COMM 3337 - Storytelling for Video Games: Storytelling for Video Games- WIN (SSI-June 01 to July 02)

Summer 2026 Syllabus, Section 381, CRN 53046

Instructor Information

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Instructional Associate Professor of visual communication
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Office: AIC 353
Office Hours:
During summer semester, office hours are only by appointment, virtually. Please email thomas.brown@tamiu to schedule an appointment.
Office Phone: 956.326.2472

Times and Location

Does Not Meet Face-to-Face

Course Description

Storytelling for Video Games is an introductory course that examines the key storytelling aspects for narrative game design: introduction and history of games, worldbuilding, character development, Storytelling & Mythic Structure, and Interactive Dialogue. The focus for the final project is on learning how to write branching story arcs in interactive storytelling design. Students will purchase a computer game, complete with a game engine, and create a computer game adventure with characters of their own design. The game level will include interactive narrative written by the students.
Psychology & Communication Department, College of Arts & Sciences

WIN-Designation

This course is designated as a writing-intensive (WIN) course. In this course, writing will not only be the subject of study, but it will also serve as a method of learning. Students will learn how communication in written, oral, and visual forms change according to purpose and genre. Brainstorming, drafting, revising, and peer-workshopping are integrated into the course curriculum and are the required components of this writing-intensive course. The final Research Paper is the designated assignment for WIN assessment.

Additional Course Information

Course runs from June 1 to July 1 with Final Exam on July 2.

PARTICIPATION:

Class online participation is graded, encouraged, and expected. However, participation does not mean being disruptive or rude in class. Please be considerate of your classmates and instructor.

GAMIFICATION:

In keeping with the gaming theme of this course, it will be taught in a gamification style.

Gamification: Using game elements and game design techniques in non-game applications, such as business, social impact challenges, and in classrooms.

You stand before the arcade game. Your fingers reach into your pocket and you pull out some loose change. One coin at a time, you slide them into its housing. The resounding click of metal lets you know it's time to play as each coin drops into the machine. As if that weren't enough, the screen lights up with animated graphics and an electronic chime sounds.

Ready Player One...

For this course, each student will select an **Avatar** (their in-game character) complete with a **class** (fighter, wizard, or cleric) You are each on your own Hero's Journey as the primary protagonist of your own story. **Fighters start out with 80 HP and 30 AP, Wizards with 30 HP and 50 AP, and Clerics with 50 HP and 35 AP.**

Your goal is to collect **experience points (XP)** in order to gain levels. Grades will be based off of the level you achieve in the course.

Level 1: 10XP Level 2: 25XP Level 3: 50XP

Level 4: 100XP Level 5: 150XP Level 6: 200XP

Level 7: 250XP Level 8: 300XP Level 9: 350XP

Level 10: 500XP Level 11: 550XP Level 12: 600XP

Level 13: 650XP Level 14: 700XP Level 15: 750XP

Level 16: 800XP Level 17: 900XP Level 18: 950XP

Level 20: 1,000XP Epic Levels: More than 1,000XP

AP (Action Points): As rewards for turning in assignments early, for participating in class discussions, and other productive or positive behavior, a student may be awarded AP. This AP can be used to purchase special favors, such as getting an answer to a test question, healing a teammate who burned through all their lives, etc. A complete list of Actions will be provided by an additional handout during class. You automatically regain 30 AP each Monday, up to your starting value.

HP (Hit Points): You lose HP when you break class rules listed in the syllabus. For example, -10HP for being rude to a classmate in an online discussion, -10HP for turning in an assignment late, -5HP for being negative in class.

Further information on the Gamification aspects of this course will be provided through Blackboard.

—COURSE ASSIGNMENTS OVERVIEW—

Written Work:

All out-of-class assignments must be typed unless stated otherwise. Assignments will be submitted electronically through our class Blackboard. All online assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. on the day indicated on your class schedule, unless otherwise noted in the syllabus schedule and/or on Blackboard. The instructor will post a Blackboard announcement for any due date adjustments, though we will do our best to stick to the schedule as summer courses are on a tight schedule.

Assignments which do not adhere to assignment guidelines will be rejected. For example, handwritten papers will not be accepted. It is the student's responsibility to submit assignments as directed, either online or in class. Please use Turnitin on Blackboard for writing assignments or Blackboard Dropbox for activities.

