

GAM 312-601: Playtesting

WQ 2024 :: Wed 1:30 - 4:45 PM, CDM 214



Instructor Info

Dr. Michael A. DeAnda

Email: mdeanda@depaul.edu

Tel: 312.362.1244

Pronouns: any human-related pronouns
are acceptable (i.e. not "it")

Office Hours

- Daley 205 B: M & W 11:45 AM-1:15 PM.

I will usually respond to emails and Discord messages within a few hours between 9AM and 5 PM Monday through Friday. It is rare that I will check and respond to online communications on weekends.



Course Description

Playtesting or Games User Research is one of the key skills every game designer needs. Feedback from playtesting is a critical part of the development process. In this course, students will learn how to identify design goals, articulate good research and interview questions, plan and conduct playtests, and evaluate playtest data to inform design decisions and make better games.

Prerequisite: GAM 226 - Fundamentals of Game Design



Course Learning Outcomes

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

- Clearly identify design goals,
- Effectively plan a playtest,
- Identify research and survey questions to gather relevant data for design iterations,
- Demonstrate effective ways to present evaluation findings,
- Make informed choices between usability and playtesting methods to reach design goals.



Required Materials

Readings will be posted on D2L in the respective week under the "Content" tab.



Grading Breakdown

Student progress will be assessed through a combination of homework assignments, game analysis papers on a game of student's choice, a group game design project, and class participation.

Participation	20%
Playtesting Methodologies (2)	20%
Peer Feedback	20%
Playtesting Reports (2)	20%
Reflections	20%

Contesting A Grade

Students wishing to contest a grade may do so during office hours or by appointment a minimum of 24 hours and a maximum of a week after assignments have been returned. Any email received regarding grade contestation outside of this window will be automatically deleted.

Before contesting a grade, make sure you followed all of the instructions for the assignment and assess if a **resubmission** is a better course of action.

A	93-100
A-	92-90
B+	89
B	88-81
B-	80
C+	79
C	78-71
C-	70
D+	69
D	69-61
D-	60
F	59-



Assignment Info

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the indicated date. Below is a brief summary of each assignment. More detailed instructions will be provided on D2L under "Content."

Unless there are unforeseen circumstances, assignments will usually be graded and returned within one week of the due date.

Playtesting Methodology

Over the quarter, you will be developing methodologies for playtesting the game, playtesting, and writing playtesting reports.

Weekly Participation

Participation is graded on your contributions to the course, including weekly discussion, participating in playtesting, and contributing to class notes. It is not enough to show up to class.

Playtesting Reports

These will be developed from data developed in two rapid prototyping sprints. You will coordinate playtests and run them in teams. You will then provide feedback on the game in the form of a *playtesting report*.

NOTE: One of the most difficult things about playtesting is to recruit enough (and suitable) playtesters. Start your recruitment process early! I recommend setting up a Google Spreadsheet, an Eventbrite or other online tool to recruit/invite testers and allow them to sign up for playtesting timeslots.



Late Work, Absences, Make-Ups, and Extra Credit

You are responsible for your course materials. If you miss class, you may watch the recordings COTL recordings and submit any in-class activities for participation credit. You may also check with others via Discord and refer to D2L and the syllabus. Any emails asking what we cover(ed) will be ignored.

Late work, while accepted, should not expect to receive feedback in the same timeframe as other assignments. This does not apply to the final assignment.

Resubmissions are accepted for regrading for full credit. I embrace failure as a learning strategy, so I require you to reflect on what you learned by revisiting the assignment with feedback. The student will submit a brief document addressing how they incorporated feedback from the initial assignment along with the iterated assignment. All work considered for regrading must be submitted by Week 10.

Extensions will not be granted beyond the deadlines of the set finals period, [determined by DePaul University](#). Students in good standing should instead apply for incomplete marks.

Extra credit will be given at the instructor's discretion, this usually involves attending a design or games related lecture and writing a reflection.



COVID-19 Policies

Do not come to class if you are feeling sick. Class is recorded via COTL and made available via D2L about 2 hours after class time. You will be able to submit in-class activities for credit.

Visit <https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/> for more info.



Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>) for further details.



Resources for Students

Writing Center

I strongly recommend you make use of the Writing Center throughout your time at DePaul. The Writing Center provides free peer writing tutoring for DePaul students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Writing Center tutors work with writers at all stages of the writing process, from invention to revision, and they are trained to identify recurring issues in your writing as well as address any specific questions or areas that you want to talk about. Visit www.depaul.edu/writing for more information.

