ETEC 526: Games and Simulations for Learning
COURSE SYLLABUS – Fall 2025

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Mary Jo Dondlinger, PhD
Office Location: Main Campus—Education North, 126
Office Hours: Virtual daily and by appointment
Text/Voicemail: 972-383-9115
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University Email Address: MaryJo.Dondlinger@tamuc.edu
Preferred Form of Communication: email
Communication Response Time: within 24 hrs weekdays; 36 hrs weekends

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Salen, K. and Zimmerman, E. (2004). *Rules of play: Game design fundamentals.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Course Description: This course examines games and simulations as learning technologies, including defining qualities and characteristics, as well as theories of learning and play. Emphasis is placed on processes for designing and selecting appropriate games and simulations based on analysis of instructional needs.

Student Learning Outcomes:

The learner will apply defining characteristics to distinguish games from simulations and other virtual learning environments.
The learner will analyze instructional needs and create a learning game or simulation design.
The learner will reflect on and discuss relationships among theories of learning and play.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

The *syllabus/schedule are subject to change.*

All students must be active participants in all aspects of class activities and within the virtual course environment. All interaction must be conducted in a professional and respectful manner and model best practices of netiquette. Course grade is based on participation in a variety of activities, including game playtesting, threaded discussions, and applied projects.

In order to interact and participate in ongoing and evolving dialogue, post and respond to questions, contribute to the knowledge base, and remain aware of class dynamics, students must login regularly and be active participants in the class. Regardless of current assignments or activities, every student should login to the course a minimum of four (4) separate days each academic week.

Game Playtesting Activity – 10%: During the first two weeks of class you will play a free, web-based game—Gamestar Mechanic--designed to teach kids the guiding principles of game design and systems thinking. Although you're likely no longer a kid, you'll learn key concepts of game design by playing. You'll also get a sense for whether, how, and what students might learn from designing a game (as opposed to merely playing one). Plus, you'll have another free tool in your toolbox that you can use in your teaching, along with an accompanying website dedicated to teachers that provides additional resources for teaching with the game (http:// http://gamestarmechanic.com/teachers).

***Reading Discussions* – 25%:** Engaging in dialogue with other students to discover critical issues and questions related to the course topic is a central component of this course. Discussions typically cover content included in the textbook or assigned readings provided through supplemental course resources. A typical Reading Discussion requires 4-6 posts: one initial response to the discussion prompt, followed by 3-5 responses to other students' posts and replies. Prompts will be available well in advance of the deadline. Please post early so that others may reply. I offer a blanket, 24-hour grace period on all discussion deadlines in case of technical difficulties or unforeseen circumstances. This grace period means that posts made 24 hours after a deadline won't be counted late. However, if you habitually wait until the grace period to make your posts, you will risk missing a post due to technical difficulties. **Be advised:** *There's no grace on the grace period.*

***Design Discussions* – 25%:** In addition to discussions about the readings for the course, you'll work through exercises and activities that will facilitate the development of your Design Project. You'll post the products or results of four of these activities to a discussion forum for comments/feedback on your design. A typical Design Discussion requires the initial post with your design activity "product" or results, followed by 4-5 responses to other students' products or posts. Details on each design task/activity are provided in the Design Project Assignment posted in eCollege under Week 1. Please post on time so that others may reply. The 24-hour grace period for discussions explained above does apply to both Design and Reading Discussions.

Design Project – 40%: The major project for this course is an instructional design project that integrates a game or simulation into a learning experience for students. You may select an existing game/simulation and design instruction around it; you may design a new game/simulation; or you may modify an existing game/simulation. Likewise, you may design instruction that has students creating, modify, or analyzing a game/simulation as a means of constructing knowledge. The final product for this Design Project is an instructional design document (IDD), which will also include a game design document (GDD) as a component. Weekly exercises, some of which involve peer feedback via the Design Discussions described above, will help shape your thinking and your design. However, these exercises serve only as checkpoints in the design process. You are expected to synthesize findings and feedback from these exercises into your design document as you develop it throughout the term.