This course includes four written assignments that make up a significant portion of the grade:

WRITING ASSIGNMENT, MAJOR QUEST 1: WORLDBUILDING

1. Upload the final draft to Turnitin. Please see rubric and complete assignment instructions on Blackboard.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT, MAJOR QUEST 2: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

1. Upload the final draft to Turnitin. Please see rubric and complete assignment instructions on Blackboard.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT, MAJOR QUEST 3: STORY STRUCTURE & PLOT

1. Upload the final draft to Turnitin. Please see rubric and complete assignment instructions on Blackboard.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT, MAJOR QUEST 4: INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

1. Dialogue written in NWN:EE Aurora Toolset. Turn in your NWN:EE module file to the instructor. Please see rubric and complete assignment instructions on Blackboard.

PRONOUNS:

Please let me know how you would like to be addressed in terms of gender pronouns and identity. You may email me or talk to me in private before or after class. I use the he, him, and his pronouns for myself and you may call me “Mr. Brown” or “Professor Brown.”

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY:

Mr. Thomas R. Brown, who publishes as “T. Rob Brown,” is a photographer and writer who began his career in 1993. In addition to more than 20 years as a full-time daily newspaper photojournalist, where he served as photographer, writer, editor, copyeditor, and page designer for numerous daily Midwest newspapers, he also served as a freelance writer for Marvel Comics and Star Wars on four published books from 2009 to 2012, including the Origins award-winning *Marvel Heroic Roleplaying: Civil War*, *Marvel Heroic Roleplaying: Civil War: Young Avengers and Runaways*, Star Wars: *Galaxy of Intrigue*, and Silver Ennie-winning Star Wars: *Clone Wars Campaign Guide*.

Twice nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, Brown earned more than 40 national, regional and state awards for photography and writing during his journalism career. Following a return to schooling to pursue his master’s degree in 2014, Brown began freelancing for *The Kansas City Star* as a photographer. He continues work on his fantasy and science fiction novels, screenplays, and photography books. Currently, he is working on *Literally Breathtaking*—a photography book about Cusco and Machu Picchu, Peru, along with Chile's Santiago region.

Brown earned his bachelor’s (1993) from Missouri Southern State University in Joplin and his master’s (2015) from Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. He is originally from the Kansas City, Missouri, area.

He began teaching at Texas A&M International University in Fall 2017.

Program Learning Outcomes

PLO 1: Critical Thinking: Graduates will develop critical thinking skills to evaluate theories and approaches to selected media and communication problems.

PLO 2: Analytical Inquiry: Graduates of the program will be able to explore appropriate data, tools, or techniques to draw informed, evidence-based conclusions within communication fields.

PLO 3: Communicative Fluency: Graduates of the program will be able to communicate effectively and with high fluency in oral, written, and mediated professional contexts.

PLO 4: Applied and Collaborative Learning: Graduates of the program will be able to collaborate effectively in teams and integrate communication knowledge with practical experiences to address community or industry communication needs.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

SLO 1: Critical Thinking: Students will be able to choose subject matter for written content and analyze peer and professional work in video games.

SLO 2: Analytical Inquiry: Students will be able to explain the process of storytelling, including worldbuilding, character development, plot development, and level design. They will also be able to explain the role of mythology and mythic structure in video game storytelling.

SLO 3: Communicative Fluency: Students will be able to communicate effectively and with high fluency in mediated writing, demonstrating proper structure, grammar, spelling, style, and content suitable for video games.

SLO 4: Applied and Collaborative Learning: Students will be able to create a completed video game adventure using interactive dialogue.

Important Dates

Visit the Academic Calendar (tamiu.edu) (https://www.tamiu.edu/academiccalendar/) page to view the term's important dates.

