School of Computing and Information Systems

Unit Outline

KXH544 Fundamentals of Interactive Entertainment

Semester 2, 2012
Newnham Campus, Launceston

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UNIT OVERVIEW

Introduction

Video games and virtual worlds are an ever-growing presence that is reshaping society and creating a cultural phenomenon bringing real-time interactive computer simulations to the forefront of people's lives. The massively multiplayer game (MMO) World of Warcraft sold 250,000 copies in November of 2004—the most successful PC game launch in history. This game continues to grow with over 11 million subscribers. Today we have players spending thousands of dollars on virtual characters and digital items on eBay and sweatshops have been established in developing nations to service this micro-economy. Games have and will continue to become a major part of our culture today and a key component of the ever-growing digital entertainment industry.

Drawing on a wide variety of examples and disciplines, this class will look at the video game industry. Topics include: historical overview of video games and virtual worlds, game genres, aesthetics and environmental design, narrative and character development, game theory and design, as well as sociological and psychological dimensions of games. We will also look at other types of real-time interactive simulations being developed today for information visualizations, entertainment, health, education, and work.

The course will include guest speakers, lectures, readings, case studies, online demos, exploration of game genres, and time applied to both creating, analyzing and playing games. Additional emphasis will also be placed on the importance of Internet-based communications and collaboration through participation in team projects.

Prerequisites

None

Unit Weight

12.5% of one academic year

Teaching Pattern

Lectures: 2 hr/wk
Tutorials: 2 hr/wk

Unit Content

1. Class Introductions and Course Overview
2. History of Video Games & Middleware Overview
3. Game Taxonomy & The Great Convergence
4. The Attention Economy, Game Theory & Psychology of the Player
5. Game Design 101 & Play
6. Game Rules, Cheating & Player Experience
7. Use of Visual Programming Environments
8. The Role of Stories, The Hero's Journey, Freedom vs. Choice
9. World Building, Virtual Worlds & The Game Design Cycle
10. Character Development and Identity
11. Social Issues in Virtual Worlds
12. Serious Games (Health, Learning, Social Change)

For more information see the section titled 'Content' on the unit website.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Differentiate and describe categories of games by genre, technology and player interaction.
2. Play and analyse games in terms of topics explored in the readings and online presentations.
3. Identify the principles of narrative and story structure as they apply to interactive entertainment.
4. Create an interactive game using a development platform with a graphical user interface.
5. Explain the psychological motivations and incentives of game players.
6. Describe the stages of the game design cycle.
7. Develop an understanding of how game design documents are constructed and used in the game development industry.
8. Describe the social design considerations in the creation of online multi-participant worlds.
9. Discuss interactive entertainment using the relevant critical vocabulary.
10. Identify and discuss game-related social, economic and ethical issues.

Generic graduate attributes

The university has defined a set of generic graduate attributes expected in its graduates.
Your course is designed to enable you to develop generic skills that are valued in, and expected of, graduates. These are skills that you will need to develop over time. Hence you are encouraged to look for opportunities, as you study each unit, to reflect on and improve these skills.
UNIT ASSESSMENT

Assessment Pattern

Internal (50%), Exam (50%)

Assessment Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Blog</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3pm Friday, Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic Game Response Paper</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3pm Friday, August 10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Game Response Paper</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3pm Friday, August 31st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Knowledgebase</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3pm Monday, October 15th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Examination</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>University Examination Period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment Items

Item 1  
**Title:** Class Participation  
**Type:** In-Semester - learning tasks  
**Task Length:** not applicable  
**Weighting:** 9.5%  
**Links to Learning Outcomes:** All  
**Due:** Not Applicable  
**Description:** Class participation and discussion are important parts of the course. A key aspect of games is engagement and interaction with other participants. This same principle should apply when we are studying games as a group.

Item 2  
**Title:** Class Blog  
**Type:** In-Semester - group assignment  
**Task Length:** 250 words per week  
**Weighting:** 4.5%  
**Links to Learning Outcomes:** 1, 2, 3  
**Due:** 3pm Friday, Weekly  
**Description:** Students will be asked to work in small teams and maintain a blog throughout the semester. Each week, there will be a choice of questions to respond to on the blog.

