BACK TO THE PAST: GAMING AND DESIGN FOR IMMERSIVE ROLE PLAY

HUB XC 410: Sp 2022 M/W 4:30-6:15PM in CGS 315

Courseware: https://learn.bu.edu/ultra/courses/_81291_1/outline

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COMMUNICATION

The best way to reach us is by email. Please allow 24 hours for a response. You in turn are expected to check your BU email daily.

PREREQUISITE

WR 120 or equivalent.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Cross-College Challenge (XCC) offers a unique project-based learning experience in which interdisciplinary student teams from across BU's undergraduate colleges tackle real-world problems. Students learn and develop collaboration, communication, problem-solving and leadership skills. Following an interdisciplinary approach, students are assigned to a diverse project team where they will conduct significant research and address a substantial, compelling challenge. In collaboration with community partners, student teams work on issues in areas such as technology, social impact, education, sustainability, arts communication, or explore enduring human questions such as inequality, social justice and human creativity.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In this game-based course, students will play and then design **an immersive role-playing game** for the **Reacting to the Past (RTTP) consortium**. RTTP uses active, experiential learning to help students engage with important social, political, historical, and cultural debates. Student teams will research, create, playtest, and pitch their own micro-games **based on controversies broadly related to social justice** (for example, suffrage or the Boston busing crisis) and/or focused in the Northeast (ex., Columbus/Indigenous Peoples Day and the Wampanoag people or Yawkey's memory).

Our focus will be on **key moments** -- such as trials, rebellions, strikes, and public debates -- **involving historically marginalized communities** as they pursued their social, economic, and

political rights. Who stood with them? Who opposed them? Why? Who were their leaders, and what methods did they and their opponents use to persuade the undecideds to join their side? What spoken and unspoken rules, customs, interests, and values governed these various parties' decision-making? **How can we use this information to help others learn about these crucial historical moments?**

Research will be conducted in partnership with a number of repositories, archives, and libraries. Ultimately, students will create a game that is playable, meets or exceeds the community partner's expectations, and is, most importantly, fun, dynamic and engaging. **Successful prototypes may be posted on the RTTP Game Library website for use beyond BU. The best project from this class may be further submitted to the annual RTTP game development conference.**

COURSE PLAN AND SPECIFIC LEARNING GOALS

We will begin by playing short historical role-playing games, *Monumental Consequence* and *Paterson, 1913*. Afterwards, everyone will develop ideas for their own games. These should all have the potential to become great games, but all of these ideas will not go forward. Only four will reach the final stage: playtesting. Along the way, teams will form. These teams will carry the project of their choice to completion. Along the way, you shall develop a deeper understanding of:

- The specific historical topics dealt with by those games
- Historical research techniques using primary and secondary sources
- Role-playing game design
- Principles of effective written expression in several genres
- Principles of effective teamwork

HUB UNITS

1. Creativity/Innovation
As teams work on their projects and address specific challenges throughout the semester:

--- Students learn creativity as an iterative process of imagining new possibilities that involves risk-taking, use of multiple strategies, and reconceiving in response to feedback. They will be able to identify individual and institutional factors that promote and inhibit creativity.

--- Students engage in creative activity by conceiving and executing original work as part of their team.

2. Writing Intensive
Students will be given writing instruction and feedback focused on the written documents that are associated with every step of the project. Through this work:

--- Students will be able to craft responsible, considered, and well-structured written arguments, using media and modes of expression appropriate to the situation.

--- Students will be able to read with understanding, engagement, appreciation, and critical judgment.

--- Students will be able to write clearly and coherently in

HUB UNITS

3. Research and Information Literacy

By engaging in substantial research to complete their projects, and following an iterative process for creating a project proposal, completing interim assignments and a final deliverable:

--- Students search for, select, and use a range of publicly available and discipline-specific information sources ethically and strategically to address research questions.

--- Students understand the overall research process and its component parts, formulate good research questions or hypotheses, gather and analyze information, and critique, interpret, and communicate findings.

---The fruits of research will yield the foundation for the team's playable game prototype.

4. Teamwork/Collaboration

Students are assigned to a team and receive explicit training in teamwork. Through this sustained collaboration on the project, and through the completion of a team contract and project plan:

--- Students will learn the characteristics of a well-functioning team.

--- Students will engage the tools and strategies for working successfully on a diverse team, including assigning roles and responsibilities, giving and receiving feedback, and engaging in meaningful group reflection that inspires

COURSE MATERIALS

Books to purchase:

• Treacy, Mary Jane. *Paterson*, *1913: A Labor Strike in the Progressive Era*, WW Norton.
• Proctor, Nicolas W. *Reacting to the Past Game Designer's Handbook*, 4th edition.

