Computer Games for Social Change  
Spring 2011  

Tuesdays 9-11:30am (Tufts students)  

Locations:  
Curriculum Lab at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development  

Prof. Marina Bers  
Marina.Bers@tufts.edu  

Office hours: By appointment  

Course Description  

This course offers a unique opportunity to collaborate in the design and prototype implementation of a computer game for social change. The course will be run as a workshop in which student teams develop their games and showcase them at an open house. We will have guest speakers from academia and industry as well as the non-profit sector and the gaming community.  

Course Requirements  

Readings (On-going — 10% of grade): All students are expected to do the readings, and to participate in discussions of the readings in class. Most readings will be available online linked from the syllabus.  

Class presentations (On-going—20% of grade): Most class time will be organized as discussions, not lectures. To help get discussions started, on some session, students will be asked to summarize the readings and describe one question or provocative issue.  

Design studio (On-going—10%): Students will work in teams to develop a proposal for a computer game for social change and a prototype.  

Mid-term proposal (Due March 15—15%): Each team will write a short proposal for their video games for social change to be discussed in class.  

Final project presentations (April 19—20%): Students will present their final projects.  

Final paper (Due April 26—25%): Each team will write a final paper about their video games and will present a demo prototype. Although the paper will be written as a team, each student needs to be explicit about their contribution to the project and his or her own learning experience. Papers should be e-mailed to Prof. Bers by noon. A hard copy should be left in her mailbox.  

Tentative Schedule
Note: This schedule may vary to accommodate the availability of the guest speakers. Check the course website for an up to date schedule.

**January 25: Introduction and course overview**

Course introduction.

**Kaiser report**

Design studio:

1. List all the games you know (exercise in categorizing games).
2. Game playing timeline

**February 1: What is in a game?**


Brown, S.(2009) Play: How it changes the brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul. **Chapter 1** and **Chapter 2**

**Guest speaker:** Scot Osterweil, MIT CMS program (10-11)

**February 8: Games for moral development**

**Guest speaker:** Ashley Sandv, Harvard Graduate School of Education (9-10:30)

Schulzke, M (2009) **Moral decision making in Fallout. The International Journal of Computer Game Research.** 9(2)

Klopfer, E, Osterweil, S & Salen, K (2009) **Moving Learning Games Forward** . The Education Arcade, MIT

**February 15: Let the game begin….**

Starr, P (1994) **Seductions of Sim: Policy as a Simulation Game**


**Klimmt, C Serious Games and Social Change: Why They (Should) Work**. Serious Games, Mechanisms and Effects. Ritterfield, Cody and Vorderer; pp 248 - 270

**Guest speaker** Ming Chow, Tufts University (10-11:30)
February 22: Group work

Playing games for social change

peacemaker  http://www.peacemakergame.com/demo.php
mcdonalds game  http://www.mcvideogame.com/index-eng.html
darfur is dying  http://www.darfurisdying.com/
3rd world farmer  http://www.3rdworldfarmer.com/
The Redistricting Game  http://www.redistrictinggame.org/
watch out for popup blockers - game won't load

March 1: Learning Games

Just a game


Guest speaker: Josh Sheldon, MIT Teachers Education Program(9-10:30)

Team work I

March 8: Let the game continue

Guest speaker: “Is it Real, Or is it Bacon?” Bill Shribman, Senior Executive Producer, WGBH (9-10:30)


Team work II

March 15: Games everywhere

Assignment due: Mid-term group proposal in class presentation

March 22: Spring break. No class

March 29: More on games

Guest Speaker: Dan Roy, Learning Games Network (9:00am)

ESA Facts about the computer games industry

Guest Speaker: Nick Maynard, Director of Innovation, D2D Fund (10:30am)

www.financialentertainment.org

Team work III

April 5: Lessons learned

Guest speaker: Nick Montford, Associate professor of digital media, Writing and Humanistic Studies, MIT

Class feedback

April 12: Lessons learned

Guest speaker: “Learning about the Gameworld in Adventure Games” Clara Fernandez, MIT Singapore Gambit Lab (9-10:30)

Team work IV
April 19: Debriefing and game presentations

Guest Speaker: Don Rawitsch, Co-Creator of the Oregon Trail Computer Game (9 – 10)


Interview -- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSN-Z1tsFJw

Each team will present its game

April 26: Final team papers due to Prof. Bers (no meeting)