The purpose of the class blog is to practice critical thinking skills in relation to games and other real-time interactive computer simulations, their structure and content, and to develop ideas from which to draw inspiration for other assignments in the class.

The blogging component of this class is participatory. There is an expectation that you not only update your own blog, but that you also read and respond to posts from other students in the class.

Item 3  
**Title:** Classic Game Response Paper  
**Type:** In-Semester - individual assignment  
**Task Length:** 900 words  
**Weighting:** 8%  
**Links to Learning Outcomes:** 1, 2, 3, 5  
**Due:** 3pm Friday, August 10th  
**Description:** This paper will involve an analysis and evaluation of a classic game from a list of provided Golden Age video game links. The analysis will include the following: History, story premise, gameplay features, navigation, goals, path of pattern discovery, and subjective evaluation.

Item 4  
**Title:** Modern Game Response Paper  
**Type:** In-Semester - individual assignment  
**Task Length:** 1400 words  
**Weighting:** 12%  
**Links to Learning Outcomes:** 1, 2, 3, 5  
**Due:** 3pm Friday, August 31st  
**Description:** This response paper will involve an analysis and evaluation of 1) a video game that is enjoyable and you want to play again and again, or 2) a video game that is frustrating or otherwise unsatisfying. The analysis will consist of game theory principles discussed in class and in reading assignments. In part these include, history, genre, boundaries, rules, balance, interactivity, navigation, victory conditions, immersion, and motivating factors.

Item 5  
**Title:** Online Knowledgebase  
**Type:** In-Semester - group assignment  
**Task Length:** not applicable  
**Weighting:** 16%  
**Links to Learning Outcomes:** All
Due: 3pm Monday, October 15th
Description: The online knowledgebase project will explore a particular topic relating to interactive entertainment. Students will work in teams to create an article that will include a presentation of their ideas supported by images, video (if appropriate), and a bibliography.

Item 6
Title: Formal Examination
Type: Formal Examination
Task Length: 2 hours
Weighting: 50%
Links to Learning Outcomes: All
Due: University Examination Period
Description: This is a 2 hour closed book exam.

See the 'Assessment' section in unit website for more detailed information about assessment items.

How your Final Grade will be determined

Overall assessment will be based on the student’s performance throughout the semester as well as in a formal examination. In order to achieve a pass (or better) result, a student must obtain:

1. at least 45% of the total mark for in-semester assessment items
2. at least 45% of the mark for the formal examination
3. at least 50% of the overall mark
UNIT RESOURCES

Unit Web Site

This unit is Web Dependent: content & communication. This means that you will need to use the Web for this unit. The unit website contains unit information and resources. The unit website is accessed from http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/. You will need to use your university email pop account username and password to log on to the MyLO system. Once authenticated by the system your personalised MyLO Learning Online area will be displayed. It contains links to the websites that you have permission to access - including the website for this unit.

If you are not able to access the unit website, please contact the University IT help desk:

- Entrance Level, Morris Miller Library, Sandy Bay Campus;
- Entrance Level, Launceston Campus Library, Newnham Campus.
- Telephone: 6226 1818 and 1300 304 903.
- The 1300 number is a local call from within Tas, with the exception of mobiles.
- Email: servicedesk@utas.edu.au
- Website: http://www.utas.edu.au/servicedesk/student/index.html

Prescribed Text


Available for purchase at the Co-op Bookshop on campus.

KXH242/542 Unit Reader

Available for purchase at Uni-Print on campus.

Readings

Recommended Reading:

Copies of the following books have been made available at the library and important sections have been reproduced in the KXH242/544 Reader. There is no requirement that you purchase these texts.


Software

The software that you will need to access the unit website and to study this unit, including general purpose software such as word processors, is provided on the computers in the School's computing labs. If you intend to use software on other computers please check that the versions are compatible.