Timely submission of assignments: Assignments MUST be completed and submitted by the designated due dates, in the designated location. Full credit cannot be earned by late or incomplete assignments. Assignments may lose up to 10% of their possible value each day late if submitted after the posted due date/time. (e.g. Assignments can lose all of their value at 10 days past due.) Further, late assignment submissions may be rejected at the instructor's discretion. Assignments involving peer participation or review, such as threaded discussions, cannot be made up after the participation period has ended and the rest of the class has moved on.

Grading

Assignment	**Percentage**	**Grade**
Game Playtesting Activity	10%	A 90-100% B 80-89% C 70-79% D 60-69% F 59% or less
Reading Discussions	25%	
Design Discussions	25%	
Design Project	40%	

Grade of "X" (Incomplete) - In accordance with the Academic Procedures stated in the TAMU-C Catalog, "students, who because of circumstances beyond their control, are unable to attend classes during finals week or the preceding three weeks will, upon approval of their instructor, receive a mark of 'X' (incomplete) in all courses in which they were maintaining passing grades." The mark of "X" will only be considered in strict compliance with University Policy upon submission of complete medical or other relevant documentation.

ETEC ePORTFOLIO for MS/MEd in Educational Technology

Students pursuing the MS/MEd degree in Educational Technology Leadership (EDTE) program ***and*** the MS/MEd degree in Educational Technology Library Science (ETLS) are now required to submit an electronic portfolio prior to graduation. This requirement

does not pertain to students taking ETEC courses as an elective for other programs, or to those pursuing only the School Library Certification who have already earned a masters degree.

Many courses in ETEC and LIS programs have identified artifact(s) that should be included in the eportfolio to provide evidence of acquired and developing knowledge, skills, and philosophical approaches. In courses where recommended artifacts are not identified, it is the student's responsibility to *collect* artifacts throughout the course and appropriately *select* which artifacts to include in the eportfolio. This includes courses from other departments and/or institutions for which the student is receiving credit towards the ETEC masters degree. For example, if a student takes courses in ELED, EDAD, MGMT, or TDEV and applies credits earned toward their ETEC masters degree, the student should include artifacts from those courses in their ETEC eportfolio.

For **this class**, the required artifacts are

- Design Project
- Selects 2-3 artifacts from the following: reflections on Gamestar Mechanic Playtesting and exercises posted for Design Discussions

Newly admitted majors in the program should contact Dr. Mary Jo Dondlinger, coordinator of the ETEC program, for more information on how to get started with the ETEC ePortfolio. If you plan to major in the program, but have not yet applied, you are strongly encouraged to do so as soon as possible. Please contact MaryJo.Dondlinger@tamuc.edu for more information about the program's portfolio requirement.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:
https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements

LMS Browser Support:
https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:
https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu**.**

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport

Interaction with Instructor Statement

The instructor is available via a variety of avenues. If you have a general question about the syllabus, class content, or anything that you would typically ask aloud in a traditional classroom environment, please do so in the Q&A Forum so that others might benefit from and participate in the exchange. If it's not something of general interest to others in the course, or involves personal concerns (i.e. grades, progress, etc.), send me via private e-mail. I check my TAMUC email daily during the week; emails sent via D2L go to this address. If you have a pressing concern on the weekend, please call or text me.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Scholarly Expectations

Work submitted at the graduate level is expected to demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills and be of significantly higher quality than work produced at the undergraduate level. To achieve this expectation, all students are responsible

for giving and getting peer feedback of their work prior to submitting it for a grade. Students are also expected to resolve technical issues, be active problem solvers, and embrace challenges as positive learning opportunities. Additionally, educational technology professionals must be able to work cooperatively and collaboratively with others—skills which students are expected to practice in this course. Students are expected to ask for help when they need it and offer help when they notice someone in need.

Timeliness

Because an 8-week term goes by quickly, assignments must be submitted by the designated due dates. Full credit cannot be earned by late or incomplete assignments. Assignments may lose up to 10% of their possible value each day late if submitted after the posted due date/time. (e.g. Assignments can lose all of their value at 10 days past due.) Many assignments involve peer review, which involves posting the assignment prior to or by the submission date. You will have plenty of notification and time to complete course assignments. If you know you are going to be out of town and unable to access a computer, plan ahead. Also plan ahead if there is a chance you might lose power, Internet access, or your available technology.

