

BECOME A GAME WRITER

SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR: ADAM DOLIN
23 JUN 2025 - 4 AUG 2025
MONDAYS & WEDNESDAYS
5:30 PM PST / 8:30 PM EST

00 THU (6/19), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Meet Your Instructor & Course Overview

- Instructor introduction & goals
- The current state of the industry
- Course objectives & flow
- Q & A

01 MON (6/23), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Decoding Game Development

Game development is complex. Get an overview of the structures and workflows of different studios to learn how to be adaptable. Throughout the development process, the role of a writer shifts, twists, and changes. Let's talk about what to expect!

- Team sizes and org charts
- Role of narrative in game development
- The role of a game writer
- Networking Tips & Breakout Rooms

Assignment #1: Efficient Critique of a Game's Narrative (Optional)

Pick any two games you played recently (or are currently playing). Describe where one game succeeds and the other fails in the execution of its narrative. Use both subjectivity and objectivity in your critique.

02 WED (6/25), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Writing vs. Narrative Design

Yup, there's a difference. Even though these terms are used interchangeably, they are two separate fields that support each other. Today we'll examine games with great narrative design to highlight the differences.

- The symbiotic relationship between writing and narrative design

- How to support any type of gameplay with narrative
- Writing for player agency

CASE STUDY: Games that demonstrate excellence in narrative design

Assignment #2: Play a Twine Game. Identify an effective use of Narrative Design in two of the four provided Twine games.

03 MON (6/30), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Narrative Design Tools

GOAL: We'll look at some of the tools used across game studios to develop narrative, allowing students to get familiar with industry-standard software. No programming knowledge required!

- Programming Languages for non-programmers.
- Working with Collaborative Documentation
- The Most Important Non-Technical Skill in Game Development
- What's the best Game Engine?

Assignment #3: Game Engine Intro (Optional)

Watch a tutorial for any engine, and make a short branching conversation.

04 MON (7/7), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Scene Study in Games

GOAL: Screenwriting is an essential skill for every game writer. We'll review screenwriting techniques, and discuss how to adapt them for games.

- The anatomy of a strong scene (or quest)
- The importance of subtext
- How to ace a game studio's writing test
- CASE STUDIES: Compelling scenes in Film, TV, and Games

Assignment #4: Scene Analysis

Read one of the provided screenplays, and identify a powerful scene and write some scene analysis.

05 WED (7/9), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Character Creation

GOAL: What's more important: Plot or Character? How do you create a memorable character? Does your main character need to be likable? We'll dig into all these questions and more.

- Character archetypes
- Character arcs
- Slide Presentations, Mood Boards and Comps
- WORKSHOP: Character Creation

Assignment #5: Character Sheet

Create a character sheet for the game.

06 MON (7/14), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Themes, Outlines, and the Writer's Room

GOAL: Discuss themes, outlines and the writers room

- What we can (and can't) steal from screenwriters
- Ludonarrative Resonance
- How to find your next big idea
- WORKSHOP: Brainstorming Exercises and Writer's Rooms

Assignment 6: Scene Writing

Description: Write a 3 page scene for the game. Students must do a feedback session before submitting their scene

07 WED (7/16), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Collaboration, Iteration, and the Art of Feedback

Writing is rewriting. As a future game writer, you'll be tasked with rewriting your texts until they're perfect. You'll learn how to emotionally prepare yourself to give & receive feedback while understanding how to maximize critiques.

- The work-self conundrum
- Balancing emotional investment
- Collaboration with other departments
- WORKSHOP: Group feedback

08 MON (7/21), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

A Dialogue About Dialog

GOAL: Dialogue is the most common tool in the game writer's toolbox. We'll look at techniques for making your dialogue feel authentic, and how acting, direction, and implementation all play a vital role in voice-over.

- Different types of dialogue
- Writing for different characters and personalities
- Supporting level design iteration by staying flexible

- WORKSHOP: Table Reads

09 WED (7/23), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Storytelling Through Systems

GOAL: We'll take a deeper look into narrative design, identifying how writers can utilize gameplay to craft unforgettable narrative beats.

- How systems can tell stories
- CASE STUDY: Celeste
- Environmental storytelling
- WORKSHOP: Design and pitch a system

Assignment #7: Lore Entries

Write lore entries for the main assignment, students can write an additional scene for bonus points.

10 MON (7/28), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Game Narrative Theory

Unearth methods of storytelling through interactivity, delving into the various narrative forms within games. Uncover the diverse ways games introduce narrative and engage in philosophical discussions about how the narrative differs from the games.

- Linear, branching, emergent, and non-traditional narrative
- The advantages and challenges for each of the above
- CASE STUDIES: God of War and God of War: Ragnarok

11 WED (7/30), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Dual Perspectives: AAA vs. Indie Games (+ Guest Speakers)

Two guest speakers are better than one. Prepare to chat with industry experts who have worked with your instructor on God of War and analyze the different paths to success. Learn how each of them approaches working with narrative to help secure your future.

- AAA dev perspective
- Indie dev perspective
- Comparison
- Q & A

12 MON (8/4), 5:30 PM PST/8:30 PM EST

Career Guidance (+ Guest Speakers)

You're about to enter your next game writing position, so let's discuss predictions for the game industry for the next year. Take time to get multiple perspectives on finding work in the future, learn how to be persistent, and take notes on career guidance.

- Key skills required to be a successful game writer
- Industry trends of 2023, and the landscape of 2024
- Career possibilities
- Portfolio & interview tips
- How not to get discouraged

Assignment #8: Course Project

Create an interactive project or a portfolio presenting your skills.

Learning Advisor

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Source: Elvtr, "Become a Game Writer.

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