We will be using the following software packages in class:

- Stencyl (Stencyl - http://www.stencyl.com/)
- Jumala (Jumala - http://www.jumala.com/)
- Facade (Procedural Arts - http://www.interactivestory.net/)
- Portal 2 Puzzle Maker (Valve Software - http://www.teachwithportals.com/)
- Second Life (Linden Labs - http://secondlife.com/)

We will also be using the following web-based tools:

- Weebly (Weebly - http://www.weebly.com/)
- 3D GameLab (Shivtr - http://3dgmelab.org.shivtr.com/)

This software has been installed on the computers in the School of Computing labs. With the exception of Portal 2, each package is freely available online for students who choose to use the software at home.

Various other software packages and web-based collaboration tools may be introduced as the course progresses.
GENERAL RESOURCES

School Website

School of Computing and Information Systems - Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Technology.  
http://www.utas.edu.au/cis

Faculty Website

Information and Resources for Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology students are available on the faculty website at:  
http://www.utas.edu.au/scieng

University Website

Information and Resources for 'Current Students' are available on the university website at:  
http://www.utas.edu.au/students/

School Help Desk

Contact the School Help Desk if you have any queries or problems with accessing, using, or printing from the computers in the School of Computing and Information Systems labs.

In Hobart the Help Desk is located on level 3 in the Centenary Building, and is open from 10:00am-12:00pm, and 2:00pm-4:00pm Monday-Friday. The phone number is 6226 2929.

In Launceston the Help Desk is located near the entrance to the computing labs and is open from 10:00am-12:00pm, and 2:00pm-4:00pm Monday-Friday. The phone number is 6324 3447.

Both help desks will accept queries over the phone outside the standard opening hours.

The computer labs at the Cradle Coast Campus are maintained by ITR - please contact the University Help Desk for assistance with these computers.

Computing Facilities

The School has PC labs (running Windows 7), Mac labs (running Mac OS X 10.6), and special purpose Networking labs at the Newnham and Sandy Bay campuses. All students are provided with logins for Windows, Macintosh and Unix environments. If you have not used these facilities before please contact the School Help Desk to collect your account details. If you would like to access these facilities after hours please contact the School Help Desk.

In Hobart, there are 4 PC Labs, 2 Mac Labs, and 1 Networks Lab in the Centenary Building. In Launceston, there are 2 PC Labs, 1 Mac Lab, 1 Networks Lab, and one Multipurpose Lab in Building V.

Use of Facilities

Use of computing facilities provided by the School is subject to the School's Ethics Guidelines, details of which are posted at http://www.utas.edu.au/computing-information-systems/resources/ethics-guidelines. Copies of the guidelines are also available in all School labs. The School's facilities may only be used for study-related purposes, and may not be used for personal gain. Anti-social behaviour in labs such as game playing, viewing pornography, loud discussion, audio without the use of head-phones, etc is strictly prohibited in all labs at all times. Eating, drinking, and smoking is not permitted in the labs. Before being granted access to the School's facilities, you will be required to sign a declaration that you have read and understand these guidelines, and that you will abide by them. Disciplinary action may be taken against students who violate the guidelines.
Learning Strategies

If you need assistance in preparing for study please refer to your tutor or lecturer. For additional information refer to the Learning Development website: http://www.utas.edu.au/learndev/

If you will be using MyLO for the first time and would like some information on how to use MyLO refer to the following website: http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/mylo-support.htm

Some of the units you will study use videoconferencing to deliver lectures and tutorials. To enable you to get the best out of a videoconference please refer to the following guide: http://www.its.utas.edu.au/videoconf/vcstudentguide.pdf

Help resolving concerns about this unit

In the first instance you should contact your lecturer. If the matter is not resolved then you should contact the Head of School. If the matter is still unresolved and you would like to know who to contact or the procedures for resolving your concern refer to the following website: http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/complaints_info.html

The Tasmanian University Union (TUU) may also be able to assist.

The School reserves the right to alter the details contained in this Unit Outline. Students will be advised of changes to the outline via their University email account and it remains the responsibility of the student to check their email for such changes.

