

The Evolution of Tabletop Game Design Course Syllabus

Instructor: Freddy Reiber

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1 Course Overview

The Evolution of Tabletop Game Design is a 1 unit course under the UCI's UTeach program, and is taught by Freddy Reiber. In this course students will learn the history of analog games, and how they have evolved over time. Students will also understand the "inner-workings" of game design and how they relate to create a enjoyable experience. Finally, students will explore the cultural impact of tabletop games and how game design intersects goals, meanings and narratives. To complete these learning objectives students will be asked to interact with specific games in a number of ways. Significant portions of class time will also be dedicated to discussion to help facilitate learning.

2 Course Work

2.1 Expected Work

For this course, you will be expected to show up to all class periods with the weeks assignment completed. The assignments will revolve around interacting with our game that is the main focus of study. These could include playing the, reading the rules, or watching a review or other players participate in playing the game. The full list of assignments can be found in the schedule. You must complete the assignment before class that week. For the games that are not being played online, a class copy will be provided with groups able to loan it for a day. Students may also play the game on Tabletop Simulator. Students will also be expected to participate in class discussions, which will be based off of that weeks assignment. Students will also be asked to, during the discussion, use a "notecard" system for participation. Optional readings will also be supplied that will expand students understanding of the topics and further academic discussion. Finally, students will be expected to participate in a quarter long game of Diplomacy.

2.2 Grading

This course is graded using the Pass/No Pass system. In order to pass the class students will be expected to attend and participate in 8 out of 10 lectures and lessons, with no attendance being take on the first week. Participation is graded by completing the "notecard" for the class. At the beginning of class, each student will be given a notecard and asked to write down their name. During class discussions, questions, students will be asked to write down (at least one) meaningful comment about the class discussion or activity. This can a question or discussion point that you were unable say due to time. It could also be a reaction to the course material, activity or something another student said. The cards will then be collected at the end of class, with participation being given as long as the card is filled out. In the case of student absence, students can make up a missing class period by writing a small report (300 words) on one of the readings and the game being discussed.

2.3 Academic Honesty

I am unsure how one would be able to cheat in this course as their are no collected artifacts, however, Academic Honesty is a severe offense. If a breach of Academic Honesty does occur, disciplinary action will be based on the UCI Academic Senate policies on Academic Honesty, which is automatically assumed you will have read. Please refer to the 2012-2013 UCI General Catalogue or the section website for a detailed description of the policy in the US 1 Reader.

3 Course Policies

3.1 Materials

For all assignments materials will be provided free of charge. However, for two gameplay assignments no free online version exists. In this instance, two options are provided. The first is to play the game in-person, with the class provided copy. This is the recommended option, as playing in person provides a unique experience from playing online. The second option is to procure Tabletop Simulator (20\$) and play the games online.

3.2 Course website

All course materials will be available on the course website. This includes the assignments, lecture slides, tutorial videos. The URL is <https://freddyreiber.info/uni7.html>.

3.3 Discord

The course will have a Discord server for finding groups to play games with, discuss things with, etc. To access the server click [here](#).

3.4 Classroom culture

Our goal in the classroom is to create an environment that is friendly and inclusive of everyone. To that end, exclusionary and dehumanizing language will not be tolerated. Additionally, students are expected to behave in a manner that helps facilitate discussion. While disagreements and opposing perspectives are encouraged, being disrespectful or dismissive is not. Please consult UCI's Student Code of Conduct to see detailed outlines of what constitutes appropriate classroom behavior [here](#).

4 Miscellaneous Information

4.1 Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Disability Services Center at (949) 824-7494 or [here](#) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. It will also be helpful to discuss privately with me any specific needs that may prove helpful.

4.2 Add/Drop Policy

The Add/Drop Policy for this course is that Adds and Drops must be submitted prior to the end of the second week of classes. No drops will be accepted after Week 2.

4.3 UTeach Course Credit

UCI students may take at most two UTeach seminars in their entire time as an undergrad. The registrar won't prevent you from enrolling in a third, but the third one (and any others) will show up on your transcript as an "unauthorized repeat."

5 Covid-19

5.1 Attendance Policy

Do not attend your in-person class if you have COVID-19, if you are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, if you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms, if you need to care for an individual with COVID-19, or have other health concerns related to COVID-19.

5.2 Missing assignments due to Covid

If a class period must be missed, students are given two options. As mentioned in the syllabus, students are required to attend and participate in 8 of the 10 course meetings. If students don't anticipate missing more than that, no action is needed to pass the course. In the case in which the student is out of class for more than 2 weeks, students will be asked to do the make up assignment detailed in the expected work section.

5.3 Online School

In the instance in which we are asked to move to online instruction, or the instructor is unable to teach, due to Covid, we will hold class online through Zoom, during the same time until in person teaching is permitted. If we are asked to move fully online, it is likely that the course structure and content will shift.

6 Course Content

Introductions & The MDA Design Model - Syllabus info, course introductions and expectations, background on games discussion, The MDA Design Model.

Wargames & Diplomacy - Early wargame history, Diplomacy's mechanics, Distrust and the Cold War. Assignment: Begin playing Diplomacy online, available [here](#)

Role Playing Games & Dungeons and Dragons - Wargame inspiration, role-playing, traditional fantasy, and the Satanic Panic. Assignment: Watch some Critical Role

Early Thematic Games & Cosmic Encounter - Thematic design, asymmetric design, and science fiction Assignment: Play Cosmic Encounter in person or on TTS.

Collectable Card Games & MtG - Replay value, luck vs skill, secondary market, and lifestyle games. Assignment: Play some Magic: The Gathering on [MTGA](#).

Euro Games Part 1 & Catan - Eurogame mechanics, mechanic focused design, and Catan's impact. Play Catan in person or [online](#).

Euro Games Part 2 & Brass Birmingham - Capitalism and the impact of theme. Assignment: Read and understand the rules of Brass Birmingham available [here](#)

Cooperative Games & Pandemic - Cooperation in games and the quarterbacking problem. Assignment: Play Pandemic in person or online.

Legacy Games & Pandemic Legacy/Gloomhaven - Lasting decisions in games and modes of storytelling. Assignment: Watch a review of Gloomhaven or Pandemic Legacy.

Wrap Up - Closing discussion, and voting game.

7 Catch All-Clause

All information in this syllabus is subject to change. In such an event, an email to all enrolled students, and an announcement in class with the changes will be made.