Textbooks

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Required	The Kobold Guide to Wordbuilding	Janna SIlverstein (editor)	9781936781119
Required	Character Development and Storytelling for Video Games, 3rd Edition	Lee Sheldon	9780367248987

Required	The Game Narrative Toolbox, 2nd Edition	Tobias Heussner, Toiya Kristen Finley, Jennifer Brandes Hepler, Ann Lemay	9781032438962
Required	The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers, 25th Anniversary Edition	Christopher Vogler	9781615933150
Optional	The Kobold Guide to Plots and Campaigns	Michelle Carter (editor)	9781936781621
Optional	The Trope Thesaurus	Jennifer Hilt	9798790522543
Optional	Neverwinter Nights: Official Worldbuilder Guide	Versus Books	9781931886130
Optional	Writer's Guide to Character Traits, 2nd Edition	Linda N. Edelstein	9781582973906
Optional	Slay the Dragon: Writing Great Video Games	Robert Denton Bryant & Keith Giglio	9781615932290
Optional	Video Game Storytelling	Evan Skolnick	9780385345828
Optional	The Ultimate Guide to Video Game Writing and Design	Flint Dille & John Zuur Platten	9781580650663
Optional	Interactive Storytelling for Video Games	Josiah Lebowitz & Chris Klug	9780240817170
Optional	The Kobold Guide to Worldbuilding Vol 2	John Joseph Adams (editor)	9781950789283
Optional	The Kobold Guide to Game Design 2nd Edition	Wolfgang Baur	9781936781034
Optional	The Kobold Guide to Monsters	Amanda Hamon	9781950789047
Optional	The Hero with a Thousand Faces	Joseph Campbell	9781577315933

Other Course Materials

***Neverwinter Nights Enhanced Edition* (for Windows PC)**

Software by BioWare Corp/Beamdog. This is the 2017 re-released, updated version of the 2002 classic D&D RPG *Neverwinter Nights*. It can be purchased direct from Beamdog (which lets you download it there and also provided me with a Steam key) or from Steam or from GOG. You only need the standard version which runs $19.99 (retail, though is often on sale in the spring and summer) but you may also get the Deluxe Edition (sometimes also called "Complete Adventures"). Either will satisfy the requirements for the course—the Deluxe just has additional content for you to play with and includes the digital soundtrack. The PC version of Neverwinter Nights includes the Aurora Toolset—this is the same toolset the creators of the game used to build it and all of the expansions. Neverwinter Nights, in addition to the regular game client, includes a game master client where certain players may enter the game as a game master with the ability to control monsters, non-player characters (NPCs), and numerous other abilities.

Grading Criteria

GRADE	PERCENTAGE
A	90-100
B	80-89.9
C	70-79.9
D	60-69.9
F	Below 60

Assignment Point Values

Note: ALL primary assignments must be completed to pass the course. This includes four individual writing assignments and the final exam. Students may not choose to take a zero for any **primary** assignment or they will fail the course. Note: the final exam will be comprehensive.

PRIMARY ASSIGNMENTS	XP
Writing Assignment #1: Worldbuilding	100XP
Writing Assignment #2: Character Development	150XP
Writing Assignment #3: Story Structure & Plot	150XP
Writing Assignment #4: Interactive Dialogue (Final Game Project)	250XP
Final Exam	100XP
SECONDARY ASSIGNMENTS	XP
Syllabus Quiz	20XP
Activities 1-3	150XP—3 @ 50XP
Classroom Participation	60XP—6 @ 10XP
Proposals 1-2	20XP—2 @ 10XP
GRAND TOTAL	1,000 possible XP