Other: Articles and other supplementary materials will be distributed in hard copy and in PDF via Blackboard.

DELIVERABLE

The final deliverable for each team is a playable prototype for an RTTP-style historical micro-game. Each team's prototype will include:
o game overview and game mechanism,
o historical context essay,
o several primary sources,
o several faction and individual role sheets,
o designer's notes for instructor manual.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS
[see p. 6 for detailed descriptions]

❖ Participation – 20% [individual; includes class participation, completion of scaffolded writing tasks, and team participation]

❖ Individual Initial Game Pitch (written and oral) – 5%
❖ Team Contract – 10%
❖ Project Proposal and Preliminary Annotated Bibliography – 10%
❖ Play-testable Prototype Drafts 1 and 2 – 10%
❖ Final Game Prototype with Final Annotated Bibliography – 30%
❖ Showcase Presentation – 5%
❖ Individual Reflection on Lessons Learned – 10%

SCAFFOLDED WRITING TASKS
[these will not receive individual grades but will count toward Participation, which is 20%]

❖ Questionnaire [individual]
❖ Outlines of speeches for *Paterson, 1913* [individual]

❖ Team feedback [individual]
❖ Team progress report [team]
❖ Peer evaluation of prototype drafts 1 and 2 [individual]
❖ Draft showcase materials [team]
❖ Other research and writing exercises as assigned [individual]

LATE WORK POLICY

Major, graded assignments will be downgraded by 1/3 of a letter grade for each calendar day they are late. Each team member, in the case of a late team assignment, will receive the same grade. Ungraded assignments will receive no credit if they are late, half-credit if they are incomplete.

ABSENCES AND LATENESS POLICY

This class requires faithful attendance. Absence from class will compromise learning and teamwork and will jeopardize your grade. More than two absences will bring your Participation grade down by a full letter grade for each absence. More than four absences will cause you to fail the class.

If you plan on being absent for a religious observance or an athletic event, please communicate with us about this at the beginning of the semester and remind us and your teammates as the date approaches.

You must be in the classroom by 4:30 pm. Please plan accordingly. More than three late appearances will count as an unexcused absence and will be penalized in accordance with the policy on absences set out above.

EDITING SKILLS – GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

One of the goals of this class is to help you develop and refine your writing skills. This includes editing skills in the areas of grammar and mechanics. Both will matter when we evaluate your major, graded assignments, especially your Final Game Prototype, which will be delivered to our community partner for possible addition to the RTTP game library and playtesting at the RTTP annual game development conference.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It is your responsibility as a BU student to read and comply with BU's Universal Academic Conduct Code for Undergraduate Students: http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/. **Plagiarism** – the presentation of another's work as your own, even by mistake – is a violation of BU's Academic Conduct Code and may result in failing this course and possible additional penalties.

Please also note rules governing teamwork, specifically:

1. No team member shall intentionally restrict or inhibit another team member's access to team meetings, teamwork-in-progress, or other team activities without the express authorization of the instructor.

2. All team members shall be held responsible for the content of all teamwork submitted for evaluation as if each team member had individually submitted the entire work product of their team as their own work.

RESOURCES

Campus Writing Centers

The Educational Resource Center: https://www.bu.edu/erc/programs/writing/ -- can help with any assignment at any stage of the writing process.
The COM Writing Center: https://www.bu.edu/com/for-current-students/the-com-writing-center/ -- focused on COM assignments but able to help with other types of writing, too.

Office of Disability and Access Services

We assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, especially during these challenging times, please talk to us as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will meet your learning needs and the requirements of the course.

Whether or not you have a documented disability, BU provides many support services that are available to all students. Disability Services (https://www.bu.edu/disability/) is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Disability Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, we invite you to speak with us or to Disability Services.

Behavioral Health Services

BU's Student Health Services provides mental and behavioral health counseling, including dealing with stress and anxiety. Their website is:
http://www.bu.edu/shs/behavioral-medicine/. Their phone number is: 617-353-3569.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

❖ **Participation – 20% [individual]**

Your participation grade will be based on your active listening and speaking during game-play in weeks 1-3 and during class activities in subsequent weeks; your active participation as a member of your team; and your timely and thoughtful completion of all scaffolded writing and research tasks. This work incorporates elements of the HUB learning outcomes for Writing Intensive (WIN), Research & Information Literacy (RIL), and Teamwork & Collaboration (TC).

