

Syllabus: CTIN 548

Preparing the Interactive Project (Thesis Prep)

Units: 2

Meets: THUR 12-2 ZML

Peggy Weil & Michael Naimark

Course Objectives

The purpose of this class is to prepare students for the production of the advanced interactive project required in CTIN 555ab. Emphasis will be on understanding the dynamics of “research production,” i.e., between exploring something new and getting something done, with strong encouragement on strategies for doing both. The course will assist students with articulating their vision of their advanced project, assessing the tools and techniques available to them, and reconciling their vision with the realities of time, budget, and other resources.

The first half of the semester is devoted to the evolution of the topic; motivation, definition and focus. The Mid-Term is a roughed-out concept proposal, accompanied by preliminary gathering of research, resources and familiarization with the field. The second half of the semester you gather research, resources and identify advisors and incorporate them into a Final Proposal. The Final Presentation will invite comments to be incorporated into the Final Proposal, handed in on May 5th.

Grading

10% Class Participation

20% Class Assignments

20% Midterm Presentation / Proposal

25% Final Presentation

25% Final Proposal

Course Requirements

Assignments

- All assignments will have clearly stated due dates.
- Work must be brought to class (not submitted by email or put into my mailbox) unless special arrangements are made. If you should require an extension, please make arrangements with me a day before the due date to avoid grading penalties.
- You are responsible for labeling (*your name, date, assignment, class*) and backing up your work.
- *Please proofread your work before handing it in (or posting)!*
- At the discretion of the instructor, the course content and assignments may deviate from the published syllabus.
- *Missing an Exam, Incompletes*

There is no midterm in this course and the final is a presentation rather than a written exam. However, USC standards still hold: The only acceptable excuses for missing an exam (in this case, one of the unit assignments) or taking an incomplete in the course are personal illnesses or a family emergency. Students must inform the professor before the exam and present verifiable evidence in order for a make-up to be scheduled. Students

who with to take incompletes must also present documentation of the problem to the instructor or teaching assistant before final grades are due.

Academic Integrity

The School of Cinema-Television expects the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical performance from USC students. It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one instructor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade and be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. If you have any doubts or questions about these policies, consult “SCAMPUS” and/or confer with the Professor or Department Chair.

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure that the letter is delivered to the Professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30am – 5:00pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Contact Information

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Please put USC in your subject line!

Schedule and Class Organization:

Weeks 1-3

Dreams: Inspiration and Contribution

Weeks 4-5

Methodology

Weeks 6-7

Tools & Resources: Nuts and Bolts

Week 8-9:

Mid Term Presentations

Weeks 10–12

Scope: Focus and Triage

Weeks 13-15

Proposal Presentations & Feedback

May 4 (Finals Week)

Final Proposals Due

January 12: Week 1

Discussion

A thesis topic is a year+ long commitment and journey; what it is about your path that will keep you interested? You need to explore your internal and external motivations:

what are your personal motivations for this avenue of exploration; what in the world begs your invention? What might you contribute to your field?

In-class Brainstorming Exercise: analysis of three objects

Assignment:

- (1) Post a short statement (and your questions) for next week: What is a thesis? Regardless of genre (game, performance, installation, research) what form(s) do you expect to deliver at the end of next year? What are you expect from both this process and the final project?
- (2) Formalize the results of your brainstorming exercise.

January 19: Week 2 - Visiting Speaker: Scott Fisher

Discussion:

(1) What is a Thesis? Scope and Expectations
Department guidelines, advisors, funds, possibilities: Everything you wanted to ask the Department Chair.

(2) What is a Thesis Proposal? Format, Mechanics

Assignment:

- (1) Evaluate your brainstorming exercise and begin to identify topics/genres/
Post assignment on class blog.
- (2) Begin a notebook with the thesis proposal protocols – start your empty slate.

January 26: Week 3

Discussion

Brainstorming: Blue Sky Proposals Freedom vs. Constraints,
Limits and Boundaries: When is it done?

Assignment:

- (1) Visualize your thesis from an experiential p.o.v. What is the User/Viewer Experience? Make sketches, descriptions, models.
- (2) Start visualizing activity around your topic: collect imagery: storyboards, sketches, short films. Keep a detailed bibliography of your sources.

February 2: Week 4

Methodology, Genre and Format 1

February 9: Week 5

Methodology, Genre and Format 2

February 16: Week 6

Tools & Resources: Nuts and Bolts 1
The role of Advisors & Campus Resources.

February 23: Week 7

Tools & Resources: Nuts and Bolts 2

March 2: Week 8

Mid Term Presentations and Discussions 1

March 11: Week 9

Mid Term Presentations and Discussions 2

March 16: Spring Break

March 23: Week 10 (Game Design Conference)

Scope: Focus and Triage 1

Discussion: Prioritization

Assignment

Assess your material, your outlines, your task. Schedule yourself for the rest of THIS term. Identify your audience, potential venues.

March 30: Week 11

Scope: Focus and Triage 2

Assignment: Continue working on your checklist

April 6: Week 12

Scope: Focus and Triage 3

Assignment: Continue working on your checklist

FINAL PROJECTS

The final project proposal must be completed and approved by Finals Week. You must include a written treatment of the project citing similar work in the field and its relationship to your proposed project. You should describe aesthetic issues you will explore, discuss the potential contribution to your field, and describe the specific techniques you will employ to realize your project.

The proposal must also include a storyboard or equivalent, budget, schedule, and supporting materials created by the student demonstrating his/her ability to pursue the project. The faculty committee will make comments and decide whether the student may go forward with his/her project. If the proposal is approved, the student will begin the project. Otherwise, the student must revise and resubmit his/her proposal to the committee.

April 13: Week 13: Presentation 1st Group

April 20: Week 14 : Presentation 2nd Group

April 27: Week 15: Presentation 3nd Group

May 5th (Final Exam Week)

Final Plans Due!!!