Time Commitment

In a graduate level course, it is a reasonable and accepted expectation that a student will spend between three and four hours outside of class for each hour spent in class that lasts 15 weeks. This applies to online and web-enhanced courses just as it does to a traditional course. The activities in this course are based on a 8-week instruction schedule, which cuts the number of weeks in half, thereby doubling the weekly time expectation. An understanding of this expectation can help serve as a gauge for you of how much time you will need to allow for and devote to each course.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook.
http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx

The *syllabus/schedule are subject to change.*

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:
https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the Attendance webpage and Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.
http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx

http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03
Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf

http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148

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Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:
http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

AI use policy

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements

and follow their instructors 'guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty

13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Because this course runs on a compressed, 8-week schedule, we'll be completing the full-semester equivalent of 2-weeks of work each week. Please note that the week runs from Monday through Sunday, except for the last week of class, which ends on ***Friday, Week 8***. If you typically have more time for your class work on the weekend, look ahead and try to accomplish some of the work coming up in the first half of the week rather than falling behind by completing the first half work the following weekend.

Week	Activity	Due Dates
1 8/25-31	Introductions	Post by Tues.
	Reading Discussion 1: Features of Game and Learning Design (Ch. 1-2 & Knizia essay in *Rules of Play*; Instructional Design Fusion's "Video Round-up on Games for Learning")	Initial post by Thurs; replies to 3-5 classmates' posts by Sun.
	Playtesting Activity: Play the first 2 quests in Gamestar Mechanic	Submit reflections on your experience to Journal 1 by Sun.
	Design Project: Complete task 1	by Sun.

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Week	Activity	Due Dates
2 9/1-7	**Reading Discussion 2**: Exploring & Defining Play (Ch. 3, 4, & 22 in *Rules of Play*; NIFP's "Patterns of Play"; Vygotsky's "Role of Play in Development")	Initial post by Thurs; replies to 3-5 classmates' posts by Sun.
	Playtesting Activity: Complete quests 3-5 in Gamestar Mechanic.	Submit reflections on your experience to Journal 2 by Sun.
	Design Project: Complete task 2	by Sun
3 9/8-14	**Reading Discussion 3**: Defining Games and Simulations (Ch. 7 & 8 in *Rules of Play*; Becker & Parker's "A Simulation Primer"; Gredler's "Games and Simulations and their Relationship to Learning")	Initial post by Thurs; replies to 3-5 classmates' posts by Sun.
	Design Project: Complete task 3.	Post results to forum for Design Discussion 1 in Week 4 by Sun.
4 9/15-21	**Reading Discussion 4**: Core Design Concepts (Ch. 5, 6, & 9 in *Rules of Play*; Csikzentmihalyi's TED Talk on "Flow"; "Grand Theft Education")	Initial post by Thurs; replies to 3-5 classmates' posts by Sun.
	Design Discussion 1: Post 3-5 comments on classmates game design exercise	Post comments for 4-5 classmates by Wed.
	Design Project: Complete task 4.	Post results to forum for Design Discussion 2 in Week 5 by Sun.
5 9/22-28	**Reading Discussion 5**: Goals, Rules, and Outcomes (Ch. 11-13 in *Rules of Play;* McGonigal's TED Talk "Gaming can make a better world")	Initial post by Thurs; replies to 3-5 classmates' posts by Sun.
	Design Discussion 2: Post comments on classmates design document draft	Post comments for 3-5 classmates by Wed.
	Design Project: Complete task 5.	Post results to forum for Design Discussion 3 in Week 6 by Sun.
6 9/29-10/5	**Design Discussion 3**: Post comments on classmates prototype/playtest results	Post comments for 3-5 classmates by Wed.
	Design Project: Complete task 6	Post results to Design Discussion 4 in Week 7 by Sun.
7 10/6-12	**Design Discussion 4**: Provide feedback on classmates' Design Projects	Post comments for 3-5 classmates by Wed.
	Submit final **Design Project** (may be modified from feedback received in Design Discussion 4)	Submit final draft to Design Project Dropbox by Sunday.
8 10/13-17	**Reading Discussion 6**: Course reflection/*post mortem*	Initial post by Wed; replies to 3-5 classmates' posts by Fri.

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