



“Lightbulb to Meeples: Game Design from Ideation to Prototype”

Time: MW 8:00-10:00 pm EST

Duration: Aug 22-Oct 3, 2022

Industry Expert: Damon Stone, Game Designer (Android: Netrunner; A Game of Thrones LCG; Call of Cthulhu LCG)

Academic Expert: Andrew D. Devenney, Associate Director of CLGS, Co-owner and Publisher of Superhero Necromancer Press

Lightbulb to Meeples is a six-and-a-half week synchronous online course focused on the overall progression of designing a tabletop board game from that first idea to a fully playable prototype. You'll be generating ideas, working the design process, and finishing with a prototype of your game that will be ready for external testing while having developed a process that you will be able to apply to any future game.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will develop a table top game idea.
2. Students will design a tabletop game in a genre of their choosing
3. Students will explain the design concepts in their game
4. Students will modify their games based on best iterative practices within the game design field.

Course Schedule

Week One

Mon, Aug 22: Tabletop Board Games

- Introduction to Course & Gather Platform
- What Do YOU Need Out of the Class?
- Game Design and the Importance of Rapid Prototyping
- Chicken or Egg: What comes first, Theme or Mechanics?
 - *Assignment - Decide on a theme. “What is this game about?”*

Wed, Aug 24: Ideation

- Narrowing of Mechanics
- Research
- Selection of minor mechanical systems
- "Screen Test" Prototype
 - Deciding on UX
 - Adjusting for game flow
 - *Assignment - Create a High Concept Proposal. “What type of game is this? What are the players trying to do?”*

Week Two

Mon, Aug 29: Quirks of Design

- Embrace Impermanence
 - Assume Countless Revisions
 - Expect to create several games to get the right game
- Make Decisions
- Embrace Failure

Wed, Aug 31: Proof of Concept

- Matching Mechanics with Theme
- Elegance through Simplicity
- Complexity Through Interaction
- What is a Proof of Concept Prototype
 - How to create a prototype
 - *Assignment - Create a Proof of Concept Prototype and write out a general rules guideline*

Week Three

Mon, Sept 5: Labor Day – NO CLASS

Wed, Sept 7: Playtesting: what is it and how do we do it?

- What Testing Can/Can't Tell Us
- How to Ask for Feedback
- Types of Testing
- "Learn to Play" Testing with Proof of Concept Prototypes from Aug 31 assignment.
- *Assignment - Additional Testing: 1 "Learn to Play" Session and 2 "Open Playtests" with at least 1 full play through, all with reports.*

Week Four

Mon, Sept 12 Evaluation and Iteration

- How to Interpret Feedback
 - It's Not Personal it's Just Data
- Review Playtest Reports from Sept 7 assignment
- Comparison of Prototype to Concept Proposal
- Comparison of Feedback to Concept Proposal
- Learning from your Journey, Success and Failures
- *Assignment - Reorient or Refine the Prototype and track changes, reasons for making those changes, and directions considered or discarded*

Wed, Sept 14: Playtesting

- Review Designer Journals from Sept 12 assignment
- Troubleshoot
- Open Playtest of Refined Prototype from Sept 12 assignment
- *Assignment - 1 "Guided Playtest" Session, and 1 "Open Playtest" Session, both with reports. Refine the Prototype and track changes, reasons for making those changes, and directions considered or discarded*

Week Five

Mon, Sept 19: Design and Development

- Review reports and journals from Sept 14 assignment
- Troubleshooting
- Difference Between Design and Development
- Where's the Fun?
- Assignment - Evaluate Current Prototype and Reorient or Refine

Wed, Sept 21: Rules Writing

- Crafting a Language
- Mean What You Say
- Golden Rules
- Intuitive Organization
- *Assignment - write a rulebook for your game*

Week Six

Mon, Sept 26: Playtesting

- Blind Playtest prototypes from Sept 19 assignment and give feedback
- *Assignment - Refine prototype and rulebook*

Wed, Sept 28: Where's the Balance?

- The "Problem" with "Balance"
- Perception IS Reality
- Assigning Numbers, Adjusting Probability, and Relative Power Levels
- *Assignment - Add, adjust, or solidify the numbers*

Week Seven

Mon, Oct 3: What Next

- Review
- Game Development
- Creating a Pitch
 - Elevator Pitch
 - Speed Dating Pitch
 - Full Pitch with Play Through
- Finding Opportunities
 - Design Contests
 - Convention Appointments
 - Open Calls
 - Blind Submissions
 - Networked Submissions

Assessment

In order to certify your completion of this course, you must finish each of the six core Challenge activities listed below before the end of the course:

- Creating Mechanics!
- Creating Theme!
- Creating Rules!
- Creating a Game!
- Modify Your Game!
- Creating a Pitch!

Finishing the Challenges requires submitting a 1-2 page summary of your creative activities for each Challenge by the appropriate class period deadline. Instructors will provide feedback on your submissions, either in class or in writing or both (depending on the nature of the Challenge assignment).