❖ **Individual Initial Game Pitch (written and oral version) – 5% [individual]**

This is a 500-word statement intended to get others excited about your game idea. In class, you will deliver a 90-second oral version. You should cover learning objectives, the core debate your game will revolve around, one key primary source, one solid secondary source by a historian (such as a scholarly article or website), and basic descriptions of at least two factions. This work focuses on the HUB learning outcomes for RIL and Creativity & Innovation (CI).

❖ **Team Contract – 10% [team]**

You will be taught the purpose and the specific sections of the team contract, which will include team and project goals, roles, processes, and interactions. A preliminary project schedule will also be included. The roles and project schedule will be updated and adapted throughout the semester via status updates during faculty check-ins (marked in the syllabus). These updates will be documented. This work focuses on the HUB learning outcomes for TC.

❖ **Project Proposal and Preliminary Annotated Bibliography – 10% [team]**

This is your foundation for your team's play-testable prototype of your game. A 1000-word document, your project proposal will include a research-based statement about your game's learning objectives, essential historical background, the nature of the core debate, and basic descriptions of at least two factions and at least one indeterminate role. You should also begin to develop a sense of your game's essential mechanism (money? voting?). Your preliminary annotated bibliography will include six sources, including at least three good scholarly sources by historians. This work incorporates elements of the HUB learning outcomes for CI, TC, WIN, and RIL.

❖ **Play-testable Prototype Drafts 1 and 2 – 10% [team]**

A prototype is a rough but playable version of a game. You will put it together by assembling and harmonizing all of the available components and formatting them so that the objectives and rules of the game are clear to your players. Draft 1 will be graded Strong / Almost There / Weak; in addition, comments will be provided to help you move toward Draft 2. Draft 2 will again be graded Strong / Almost There / Weak, but more will be expected of it since you will have received and taken into consideration our feedback. This work focuses on the HUB learning outcomes for CI and WIN.

The components that will go into your prototype will include Game Overview and Historical Context Essay, Game Mechanics, Two Core Primary Sources (with glosses), Two Generic Faction Role Sheets, Three Specific Indeterminate Role Sheets, as well as Designer's Notes for the Instructor Manual. The word count, not including the role sheets and the primary sources, will

probably hover around 800 words. Each role sheet will be 300-600 words. Instructions for how to write each component will be distributed in class and posted to Blackboard.

❖ **Final Game Prototype with Final Annotated Bibliography – 30% [team]**

This is the prototype that will eventually be presented to our community partner. It will include the same components as above, but they should all be stronger and clearer as a result of two rounds of play-testing and detailed peer feedback that will take place between Draft 2 and Final. In addition, it should demonstrate strong grammar and mechanics and look professional. This project reflects all your previous work and thus incorporates all of the HUB learning outcomes: CI, RIL, WIN, and TC.

❖ **Showcase Presentation – 5% [team]**

Each team will develop their own way to present their game at the XCC Showcase. We will share models and other possibilities.

❖ **Individual Reflection on Lessons Learned – 10% [individual]**

This 500-word essay is your opportunity to reflect on your experience designing a game in collaboration with your teammates. What did you learn about research? writing? creativity? teamwork? your game topic? yourself? Which lessons do you think will stick with you and why?

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GRADING CRITERIA

Every written assignment will be evaluated using the following criteria:

FOCUS – are you answering the question?
EVIDENCE – do you support your position?
CITATIONS / QUALITY SOURCES – do you have quality sources? are you citing them properly?
CLARITY – does your prose make sense?
COHERENCE – do your ideas hold together and build upon one another?

W E E K	DATE	TOPICS	READINGS DUE	PROJECT ACTIVITY / ASSIGNMENTS DUE
1	Jan 24 (M)	Introductions / Syllabus review / Work on your questionnaire	Syllabus	**SUBMIT QUESTIONNAIRE**
	Jan 26 (W)	Play "Monumental Consequence" / Debrief / Primary Sources Activity: What if "Monumental Consequence" took place in *your* hometown?	"Monumental Consequence" handout & role sheet	
2	Jan 31 (M) – this class will take place on Zoom	**Community Partner visit:** Nicholas Proctor, chair of RTTP Editorial Board / Introduce *Paterson,* 1913	Information from RTTP website; *Paterson, 1913,* pp. 3-33, 34-47, your role sheet, and the Core Texts it refers to	**BRING ONE QUESTION FOR COMMUNITY PARTNER**
	Feb 2 (W)	*Paterson* Rounds 1 and 2	*Paterson, 1913*, pp. 48-55 and 58-64	**SUBMIT GAME SPEECH OUTLINE on BB**
3	Feb 7 (M)	*Paterson* Round 4 and debrief & look behind the curtain	*Paterson, 1913*, pp. 66-71	**SUBMIT GAME SPEECH OUTLINE on BB**
	Feb 9 (W)	Brainstorming ideas for games / **Library Research Session #1: finding reliable sources** / start working on your pitch – guided research	*Game Designer's Handbook,* chs. 1, 2, 9 ("Series Standards," "Conceptualization," "Short Games"); look through the bank of ideas on BB	
	Feb 10 (Th) and Feb 11 (F)	*Optional office hours to help develop your pitches*		