The Dean of Students Office

The Dean of Students Office (DOS) is primarily responsible for meeting the urgent needs of students by providing clear and critical support structures in times of need. Additionally, the department helps develop and maintain community standards in order to facilitate a safe and healthy campus environment for our students. The Dean of Students Office provides the administrative withdrawal and absence

notification processes, and can help students identify campus and community resources in times of personal and/or family crises and medical emergencies. The Dean of Students Office at DePaul University promotes student learning and ethical decision making in an inclusive and student-centered environment. Utilizing a comprehensive approach to student advocacy that is informed by DePaul's Catholic, Vincentian, and urban mission, the office collaborates with students, staff, faculty, parents and community partners to support students in reaching their academic and personal success.

Contact Info:

Phone: 773-325-7290

Email: deanofstudents@depaul.edu

Website:

<https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/dos.aspx>

Location:

Lincoln Park Campus

Student Center, Suite 307

2250 N. Sheffield Ave.



DePaul and College-Specific Policies

NAME & GENDER PRONOUNS

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have

contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) by emailing csd@depaul.edu and/or visiting one of the locations below.

Loop Campus

Lewis Center Suite 1420
25 East Jackson Blvd
phone: (312) 362-8002
fax: (312) 362-6544
tty: (773) 325-7296

Lincoln Park Campus

Student Center, Suite #370
2250 N Sheffield Ave
phone: (773) 325-1677
fax: (773) 325-3720
tty: (773) 325-7296

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in campusconnect.depaul.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & PLAGIARISM

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found on DePaul's [academic integrity website](#). If you have any questions, be sure to consult with your professor.

SEXUAL AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

Faculty are required to report information reported to them about experiences with sexual or relationship violence to DePaul's Title IX Coordinator. Students disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence in course assignments or discussion does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response.

As a DePaul community, we share a commitment to take care of one another. Classroom relationships are based on trust and communication. Sometimes, material raised in class may bring up issues for students related to sexual and relationship violence. In other instances, students may reach out to faculty as a source of help and support. It is important for students to know that faculty are required to report information reported to them about experiences with sexual or relationship violence

to DePaul's Title IX Coordinator. Students should also know that disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence in course assignments or discussion does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response.

Students seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul should contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400) or the Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7290; Loop: 312-362-8066 or titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu).

Students seeking to speak confidentially about issues related to sexual and relationship violence should contact a Survivor Support Advocate in the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness for information and resources (773-325-7129 or hpw@depaul.edu). More information is available at the [Office of Health Promotion and Wellness website](#). Students are encouraged to take advantage of these services and to seek help around sexual and relationship violence for themselves as well as their peers who may be in need of support.

ENROLLMENT/WITHDRAWAL AND OTHER ACADEMIC POLICIES

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on registration policies can be found at [DePaul Central](#).

WITHDRAWAL

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (campusconnect.depaul.edu). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

ADMINISTRATIVE WITHDRAWAL

Administrative Withdrawal Appeals are submitted to and processed by the Dean of Students Office, and allow students to be retroactively withdrawn from classes for medical, mental health or personal crises even after the term has ended. More information is available on the [Division of Student Affairs](#) website.

EXCUSED ABSENCE

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the [Absence Notification form](#) through the [Dean of Students office](#). Students must submit supporting

documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

SYLLABUS CHANGES AND ERRORS

The instructor may make changes and updates to the course syllabus and schedule as needed. Students will be notified of any changes. If you find any broken links, outdated information, or other content that just seems “off” somehow, please let me know so I can fix it. I really do appreciate students helping me find and fix mistakes or confusing wording in my materials.



Resources for Students in Need of Support

Safety and Mental health safety are important. If you find yourself in a state of distress, depression, or unsafe circumstances, please make use of any of the following resources should you seek counseling.

DEPAUL STUDENT COUNSELING

Full time and Part time DePaul students may schedule appointments with the University Counseling Service Info here:

<https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/counseling/Pages/default.aspx>

The front desk staff is working remotely and will answer your call directly. If they are taking another call, please leave a message and your call will be returned within a business day. **If you would like to be contacted by a counselor please call** (773) 325-7779 or (312) 362-6923.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES EXTERNAL TO DEPAUL

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Phone: 1-800-273-8255

Online chat feature: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Available 24/7. Offers help in more than 200 languages. All calls are free and confidential.

Phone: 1-800-799-7233

Chat online with someone: <https://www.thehotline.org/>

The Trevor Project

For young LGBTQ persons in crisis or in need of someone to talk to:

Phone: 1-866-488-7386

Text START to 678678

Chat online by visiting: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/>

Trans Lifeline

A peer support hotline runned by trans people for trans people.

Phone: 877-565-8860