SUMMER I 2026 COURSE OUTLINE

Week of	Agenda/Topic	Reading(s)	Due
6/1	INTRODUCTION	VIDEO: Welcome & Intro to Course	End of 6/4
	ONLINE DISCUSSION	Introduce Yourselves	End of 6/4
	VIDEO	VIDEO: Gamers: Dorkness Rising	End of 6/4
	ONLINE DISCUSSION	The Gamers: Dorkness Rising	End of 6/4
	SYLLABUS	SYLLABUS & Syllabus Quiz	End of 6/4
	GAMIFICATION	AVATARS & Select Avatar-Join Group	End of 6/4
	HISTORY OF VIDEO GAMES Lecture	POWERPOINT: Brief History of Games	End of 6/4 would be best
	TERMINOLOGY of VIDEO GAMES	POWERPOINT: Terminology	End of 6/4, but no real due date
	Worldbuilding	READINGS: See Blackboard	End of 6/8
	Worldbuilding Lect.	POWERPOINT: Worldbuilding 1	End of 6/8
	Worldbuilding Lect.	POWERPOINT: Worldbuilding 2	End of 6/8
	Worldbuilding	VIDEO: Worldbuilding NWN Demo	End of 6/8
	Worldbuilding	ACTIVITY 1: Worldbuilding	End of 6/8
	Worldbuilding	WRITING 1: Proposal 1	End of 6/4
	ONLINE DISCUSSION	Worldbuilding	End of 6/8
	Worldbuilding	WRITING 1: Worldbuilding	Start 6/1
	Worldbuilding	DUE: Writing 1: Worldbuilding	End of 6/8
6/8	Character Dev	READINGS: See Blackboard	End of 6/11
	Character Dev Lect.	POWERPOINT: Char Dev 1	End of 6/11
	Character Dev Lect.	POWERPOINT: Char Dev 2	End of 6/11
	Character Dev Lect.	POWERPOINT: Char Dev 3	End of 6/11
	Final Game Project	WRITING 4: Proposal 2	End of 6/11
	Character Dev	VIDEO: Char Build in NWN Demo	End of 6/11
	Character Dev	ACTIVITY 2: Char Dev	End of 6/11
	ONLINE DISCUSSION	Character Development	End of 6/15
	Character Dev	WRITING 2: Char Dev	Start 6/8
	Character Dev	DUE: Writing 2: Char Dev	End of 6/15
6/15	Storytelling	READINGS: See Blackboard	End of 6/18
	Storytelling	POWERPOINT: Storytelling 1	End of 6/18
	Storytelling	POWERPOINT: Storytelling 2	End of 6/18
	Storytelling	POWERPOINT: Storytelling 3	End of 6/18
	Storytelling	POWERPOINT: Storytelling 4	End of 6/18
	Storytelling	ACTIVITY 3: Story Dev	End of 6/18
	ONLINE DISCUSSION	Mythic Structure & Storytelling	End of 6/22
	Storytelling	WRITING 3: Story Dev	Start 6/15
	Storytelling	DUE: Writing 3: Story Dev	End of 6/22

6/22	ONLINE DISCUSSION	Dialogue	End of 6/25
	Dialogue	READINGS: See Blackboard	End of 6/25
	Dialogue Lect.	POWERPOINT: Dialogue 1	End of 6/25
	Dialogue Lect.	POWERPOINT: Dialogue 2	End of 6/25
	Dialogue Lect.	POWERPOINT: Dialogue 3	End of 6/25
	Dialogue	VIDEO: Dialogue in NWN Demo	End of 6/25
	Final Game Project	WRITING 4: Final Game Project	Start 6/22 if you haven't already - this takes time.
	Testing/Editing	LAB: Work on your Final Project	
	ONLINE DISCUSSION	NWN:EE Toolset Discussion	Daily End of 6/29
6/29	Final Game Project	DUE: Writing 4: Final Game Project	End of 7/1
	Final Exam Review	Final Exam Review-Online	End of 7/1
	FINAL EXAM ONLINE	Final Exam - Respondus Monitor	End of 7/2

University/College Policies

Please see the University Policies below.

COVID-19 Related Policies

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please refer to the Student Handbook, Appendix A (Attendance Rule) for instructions.

Required Class Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class in person (or virtually, if the class is online) and to complete all assignments. If you cannot attend class, it is your responsibility to communicate absences with your professors. The faculty member will decide if your excuse is valid and thus may provide lecture materials of the class. According to University policy, acceptable reasons for an absence, which cannot affect a student's grade, include:

- Participation in an authorized University activity.
- Death or major illness in a student's immediate family.
- Illness of a dependent family member.
- Participation in legal proceedings or administrative procedures that require a student's presence.
- Religious holy day.
- Illness that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class.
- Required participation in military duties.
- Mandatory admission interviews for professional or graduate school which cannot be rescheduled.

Students are responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to faculty members within seven calendar days of their absence and return to class. They must substantiate the reason for the absence. If the absence is excused, faculty members must either provide students with the opportunity to make up the exam or other work missed, or provide a satisfactory alternative to complete the exam or other work missed within 30 calendar days from the date of absence. Students who miss class due to a University-sponsored activity are responsible for identifying their absences to their instructors with as much advance notice as possible.

