

Introduction to Game Studies ART 108

Spring 2026 Section 01 Hybrid 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/21/2026

Contact Information

Instructor: James Morgan

Office Location: Art 325 / Zoom

Email: james.morgan@sjsu.edu

It is best to contact me via email, not CANVAS

Discord @rubaiyat

Office Hours: M 1530-1730

Class Days/Time: Section 1 M/W 6:00 pm - 7:15 pm, Art 135

Section 80 Friday 12:30 - 3:15pm, Online

Course Information

Introduction to the systems, design, history, and cultural analysis of games with emphasis on critical studies, development, technological literacy, markets and impact on society.

Prerequisite: Upper division standing or instructor consent.

Letter Graded

Course Description and Requisites

Introduction to the systems, design, history, and cultural analysis of games with emphasis on critical studies, development, technological literacy, markets and impact on society.

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Classroom Protocols

- Students are responsible for all information presented in lectures and demonstrations, and through assigned readings and web related research.
- Students will present and critique their projects, drafts and proposals in class and on-line.
- Students are responsible for actively engaging in the course material by completing all course assignments and readings.
- In the course of the semester we will undoubtedly talk about things, which are not in the mainstream and may be controversial. If at any time you find the subject or content of this course objectionable you are encouraged bring that into the discussion. If you find a presentation offensive you are permitted to quietly, without disrupting the class, excuse yourself. It is then your responsibility to contact the instructor for make-up work.
- Additionally, students are responsible for their own well-being. If you need help, it is your responsibility to ask for it.

Late Assignments

Assignments are to be turned in on time and complete. An assignment will not be considered complete until all elements are uploaded and fully working. Assignments that are turned in on time may be redone for full credit until the last week of class. It is most important to present your work publicly. Note that project presentation days are mandatory, if a project is not presented on a critique day it may be considered late.

Late assignments may receive a one time 10% or one point penalty.

AI Use Policy:

Students may use AI tools in this course unless otherwise specified. Any use of AI must be clearly disclosed, including the tool used and how it contributed to the work. Course projects are designed to be appropriately challenging without requiring AI assistance; therefore, the use of AI will raise expectations for originality, rigor, and overall quality. Undisclosed or misleading use of AI will be treated as a violation of academic integrity.

Program Information

Department Name: Art and Art History

Department Office: ART 116

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/art

Department Email: art@sjsu.edu

Department phone number: 408-924-4325

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

L01 Demonstrate an appreciation for the cultural value of the technologies and strategies used in games through writing and projects;

L02 Investigate and research user experiences of their own games and those of others;

L03 Apply researched information to improve player experience;

L04 Speak and write clearly about their own and others' work;

L05 Demonstrate and apply technological and information literacy;

L06 Translate different kinds of subject matter into gaming environments;

L07 Create original and creative content through the medium of games.

Course Materials

Textbook

Introduction to Game Design, Prototyping, and Development, 3rd Edition, Jeremy Gibson Bond, eText
<https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/introduction-to-game/9780136619918/>

Please also be aware that the library has tremendous resources relating to games and game studies. We have a lib guide at <http://libguides.sjsu.edu/GameStudies>

Other technology requirements:

Major software products are listed here so that you may make the decision now whether you are willing to sign up for these accounts. Generally, these software packages have been vetted and are considered safe, however many of them involve online connections and content that is not controlled by the faculty member or school. This is considered fair notice, before the drop date and that there is no penalty for withdrawing from the course at this point.

ADOBE CC - this is provided free to students; you must sign up for an adobe account using your sjsu email and log in via the enterprise option. You can then download the Adobe Cloud Manager and continue to download any of the suite of programs. <https://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/adobe/students/index.html>

Discord - this communication tool requires you to create an account. You can then join our semi-private server. You will have control over what handle we see and will be able to easily communicate with your group and the class.