Occupational Health and Safety

The university is committed to providing a safe and secure teaching and learning environment. For more information see http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol_proc/

University Services and Support

If you are experiencing difficulties with your studies or assignments, have personal or life planning issues, disability or illness which may affect your course of study, you are advised to raise these with your lecturer in the first instance.

The University has staff available to assist you, such as the:

- Learning Development Advisor
- Student Counselor
- Careers Advisor
- Disability Officer

For more information and contact details see the Services and Support section on the University 'Current Students' web page: http://www.utas.edu.au/students/
**GENERAL ASSESSMENT**

**Approach to Learning**

The University is committed to high standards of professional conduct in all activities, and holds its commitment and responsibilities to its students as being of paramount importance. Likewise, it holds expectations about the responsibilities students have as they pursue their studies within the special environment the University offers.

The University's Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning states:

Students are expected to participate actively and positively in the teaching/learning environment. They must attend classes when and as required, strive to maintain steady progress within the subject or unit framework, comply with workload expectations, and submit required work on time.

You are expected to spend about 130 hrs studying in this unit - this includes attendance at scheduled teaching sessions. (For a 13 week semester this is, on average, 10 hr/wk.) This is the amount of study time that the 'typical' student will need to reach the level of competence and understanding required to fulfil the unit objectives. You are expected to:

- attend all scheduled teaching sessions, unless otherwise notified by the unit coordinator
- prepare for, and actively participate in all scheduled teaching sessions
- complete the assigned learning tasks
- review what has been learnt
- complete assessment items and submit them on time
- access and be familiar with the information and resources available on the unit website
- seek help from teaching staff if you have any questions or difficulties in studying this unit

You are encouraged to read the university's Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning. Part A describes the 'Responsibility of the University to Students' and part B describes the 'Responsibilities of Students to the University'.


It is expected that students will familiarise themselves with access and use of the MyLO system operated by the University for the electronic delivery of course materials, and for various forms of communication.

It is expected that students will consult email sent to their University email address at least twice a week for notices relating to the administration of the unit, and for notification of the results of assignments.

It is expected that students will read the background material specified in the course curriculum, will actively attend and participate in tutorials, and be prepared to discuss relevant issues arising with tutors, lecturers and fellow students.

**Student Expectations of the Unit**

Students enrolled in this Unit may reasonably expect the following:

1. To be able to contact a lecturer or tutor by electronic mail, to raise issues arising in the unit, either relating to content or student performance within the unit.
2. Subject to availability, to be able to discuss such issues in person with the lecturer or tutor.
3. That assignments will be marked and the marks will normally be returned within 3 weeks of due dates.
4. That all relevant notices regarding the administration of the unit, including any necessary changes, will be communicated to all students enrolled in the unit via email.

*These expectations are in addition to those specified in relevant University regulations.*
Plagiarism

Unless specifically stated in the specification of the assessment item provided on the unit website, it is required that:

- work submitted by a student is the work of that student alone OR
- where the assessment item is to be completed by a group of students, the work submitted by the group of students is the work of that group of students alone.

While students are encouraged to discuss the assignments in this unit and to engage in active learning from each other, it is important that they are also aware of the University's policy on plagiarism. Plagiarism is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own; for example, downloading an essay wholly or in part from the internet, copying another student's work or using an author's words or ideas without citing the source.

"Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own; for example, using an author's words without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source, using an author's ideas without proper acknowledgment and citation, copying another student's work.

If you have any doubts about how to refer to the work of others in your assignments, please consult your lecturer or tutor for relevant referencing guidelines, and the academic integrity resources on the web at http://www.academicintegrity.utas.edu.au.

The intentional copying of someone else's work as one's own is a serious offence punishable by penalties that may range from a fine or deduction/cancellation of marks and, in the most serious of cases, to exclusion from a unit, a course or the University. Details of penalties that can be imposed are available in the Ordinance of Student Discipline - Part 3 Academic Misconduct, see http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/23991/ord91.pdf.

The University and any persons authorised by the University may submit your assessable works to a plagiarism checking service, to obtain a report on possible instances of plagiarism. Assessable works may also be included in a reference database. It is a condition of this arrangement that the original author's permission is required before a work within the database can be viewed."