4	Feb 14 (M)	**Voting on initial pitches / Choose your team**	Independent research and reading to finalize your pitch	**SUBMIT INITIAL WRITTEN PITCH & ORAL PITCH – due 2/14@3:30 on BB**
	Feb 16 (W)	**TLA Workshop 1 –** guidance on how to work as a team and write your team contract		
5	Feb 22 (this is a Tuesday running on Monday schedule)	**Library Research Session #2** / Do research on pitches that have advanced: finding primary sources and planning for roles / Work in teams toward project proposal	Independent reading related to your game	**SUBMIT TEAMING CONTRACT on BB**
	Feb 23 (W)	Work on your project proposal: focus on core debate and learning objectives / footnoting and citations (Chicago) / explain Annotated Bibliography assignment	Review RTTP Game Prototype Submission Form; *Game Designer's Handbook,* ch. 8 ("Anticipating Challenges"); independent reading related to your game	
6	Feb 28 (M)	Guided research: focus on scholarly sources and historical context section / faculty check-in / guided peer review: focus on big ideas and quality of sources	Independent reading related to your game	
	Mar 2 (W)	Guided research: focus on role descriptions and game mechanism / faculty check-in / guided peer review: focus on citations, bibliography, and mechanics		**SUBMIT PROJECT PROPOSAL & PRELIMINARY ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY – due 3/3@3:30 on BB**
			SPRING BREAK	

7	Mar 14 (M)	Discuss assigned reading / Research & Writing: game overview and game mechanics / faculty check-in	*Game Designer's Handbook*, pp. 25-43 ("Rules," "Game Mechanisms," "Counterfactuals"); independent reading related to your game	
	Mar 16 (W)	Research & Writing: historical context essay and core primary documents / **TLA Workshop 2**	Independent reading related to your game	
8	Mar 21 (M)	Discuss assigned reading / Research & Writing: roles and role sheets / Teaming process check-in	*Game Designer's Handbook*, ch. 4 ("Roles"); independent reading	**SUBMIT TEAM EVALUATIONS (individual)**
	Mar 23 (W)	Research & Writing: designer's notes for the instructor manual / Teaming process check-in		**SUBMIT TEAM PROGRESS REPORT**
9	Mar 28 (M)	Compiling your prototype draft 1: guided in-class work		
	Mar 30 (W)	Editing your prototype draft 1: guided in-class work		**SUBMIT PLAYABLE PROTOTYPE DRAFT 1 FOR INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK on BB**
10	Apr 4 (M)	Discuss assigned reading / work on integrating instructor feedback on Draft 1 / finalize prototype materials for distribution	*Game Designer's Handbook*, ch. 5 ("Structuring the Game")	**DISTRIBUTE GAME MATERIALS TO CLASSMATES NO LATER THAN 4:30 PM TUESDAY**
	Apr 6 (W)	Playtest Groups 1 & 2		**SUBMIT PLAYTEST PEER FEEDBACK on BB**

11	Apr 11 (M)	Playtest Groups 3 & 4		**SUBMIT PLAYTEST PEER FEEDBACK 1 on BB**
	Apr 13 (W)	**TLA Workshop 3** / analyze and integrate playtest feedback into updated version for Final Playtest	Collect and read peer feedback on first round of playtesting	
12	**Apr 18 (M) NO CLASS**			**SUBMIT PLAYABLE PROTOTYPE DRAFT 2 AND DISTRIBUTE TO PEERS NO LATER THAN** 4:30 pm on Tuesday, April 19
	Apr 20 (W; Monday schedule)	Final Playtest Groups 1 & 3		**SUBMIT PLAYTEST PEER FEEDBACK 2 on BB**
13	Apr 25 (M)	Final Playtest Groups 2 & 4		**SUBMIT PLAYTEST PEER FEEDBACK 2 on BB**
	Apr 27 (W)	Prep for XCC Showcase	Examine presentation models on BB	**SUBMIT GAME PROTOTYPE FINAL DRAFT on BB**
14	May 2 (M)	Rehearsing for XCC Showcase		
	May 4 (W)	Finish rehearsing / Reflections on the course		**SUBMIT SHOWCASE MATERIALS / INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION ON THE COURSE**
	May 5 (Th)	**XCC Showcase (3-6 pm)**		