Classroom Behavior (applies to online or Face-to-Face Classes)

In the classroom, students are expected to listen attentively, participate respectfully, and adhere to established rules. Behavior that interferes with the class lecture may result in disciplinary action, ensuring a productive and respectful learning environment for everyone. Any disputes over academic matters should be addressed calmly and constructively, ideally during designated times such as office hours or after class. If a student does not agree with a decision, they can request a meeting with the instructor to discuss their concerns in more detail. Should further resolution be needed, the student may escalate the matter to the department head or use formal grievance procedures as outlined in the sections below. (please refer to Student Handbook Article 4 (https://www.tamiu.edu/handbook/article-04.shtml)).

TAMIU Honor Code: Plagiarism and Cheating

As a TAMIU student, you are bound by the TAMIU Honor Code to conduct yourself ethically in all your activities as a TAMIU student and to report violations of the Honor Code. Please read carefully the Student Handbook Article 7 and Article 10 available at Student Handbook (https://www.tamiu.edu/handbook/index.shtml).

We are committed to strict enforcement of the Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code tend to involve claiming work that is not one's own, most commonly plagiarism in written assignments and any form of cheating on exams and other types of assignments.

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as your own. It occurs when you:

1. Borrow someone else's facts, ideas, or opinions and put them entirely in your own words. You must acknowledge that these thoughts are not your own by immediately citing the source in your paper. Failure to do this is plagiarism.
2. Borrow someone else's words (short phrases, clauses, or sentences), you must enclose the copied words in quotation marks as well as citing the source. Failure to do this is plagiarism.
3. Present someone else's paper or exam (stolen, borrowed, or bought) as your own. You have committed a clearly intentional form of intellectual theft and have put your academic future in jeopardy. This is the worst form of plagiarism.

Here is another explanation from the 2020, seventh edition of the Manual of The American Psychological Association (APA):

"Plagiarism is the act of presenting the words, idea, or images of another as your own; it denies authors or creators of content the credit they are due. Whether deliberate or unintentional, plagiarism violates ethical standards in scholarship" (p. 254). This same principle applies to the illicit use of AI.

Plagiarism: Researchers do not claim the words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due. Quotations marks should be used to indicate the exact words of another. Each time you paraphrase another author (i.e., summarize a passage or rearrange the order of a sentence and change some of the words), you need to credit the source in the text. The key element of this principle is that authors do not present the work of another as if it were their own words. This can extend to ideas as well as written words. If authors model a study after one done by someone else, the originating author should be given credit. If the rationale for a study was suggested in the discussion section of someone else's article, the person should be given credit. Given the free exchange of ideas, which is very important for the health of intellectual discourse, authors may not know where an idea for a study originated. If authors do know, however, they should acknowledge the source; this includes personal communications (p. 11). For guidance on proper documentation, consult the Academic Success Center or a recommended guide to documentation and research such as the Manual of the APA or the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. If you still have doubts concerning proper documentation, seek advice from your instructor prior to submitting a final draft.

TAMIU has penalties for plagiarism and cheating.

- **Penalties for Plagiarism**: Should a faculty member discover that a student has committed plagiarism, the student should receive a grade of 'F' in that course and the matter will be referred to the Honor Council for possible disciplinary action. The faculty member, however, may elect to give freshmen and sophomore students a "zero" for the assignment and to allow them to revise the assignment up to a grade of "F" (50%) if they believe that the student plagiarized out of ignorance or carelessness and not out of an attempt to deceive in order to earn an unmerited grade; the instructor must still report the offense to the Honor Council. This option should not be available to juniors, seniors, or graduate students, who cannot reasonably claim ignorance of documentation rules as an excuse. For repeat offenders in undergraduate courses or for an offender in any graduate course, the penalty for plagiarism is likely to include suspension or expulsion from the university.
  - *Caution*: Be very careful what you upload to Turnitin or send to your professor for evaluation. Whatever you upload for evaluation will be considered your final, approved draft. If it is plagiarized, you will be held responsible. The excuse that "it was only a draft" will not be accepted.
  - *Caution*: Also, do not share your electronic files with others. If you do, you are responsible for the possible consequences. If another student takes your file of a paper and changes the name to his or her name and submits it and you also submit the paper, we will hold both of you responsible for plagiarism. It is impossible for us to know with certainty who wrote the paper and who stole it. And, of course, we cannot know if there was collusion between you and the other student in the matter.
- **Penalties for Cheating**: Should a faculty member discover a student cheating on an exam or quiz or other class project, the student should receive a "zero" for the assignment and not be allowed to make the assignment up. The incident should be reported to the chair of the department and to the Honor Council. If the cheating is extensive, however, or if the assignment constitutes a major grade for the course (e.g., a final exam), or if the student has cheated in the past, the student should receive an "F" in the course, and the matter should be referred to the Honor Council. Additional penalties, including suspension or expulsion from the university may be imposed. Under no circumstances should a student who deserves an "F" in the course be allowed to withdraw from the course with a "W."
  - *Caution*: Chat groups that start off as "study groups" can easily devolve into "cheating groups." Be very careful not to join or remain any chat group if it begins to discuss specific information about exams or assignments that are meant to require individual work. If you are a member of such a group and it begins to cheat, you will be held responsible along with all the other members of the group. The TAMIU Honor Code requires that you report any such instances of cheating.
- **Student Right of Appeal**: Faculty will notify students immediately via the student's TAMIU e- mail account that they have submitted plagiarized work. Students have the right to appeal a faculty member's charge of academic dishonesty by notifying the TAMIU Honor Council of their intent to appeal as long as the notification of appeal comes within 10 business days of the faculty member's e-mail message to the student and/or the Office of Student Conduct and Community Engagement. The Student Handbook provides more details.

