

Syllabus

USC School of Cinematic Arts
Interactive Media & Games Division
Creative Media & Behavioral Health Center

CTIN 599 – Interactive Entertainment Intersections: Neuroscience, Public Health and Medicine | Spring 2015/ 2 Units

“Mental health ultimately means that an individual, through rich emotion affirming encounters with living, has integrated his or her life in such a way that the emergent self-structures, deeply affective, can steer a satisfying, cognitive course through future emotional jungles of lived lives.” – Jaak Panksepp (2009, pp.6-7)

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will give students an overview of foundational concepts required for design, development and evaluation of interactive entertainment and transmedia-based interventions at the intersection of neuroscience, public health and medicine. Students will develop a unique transdisciplinary perspective of intervention rationale and impact related to wellness, illness and resilience, following a trajectory of critical periods of life and living. They will develop critical reading abilities, writing skills, and experience analysis and synthesis skills.

COURSE OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this course is to prepare students for transdisciplinary collaboration with teams of artists, designers, scientists, health professionals, and engineers, whose mission is to develop and evaluate interventions focused on improving human health and the experience of living.

Students will obtain basic mastery of core concepts in the field, including challenges and opportunities. They will acquire necessary skills for analyzing prior art and for proposing future work through a transdisciplinary lens, which will integrate their own skills and experiences. Students will learn how to apply a common philosophical and theoretical framework that underlies intervention design and evaluation. They will practice conducting literature reviews from diverse fields, conducting design analyses, and synthesizing concepts from multiple disciplines. Students will acquire a basic understanding of study design, instrument selection, and ethics.

Course Requirements & Activities

READINGS/RESOURCES

Assigned readings will be available via Blackboard and ARES. They will be organized as required vs. recommended. In addition to readings, resources such as websites, videos, and interactive works will be made available. Such works are not considered optional or supplemental, but are extremely critical for experiential design processes. A sample reading list is included in the Readings Appendix.

% of Grade	
4 written assignments (I=5%, II=10%, III=10% IV=10%)	35
1 take-home exam	30
2 group projects (I=10%, II=10%)	20

Final digital portfolio	5
Participation	10
TOTAL	100

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be asked to complete 4 key writing assignments (see COURSE SCHEDULE) that will exercise existing knowledge and skills, and incorporate interpretations of readings and experiences. These assignments are meant to sharpen their *critical, analytical, integrative* and *empathic* skills. The types of written assignments represent common types of written documents students will need to prepare for team science, such as sections in grant proposals, internal communications, results report preparation, scholarly publications, and essential documents for research that involves human subjects. Such documents involve basic science writing, technical writing, or translation to lay audience language. Students are required to submit these documents on time in Microsoft Word format in order to be eligible for full credit. Students will be provided with constructive criticism and comments toward final revisions of the documents for assignments I-III and will receive a preliminary grade, which may be improved with a final re-write. All re-writes will be due by the last day of class to be included in the Final Digital Portfolio (see below) for grading.

Proper authorship and attribution of creative works is required, including students' own original work. Students are strongly encouraged to use reference management software, such as Endnote, RefWorks, Mendeley** or Zotero and to adhere to a recognized style, such as APA, IEEE, MLA, Chicago, or AMA.

Point Allocation for Individual Written Assignments

- 50% for intellectual merit
- 40% for clarity, style, and organization
- 10% of points for submitting on time

TAKE-HOME EXAM

Students will be assigned questions and short essay topics, in the form of challenges, which will be announced three weeks before the exam is due. In order to respond to the exam, students will have to have reviewed all required and some recommended readings, and are expected to do some additional research on their own. The exam requires a written narrative with links to supplemental materials to illustrate their response to the challenge, such as video, games, art and any other media. Students will be able to choose between multiple challenges and can work together to review works, but each one must make, and document, their unique contribution in their own exam. The exam is expected to stimulate a deeper review and reflection of the chosen challenge area, with an opportunity for the student to exercise their creative, critical, analytical and synthetic skills on-demand. Students will not be judged on their mastery of concepts, as much as their ability to pull things together and guide the reader to see something in a completely new way. The reader must be persuaded on what is interesting, what is valuable, and/or what is worth knowing using both evidence and opinion. Students who receive at least a B- grade on their exam may be provided comments toward a re-write of their exam. Students who receive less than a B- on their can choose another challenge topic and submit it with their Digital Portfolio, with a 10% deduction on the exam grade.

