for developing original story ideas and overcoming writer's block.
5. Identify and use common tropes of videogame writing and design.
6. Identify and describe some basic elements of videogame writing as a profession.
7. Write a story according to one of the common story structures.

INSTRUCTOR

Andres Crespo, acrespo@njit.edu. Office hours are held on Thursdays from 2:00 – 5:00 pm in Cullimore 419. If you prefer to meet remotely, please let me know.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

All reading materials will be uploaded to Canvas.

Required Games	*The Last Moments of a Doomed Spaceship*
	The Stanley Parable Ultra Deluxe
	Dear Esther

AI CHATBOTS

When using AI chatbots for assistance (e.g., research, brainstorming, etc.), you must quote any borrowed material and include a disclaimer at the end, ==documenting how the tool aided you in the writing process==. Remember that chatbots sometimes generate fictitious content, including source material.

NJIT CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

"Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: NJIT Academic Integrity Code.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu"

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a documented disability, please see me as early in the semester as possible to discuss the necessary accommodation, and/or contact Student Disability Services at 973-596-3420.

THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center (G17 Central King) is available for 45-minute individual and group appointments with professional writing tutors both onsite and online. This resource is intended to help you improve your communication and writing skills. Tutors can help with planning assignments, improving your writing, refining an essay or multimedia project, or other communication-based needs. To make an appointment, please visit https://www.njit.edu/writingcenter/

ASSIGNMENT & ASSESSMENT

Attendance/Participation	15%
Creative Writing	10%
Reflecting on your writing	20%
Reflecting on other's writing	20%
Composite Writing	10%
Final Analysis	25%

GRADES

A = 94 – 100   B+ = 87 – 93   B = 81 – 86   C+ = 76 – 80   C = 70 – 75   D = 65 – 69   F = 0 – 64

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

I do not accept emailed assignments. Late assignments receive a 10% late penalty for each day they are late; after 3 days, I do not accept the assignment. However, documented emergencies, accommodations, and unprecedented personal circumstances are exceptions to this rule once the Dean of Students (https://www.njit.edu/dos/contact.php) approves it.

The threshold for plagiarism is 20%. That means that anything beyond that will not be accepted unless it comes from citations.

ENGAGEMENT

Attendance   *Unexcused Absences*: You may have up to 4 unexcused absences. Anything beyond that would be grounds for failure. This will impact your overall grade.

Excused Absences: If you are absent at any point in the semester for a legitimate reason, you must contact the Dean of Students first. If they approve the absence, I will receive an official response from them.

Participation   This course hinges on the exchange of ideas. Thus, I expect you to read the materials thoughtfully and carefully.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following course outline is tentative and subject to change.

Level	DATE	Course Topic	Readings and Games	Course Project
1	Jan. 27	Games and Narratives	• Dille, Flint, and John Zuur Platten. *The Ultimate Guide to Video Game Writing and Design*. Lone Eagle, 2008. – "Level 1" pgs. 1-25 • *The Last Moments of a Doomed Spaceship*	Week 1 Discussion
2	Feb. 3	Interactivity and Narrative Style	• Wolf, Mark J. P. "Assessing Interactivity in Video Game Design." *Mechademia*, vol. 1, 2006, pp. 78–85, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41510879. • Crawford, Chris. *The Art of Interactive Design: A Euphonious and Illuminating Guide to Building Successful Software*. 1st edition, No Starch Press, 2002. – Chapters 1-2 • **Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) Sample Review**	Week 2 Discussion ==500-word CYOA Due 2/5==
3	Feb. 10	Writing About Your Writing	• "How to Write an Incredible Synopsis in 4 Simple Steps." *Reedsy*, https://blog.reedsy.com/how-to-write-a-synopsis/. Accessed 20 Aug. 2024.	Week 3 Discussion ==Synopsis Due 2/19==

			• *The Stanley Parable Ultra Deluxe*	<mark>In-class Peer Review</mark>
4	Feb. 17	Game Development Methods	• *Dear Esther* • "Writing for First-Person Shooters" (See Canvas)	Week 4 Discussion <mark>Methods Plan Due 2/19</mark>
5	Feb. 24	World Building (WB)	• "10 Worldbuilding Tips: How to Write an Engaging Fictional World - 2024." *MasterClass*, https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-an-engaging-fictional-world. Accessed 21 Aug. 2024. • *16.24: Worldbuilding for Games*. https://writingexcuses.com/16-24-worldbuilding-for-games/. Accessed 21 Aug. 2024. • **Extra resource**: *D&D Compendium - Worldbuilding*. https://www.dnd-compendium.com/dm-resources/worldbuilding. Accessed 21 Aug. 2024.	Week 5 Discussion <mark>WB Exercise</mark>
6	Mar. 3	Story Structure	• "Story Structure: 7 Types All Writers Should Know." *Reedsy*, https://blog.reedsy.com/guide/story-structure/. Accessed 19 Aug. 2024.	Week 6 Discussion <mark>Revise current story due 2/12</mark>

7	Mar. 10	Identifying Areas of Improvement	• *16 Common Fiction Writing Mistakes (And What to Do Instead) | Writers.Com*. https://writers.com/16-common-fiction-writing-mistakes. Accessed 20 Aug. 2024.	Week 7 Discussion ==Improvement Plan due 3/12==
8	Mar. 17	Spring Recess from 16 March to 22 March		
9	Mar. 24	Creativity	TBD	Week 9 Discussion ==Implement Improvements due 4/2==
10	Mar. 31	Tropes	• "If It Works, Break It: Game Narrative Tropes and Innovation" (See Canvas)	Week 10 Discussion
11	Apr. 7	Professional Perspectives	• *16.25: Breaking Into Game Writing*. https://writingexcuses.com/16-25-breaking-into-game-writing/. Accessed 22 Aug. 2024.	Week 11 Discussion ==Implement your trope(s) due 4/9==
12	Apr. 14	Modular Stories	• Sheldon, Lee. *Character Development and Storytelling for Games*. 3rd edition, CRC Press, 2022. – Chapter 14	Week 12 Discussion
13	Apr. 21	Final Analysis	TBD	==Final Project due 4/28==

14	Apr. 28	Collaborative Writing	TBD	In-class Peer Review
15	May 5	Final Project	Final Project due 5/9	