



Course Title: Game On! How Gaming Can Motivate You and Your Customers

Course Code: DSN 02 W

Instructors: Jesse Harris & Laura Pickel

Course Summary:

Initiating and sustaining change in ourselves and others is hard, but we can leverage the mechanics of games to ease transitions and shape behavior for long-term success. In this class we will:

1. Learn about 10 common game mechanics, exploring how they function in games, how you can apply them to change, and their potential pitfalls.
2. Apply this knowledge to weekly quick design challenges during weekly zoom sessions
3. Design, playtest, and evaluate “game-changing” solutions for a real-world challenge that you’ll bring to the class.

In this course we will design-to-think, applying the mechanics to weekly and course-long projects. You’ll walk away with experience using game mechanics to design meaningful and impactful behavior change solutions.

**Please see course page for full description and additional details.*

Grade Options and Requirements:

- No Grade Requested (NGR)
 - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
 - Students must participate in at least 70% of weekly discussions and/or Zoom sessions.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
 - Students must participate in at least 70% of weekly discussions and/or Zoom sessions, and complete a behavior change project and a piece of written work (to be discussed further in class).

**Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*

Tentative Zoom Schedule*:

**Please note that the Zoom schedule is subject to change.*

Feb 1-Mar19

Week 1 - Exploration & Collection - 9 am on Wednesday, Feb. 3

Week 2 - Scoring & Badging - 9 am on Wednesday, Feb. 10

Week 3 - Roleplay & Simulation - 9 am on Wednesday, Feb. 17

Week 4 - Randomization - 9 am on Wednesday, Feb. 24

Week 5 - Levels - 9 am on Wednesday, Mar. 3

Week 6 - Presentations - 9 am on Wednesday, Mar. 10

Week 7 - Presentations & Reflection - 9 am on Wednesday, Mar. 17

Tentative Weekly Outline:

Every week will consist of:

- Readings about the selected game mechanic (from both academic and popular press)
- Video content from the instructor team (mechanic overview and case study review)
- Live Zoom session
 - Weekly game mechanic spotlight & discussion
 - Presentations about game mechanic application from industry experts
 - Mini-group challenge
 - Brief presentations and feedback from peers and instructors
- Optional game nights & instructor office hours (alternating weeks)

Week 1: Exploration & Collection

Exploration refers to the way that players travel across physical or digital space to understand their environment (ex: Mario exploring various levels with different types of challenges and threats).

Collection refers to the act of picking up different pieces, tokens, or currency to help accomplish an ultimate goal (ex: Collecting “pie” pieces to complete a wheel in Trivial Pursuit).

Topics for this week will include:

- Introduction to game mechanics & course overview
- How to employ game mechanics to address behavior change
- Overview of “Exploration” and “Collection” gamification mechanics
- Games that use “Exploration” and “Collection” mechanics

Week 2: Scoring & Badging

Scoring is a method used to measure progress toward a goal and success relative to others or the game itself (ex: the number of points earned by two sides in a basketball game).

Badging refers to special awards and tokens awarded for particular accomplishments (ex: a First Aid patch awarded to a Girl Scout for learning CPR).

Topics will include:

- Overview of “Scoring” and “Badging” gamification mechanics
- Games that use “Scoring” and “Badging” mechanics
- Why change is hard
- Incentivizing change

Week 3: Roleplay & Simulation

Roleplay involves assuming the personality, traits, and abilities of a character in physical or digital space (ex: assuming the role of a detective at a murder mystery dinner to solve puzzles).

Simulation involves the imitation of a real-world situation or environment that would often be otherwise difficult or dangerous to experience (ex: a virtual reality game that has players repair the International Space Station).

Topics will include:

- Overview of “Roleplay” and “Simulation” gamification mechanics
- Games that use “Roleplay” and “Simulation” mechanics
- Creating space for change
- Lowering and raising the stakes

Week 4: Randomization

Randomization is a key mechanics in many games, often used as a driver of gameplay, to level players with different abilities, and to inject fun and uncertainty (ex: spinning a wheel to see who can get closest to \$1 on The Price is Right for a chance to make it into the finale).

Topics will include:

- Overview of “Randomization” gamification mechanic
- Games that use “Randomization” mechanic
- The element of chance
- The role of strategy

Week 5: Levels

Levels are used to mark increasing difficulty, often carefully scaffolded to induce flow and encourage further gameplay (ex: increasing complexity of challenges and resources in the Angry Birds mobile game).

Topics will include:

- Overview of “Levels” gamification mechanic
- Games that use “Levels” mechanic
- Change & the art of flow
- The Goldilocks problem: Not too simple, not too complicated

Week 6: Presentations & Additional Mechanics

There are many additional mechanics that we want to cover in this course. This week, we’ll kick off our first round of presentations and quickly review 4 additional mechanics in a speed round.

- *Competition* pits players against each other as individuals or teams to accomplish the ultimate goal.
- *Cooperation* pits players against the game itself to complete the objective, usually before time runs out.
- *Loss Aversion* refers to the powerful tendency in humans to avoid losing something they already possess.
- *Time pressure* is a common element used to amplify urgency and constrain gameplay. It uses a clock, hourglass, number of rounds, or other limitation to regulate the speed or pace of a game or round.

Week 7: Reflection & Next Steps

We’ll wrap up our project presentations and take time to reflect on what we’ve learned. We’ll also learn how to take our designs from good *ideas* to testable *prototypes* and implement them as successful *solutions*.