Github - you will need to create an account but are then able to host projects and collaborate with others as well as host public web pages. This is where our portfolios will live.

Trello – you will need to make an account to be able to share project management with your team.

Unity – you will need to make an account to be able to download and run Unity. This is required for the digital prototype in Unity.

Piskel.com - you may need to make an account or download this 2D art tool. This tool makes animations MUCH easier.

Online blog software wordpress.com or medium.com, in order to post your blog publicly, you will need an account. You may use other software, but the requirement is that all of your posts are public, that you can link directly to each post, and that previous posts are easily findable from an existing post.

jackbox.tv – online game play, if you want to host games, you will need to have purchased the game.

Various online game sites. You are always encouraged to question the security of your data and be conservative in creating accounts, but we shall be doing this several times during the semester.

Also, all students will be required to get a standard deck of playing cards. (4 suits, 52 cards total but may have 2 jokers.)

Course Requirements and Assignments

Game labs- 20%

Game labs are structured play or design sessions often followed by brief reflective writing, and in-class discussion. These sessions are done as a group and are very difficult to make up. LO2, LO3.

Blog - 20%

Students will be asked to maintain a weblog to publicly post writings and responses to readings. Students will write no less than 200 words (approximately one 'typed' page and include images). Points will be given for both postings and peer review. LO1, LO4, LO5.

Participation - 10%

Active participation within groups and in discussion is expected. Performance can be tracked in CANVAS beginning the second week of class. LO4

Game 1: paper prototype – 10%

Design, play test and turn in a non-digital game using the readings and your group as a development guide. Games will be evaluated according to the game rubric. LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5, LO6, LO7.

Game 2: videogame prototype - 10%

Design, play test and turn in a digital game using the readings and your group as a development guide. We shall use Unity for this prototype so that we can see the advantages of a toolkit. Games will be evaluated according to the game rubric. LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5, LO6, LO7.

Exam -10%

The Exam will cover essential vocabulary and concepts. The class will work on a study guide throughout the semester. LO1.

Final - Paper, Presentation, or Game - 20%

The final project of this course will be negotiated between the individual and the instructor. It may be a formal paper, presentation (video or in person). LO7.

A quick note about final presentations, I typically reserve the last day of class and the final period for final presentations. Students are asked to be present at two of these dates and give feedback in addition to presenting their project at one. You may choose which two of the four sessions to attend, two will be on campus and two online. This is intended to give you flexibility during finals.

✓ Grading Information

Projects

Each project will be evaluated per the following formula:

Completeness(1/3) + Function(1/3) + Aesthetics(1/3)

Determination of Grades

- Grades will be determined based on the sum of the areas listed above according to the chart below.
- Extra credit options may be offered or requested.
- Late work may be graded down if submitted within a reasonable time, or not accepted if submitted too late. This especially applies to group work.

Late assignments will be accepted under unusual, extenuating, or emergency circumstances. Certain assignments, like lecture responses are intended to be done the week that they are assigned. We also do exercises in class for the first 10 weeks these are intended to be done in class with peers and are difficult to make up.

Numeric grade equivalents:

