Fun & Games: Motivational Design of User Experiences

COMM 115S
Summer Quarter 2012
Tuesday/Thursday 2:15-3:30
Building 50 (Anthropology), Room 52H

Instructor: Jim Cummings
Office: McClatchy Hall (120), Rm. 300
Office Hours: Wednesday 3:45 – 4:45 (and by appointment)
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Course Description & Goals:

Educators can be found conducting classes in the form of multiplayer games in which completing assignments earns you “experience points” and grades are based on “leveling up.” Biochemists are making simple video games that simulate complex research puzzles in order to crowd-source potential solutions from the kid next door. Various interventions are employing virtual rewards, teams, and reputation markers to incentivize real world behavior ranging from commercial purchases to physical exercise to reductions in energy use.

The above are all examples of motivational design, in which the engaging qualities common to games and other play activities are being leveraged to drive particular behaviors. Using scientific research and industry examples this course will examine the key processes and concepts that make up such designs. The first half of the course will be spent reviewing theories of motivational psychology and communication, to equip us with a more tangible understanding of “engagement”, “fun”, and the features that elicit them. In the latter half of the course we will then consider how these features might be applied to traditionally “not fun” or “non-engaging” experiences and tasks so as to yield desired results. Along the way, we will compare different theoretical approaches to motivation, consider the potential uses of emerging technologies for new motivational designs, and discuss the ethics of designing for behavior change.

In other words, this course will be about:

- Explicating key concepts (“play”, “game”, “fun”, “engagement”, “enjoyment”)
- Examining their potential application for motivating particular behaviors

This course will not be about:

- Game design (at least not explicitly)
- Game theory (the closest we may come is a flirtation with some behavioral economics)
Course Requirements:

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<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Description</td>
<td>July 26</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Presentation</td>
<td>August 14, 16</td>
<td>20% / 30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Write-up</td>
<td>August 16</td>
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Class Participation: While formally a lecture, my goal is for class meetings to be interactive (varying depending on the number of students enrolled and the content for a given day). To this end attendance and participation are mandatory for every class meeting.

Reading Responses: Course readings will consist of a blending of formal academic journal articles and chapters, excerpts from trade books, and video clips. Students will be required to submit a brief reaction paper (1-2 paragraphs reflecting on – not summarizing – the readings assigned for each lecture. These will be due by **9am the day of class**. Responses will be graded as either “√+” (Outstanding, offer particularly novel insights), “√” (Satisfactory, indicates you’ve done the readings and have applied some thought to them) or “√-” (Unsatisfactory).

Final Project: There is no final exam for this class. Instead, the goal is to try to apply the course materials to actual research and/or design projects. Final projects can be completed as either of the following:

- Option 1: **Research Proposal** – A proposal for a research study related to the concepts from this course, including all the sections of a formal research report (Introduction, Methods, Results [Expected], Discussion). Proposals are expected to be 10-12 double-spaced pages.

- Option 2: **Design Proposal** – A design prototype for a potential media intervention, classroom intervention, or business model drawing upon course concepts. Can be either a written design document (10-12 double-spaced pages) **OR** a functional application with a brief write-up (3-4 pages). Group work is encouraged for this option.

A **1-page** description of your intended project will be due on **July 26**. It is highly encouraged that students meet with the instructor prior to this date in order to discuss potential project ideas.

Final projects will have two major components: the write-up and a short presentation. All write-ups will be due on the last day of class (**August 16**). Presentations (Powerpoint, live demos, etc.) will take place during the last two class meetings (**August 14 and 16**). Each presentation will include 10 minutes of presenting followed by 5 minutes of questions and feedback.

NOTE: For research proposals and design documents, write-ups will be worth 30% of your grade while the presentation will be worth 20%. Conversely, for functional demos, the write-up will be worth 20% and the presentation 30%.
Course Schedule (subject to change):

Tuesday, June 26
Introduction: Games Invading Reality (aka The Fun Revolution aka The Gamepocalypse)


Thursday, June 28
The Drive to Play


Tuesday, July 3
Communication Theories of Play and Entertainment


Thursday, July 5
Motivation: Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Everything in Between

Tuesday, July 10
Motivation: Basic Need Satisfaction


Thursday, July 12
Media Enjoyment


Evidence and Advancements” in J. Bryant & P. Vorderer (Eds.), Psychology of Entertainment, (pp. 239-254). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Tuesday, July 17
Engagement, Arousal, & Motivational Activation


Optional: Lang, A. (2006). Using the limited capacity model of motivated mediated message processing to design effective cancer communication messages. Journal of Communication, 56(s1), S57-S80

Thursday, July 19
Gamification: The Hype


Tuesday, July 24
Gamification: Criticisms & Case Studies


**Thursday, July 26**

**Means vs. Outcomes: Persuasion vs. Gamification**


**Tuesday, July 31**

**Nudging Decisions & Behaviors**


VIDEO: Sutherland, R. (2010). Sweat the small stuff. TED. Available at: [http://www.ted.com/talks/rory_sutherland_sweat_the_small_stuff.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/rory_sutherland_sweat_the_small_stuff.html)

**Thursday, August 2**

**The Role of New Technology**


Tuesday, August 7
Ethics & Potential Dangers


Thursday, August 9
Catch-up / Guest Speaker

Tuesday, August 14
Final Project Presentations

Thursday, August 16
Final Project Presentations, Final Projects write-ups due