Sample challenge topics:

- Describe/critique the shortcomings of obesity interventions using games in children and/or

adolescents.

- Critique popular design strategies for sound-based feedback in movement disorders.
- Choose a popular off-the-shelf game and explain how its design promotes, enables, discourages or encourages prosocial behavior.
- Describe various parameters of intersubjectivity in a given scenario? Where do the core interactions lie? Who has agency/when? How do the subjects enter, exit and navigate the relationship?

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Point Allocation for Take-Home Exam

- 70% for intellectual merit
- 20% for clarity, style and organization
- 10% of points for submitting on time

GROUP PROJECTS

Values-at-Play Project

Values-at-play cards [see <http://valuesatplay.org/grow-a-game-overview>] are commonly used as a design method for integrating social values into an interactive experience, such as a boardgame or a prototype for a digital game, or other type of interactive entertainment experience. Students will be asked to prepare a simple paper, playable prototype of an experience that has a beginning, middle, and end, or that is comprised of one round of play that may introduce a larger, more complex topic through assigned topic and constraint cards. This exercise will be

completed in randomly assigned teams and students must provide written instructions on how to play the game. The experience should take participants no more than 10 minutes to complete. Teams will be expected to test each others' prototypes and provide feedback throughout the semester and present the prototype to the instructor by appointment. Final playables will be included in the Digital Portfolio (see below) and be available to the public on the final day of the semester. Students will be given a brief survey to rate their team members on their team contribution. Some video documentation of this assignment for the Digital Portfolio, even if shot through a cell phone, is highly recommended.

Point Allocation for Values-at-Play Project (includes rating by classmates)

- 30% for broader impact
- 30% for quality of experience design
- 30% for collaboration
- 10% for documentation process (instructions, ratings, notes)

Experience Observation and Analysis Project

Students will be asked to video record one of their classmates using a full-body game title or other interactive entertainment experience (e.g., mixed reality, augmented reality) and to volunteer to be taped for one of their classmates to video record them for their chosen experience. Observers will be asked to code the video using a simple qualitative method supplied by the instructor and provide a short objective and subjective summary of the observed experience. The participant will be asked to do the same for their own video. Both parties should remain blind to each other's coding and analysis. Results will be made available to classmates for review, unless participants experience regret

or embarrassment after reviewing their session. Students are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity during this project. Students will also be given a brief survey to rate their Observer.

Point Allocation for Experience Observation and Analysis Project

(includes rating by classmates)

- 30% qualitative coding quality/attention to detail
- 60% for analytical summary insight
- 10% for ethical/professional conduct

DIGITAL PORTFOLIO

The instructor will provide students with feedback on most written and group assignments so that students can complete a personal portfolio that contains their semester's work. The digital portfolio must include a public presence, which could be a WordPress site, Facebook Page, Tumblr site, traditional web site, or other tool/medium that contains a curated glimpse of their projects. Students are not required to make the works and paper publicly available in their entirety, but a visitor must be able to quickly understand what their skills, experience, analytical and integrative capabilities are. Students should think of this as their collaboration portal – not a dumping ground. What would others like to know about you as a future collaborator? In addition, students will be required to provide the instructor with a digital folder of all revised assignments, neatly organized in subfolder by assignment name.

Point Allocation for Digital Portfolio

- 50% for quality of presentation
- 50% for quality of content
- (late submission loses 1% per day)

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Although student physical presence may not always be possible in the class, absenteeism will naturally result in student inability to meet course objectives. If a student can't be there for a class, but can participate virtually, we may be able to connect them via videoconference. Students are encouraged to participate virtually if they have a cold or something that can be transmitted to others. Participation in playing the Brain Architecture game is mandatory and if students cannot make it to that class, they are required to find two people who can play the game with them outside of class during a time convenient to the instructor. Students are also required to participate and help organize the Open House of the last day of class, which will be open to the public, and will include community members from academia, healthcare, and industry who are invited to review, discuss and critique their work. Unexcused absences or regular tardiness will affect this portion of student grade and bring down the overall grade. If students have an unavoidable conflict, please contact the instructor via email or phone as far in advance as possible.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious

academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information*

<http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Notes:

****** *I personally have used all of these and prefer Mendeley for my own work for the following reasons: a) you can set up a watch folder and dump all your files in it and it will automatically index them, often correctly if they contain correct bibliographic data; b) it will nicely rename all your files in a format you can quickly sort, such as name, year and title and even organize by folders; c) you can make a new entry by just inserting a doi number.*