It is important that you understand this statement on plagiarism. Should you require clarification please see your unit coordinator or lecturer. Useful resources on academic integrity, including what it is and how to maintain it, are also available at: http://www.academicintegrity.utas.edu.au

Referencing

The preferred text referencing systems for the School is the Harvard system (also referred to as the author-date system). In your written work you will need to support your ideas by referring to scholarly literature, works of art and/or inventions. For information on presentation of assignments, including referencing styles: http://utas.libguides.com/referencing

It is important that you understand how to correctly refer to the work of others and maintain academic integrity. Failure to appropriately acknowledge the ideas of others constitutes academic dishonesty (plagiarism), a matter considered by the University of Tasmania as a serious offence. The university document on plagiarism contains information about referencing the work or ideas of others (see http://www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism/).
Submissions

The details of the submission method (paper, electronic or other) for each assignment will be supplied in a separate assignment specification sheet. All in-semester assignment submissions (including electronic submissions) are to include an Assignment Cover Sheet which includes a statement confirming that the submission is your own work. The Assignment Cover Sheet is available from the School Help Desk in Launceston and Hobart, and on the School's website: [http://www.utas.edu.au/computing-information-systems/resources](http://www.utas.edu.au/computing-information-systems/resources).

Students must take responsibility for the correct submission of their assignments. Students are expected to adhere to the following procedure for submission:

- Submitted files MUST be checked by the student to ensure that correct submission of the file has been undertaken.
- Students are expected to notify the Lecturer WITHIN TWO HOURS of submission if their files have not been submitted correctly.
- Students must take responsibility for safely backing up of their own files during the academic year to ensure that no files are permanently lost.

Extensions

Assessment items will not be accepted after the due date except under the conditions stated in the School policy on late assessment. [http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/231960/ExtensionPolicy.pdf](http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/231960/ExtensionPolicy.pdf) (PDF - 100KB).

Review of Assessment and Appeals

1. It is expected that students will adhere to the following policy for review of any piece of continuous assessment.
   a. Within 5 days of the release of the assessment result, the student should request an appointment with the Lecturer. The student should be prepared to discuss specifically which section of the marking criteria they are disputing and why they consider the mark is inappropriate.
   b. Following this discussion, students may request a formal remark of the original submission (in accordance with Rule of Academic Assessment 111, clause 22.1). This remark will be undertaken, where practicable, by an alternative assessor.
2. Students may also request a review of the final result in a unit. The request and payment must be made within 10 days from the date of the result notification. Students are referred to Rule of Academic Assessment 111, clause 23 at [http://www.utas.edu.au/university-council/university-governance/rules](http://www.utas.edu.au/university-council/university-governance/rules) and [http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/examinations_and_results/results/result_review_results.htm](http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/examinations_and_results/results/result_review_results.htm).

Complaints Procedure

It is expected that students will adhere to the following policy for making any complaint or grievance directly related to a Unit:

a. In the first instance, students are to approach the Lecturer or Unit Coordinator concerned and arrange a time to speak with them about their concern.
   b. If an issue remains unresolved, the student should approach the Head of School and arrange a time to speak with them about their concern.

If the School’s internal policy of complaints is unable to resolve an issue, students should consult Ordinance 8 Student Complaints for further direction, see [http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/complaints_info.html](http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/complaints_info.html).

Formal Examination

The formal examination is conducted by the University Registrar. The 'Current Students' section on the university website contains information about the conduct of, and timetable for, formal examinations.

Final Grade

Passing grades will be awarded based on the AVCC guidelines:

- PP at least 50% of the overall mark but less than 60%
- CR at least 60% of the overall mark but less than 70%
- DN at least 70% of the overall mark but less than 80%
- HD at least 80% of the overall mark

In order to comply with the benchmarks set by the Faculty of Science, Engineering & Technology for distribution of grades in units, both the in-semester and examination marks that students obtain may be adjusted either upwards or downwards. See [http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/scieng/scieng/policies.asp](http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/scieng/scieng/policies.asp) for details of the Faculty Assessment Guidelines.