93% and above A

92% - 90% A minus

89% - 88% B plus

87% - 83% B

82% - 80% B minus

79% - 78% C plus

77% - 73% C

72% - 70% C minus

69% - 68% D plus

67% - 63% D

62% - 60% D minus

below 60% F

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

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| Mon Jan 26, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 1: What is a Game | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Jan 28, 2026 | Assignment Blog Post 1: Internet Arcade | due by 11:59pm |
| | Quiz Chapter 7: Acting like a designer. | due by 11:59pm |
| | Discussion Topic Post Your Race to the Finish Game | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Feb 2, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 2: Session Reports and Boardgame Geek | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Feb 4, 2026 | Assignment Blog Post 2: Gam Lab I | due by 11:59pm |
| | Quiz Chapter 8: Design Goals | due by 11:59pm |
| | Assignment Game Lab 1 (card / board) | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Feb 9, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 3: Prototyping and Design | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Feb 11, 2026 | Assignment blog 2 peers done | due by 11:59pm |
| | Quiz Chapter 9: Paper Prototyping | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Feb 16, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 4: Prototyping Part II | due by 11:59pm |
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| Wed Feb 18, 2026 | Assignment Blog Post 3: Prototyping | due by 11:59pm |
| | Quiz Chapter 10: Game Testing | due by 11:59pm |
| | Assignment Paper Prototype | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Feb 23, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 5: Mechanics, Dynamics, Aesthetics | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Feb 25, 2026 | Assignment Blog Post 4: Video Game Lab | due by 11:59pm |
| | Quiz Digital Game Lab (Lab #2) | due by 11:59pm |
| | Assignment paper prototype peer reviews | due by 11:59pm |
| | Quiz Unity Team: Who is your team? | due by 11:59pm |
| Fri Feb 27, 2026 | Quiz MDA Reading Quiz | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Mar 2, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 6: Game Engines | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Mar 4, 2026 | Quiz Chapter 11 & 12 | due by 11:59pm |
| | Assignment Digital Game (design document) | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Mar 9, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 7: History of Video Games | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Mar 11, 2026 | Quiz Chapter 14 & 15 | due by 11:59pm |
| | Discussion Topic Unity: Scene milestone | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Mar 16, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 8: Level Design Patterns | due by 11:59pm |
| | Quiz Chapter 13 Puzzles | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Mar 18, 2026 | Discussion Topic Unity: Animation Milestone | due by 11:59pm |
| Fri Mar 20, 2026 | Discussion Topic Unity Alpha Playtesting: Mar 20 | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Mar 23, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 9: RPG, MMO, Simulation & VR | due by 11:59pm |
| | Discussion Topic Unity: WebGL publish | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Mar 25, 2026 | Discussion Topic Unity Alpha Playtesting: Mar 25 | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Apr 6, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 10: Narrative Architecture | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Apr 8, 2026 | Assignment Blog Post 5: First Playable | due by 11:59pm |
| | Assignment Digital Game: Unity Files | due by 11:59pm |
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| | Quiz Jenkins: Game Design as Narrative Architecture | due by 11:59pm |
| | Discussion Topic Unity Prototype: Turn in and Discussion | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Apr 13, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 11: Serious, Casual and Learning in Games | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Apr 15, 2026 | Assignment Blog Post 6: Video Game Prototype | due by 11:59pm |
| | Quiz Chapters 3, 4 & 5 | due by 11:59pm |
| | Assignment Proposal: Final Project | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Apr 20, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 12: Literacy, Criticism and Science | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon Apr 27, 2026 | Discussion Topic Lecture 13: Fine Art and Games | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed Apr 29, 2026 | Assignment Blog Post 7: JackBox Game | due by 11:59pm |
| Fri May 1, 2026 | Discussion Topic Draft of Final - april 29 / may 1 | due by 11:59pm |
| Sat May 2, 2026 | Quiz Exam Part 2 - Spr 26 | due by 11:59pm |
| | Quiz Game Studies Midterm Spring 26 (part 1: timed) | due by 11:59pm |
| Wed May 6, 2026 | Assignment Blog Post 8: Final Project | due by 11:59pm |
| Fri May 8, 2026 | Discussion Topic May 8 - 1330 (online) Finals | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon May 11, 2026 | Discussion Topic Final May 11 in Art 135 6pm | due by 11:59pm |
| Fri May 15, 2026 | Discussion Topic Final May 15 1pm - 3pm (online) | due by 11:59pm |
| Mon May 18, 2026 | Assignment Blog Post 9: Course Reflection | due by 11:59pm |
| | Assignment final - submit published link here | due by 11:59pm |
| | Discussion Topic Final May 18 (art 135) 530-730pm | due by 11:59pm |