Use of Work in Two or More Courses

You may not submit work completed in one course for a grade in a second course unless you receive explicit permission to do so by the instructor of the second course. In general, you should get credit for a work product only once.

AI Policies

Your instructor will provide you with their personal policy on the use of AI in the classroom setting and associated coursework.

TAMIU E-Mail and SafeZone

Personal Announcements sent to students through TAMIU E-mail (tamiu.edu or dusty email) are the official means of communicating course and university business with students and faculty –not the U.S. Mail and no other e-mail addresses. Students and faculty must check their TAMIU e-mail accounts regularly, if not daily. Not having seen an important TAMIU e-mail or message from a faculty member, chair, or dean is not accepted as an excuse for failure to take important action.

Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to download the SafeZone app, which is a free mobile app for all University faculty, staff, and students. SafeZone allows you to: report safety concerns (24/7), get connected with mental health professionals, activate location sharing with authorities, and anonymously report incidents. Go to SafeZone (https://www.tamiu.edu/adminis/police/safezone/index.shtml) for more information.

Copyright Restrictions

The Copyright Act of 1976 grants to copyright owners the exclusive right to reproduce their works and distribute copies of their work. Works that receive copyright protection include published works such as a textbook. Copying a textbook without permission from the owner of the copyright may constitute copyright infringement. Civil and criminal penalties may be assessed for copyright infringement. Civil penalties include damages up to $100,000; criminal penalties include a fine up to $250,000 and imprisonment. Copyright laws do not allow students and professors to make photocopies of copyrighted materials, but you may copy a limited portion of a work, such as article from a journal or a chapter from a book for your own personal academic use or, in the case of a professor, for personal, limited classroom use. In general, the extent of your copying should not suggest that the purpose or the effect of your copying is to avoid paying for the materials. And, of course, you may not sell these copies for a profit. Thus, students who copy textbooks to avoid buying them or professors who provide photocopies of textbooks to enable students to save money are violating the law.

Students with Disabilities

Texas A&M International University seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal education opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Office of Disability Services for Students located in Student Center 124. This office will contact the faculty member to recommend specific, reasonable accommodations. Faculty are prohibited from making accommodations based solely on communications from students. They may make accommodations only when provided documentation by the Office of Disability Services for Students.

For accommodations or assistance with disabilities, contact the Disability Coordinator, Karla Pedraza, at karla.pedraza@tamiu.edu, call 956.326.2763, or visit Student Center 124.

Student Attendance and Leave of Absence (LOA) Policy

As part of our efforts to assist and encourage all students towards graduation, TAMIU provides
LOA's for students, including pregnant/parenting students, in accordance with the Attendance Rule (Section 3.07) and the Student LOA Rule (Section 3.08), which includes the "Leave of Absence Request" form. Both rules can be found in the TAMIU Student Handbook (URL: Student Handbook (https://www.tamiu.edu/handbook/index.shtml)).

Pregnant and Parenting Students

Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, harassment based on sex, including harassment because of pregnancy or related conditions, is prohibited. A pregnant/parenting student must be granted an absence for as long as the student's physician deems the absence medically necessary. It is a violation of Title IX to ask for documentation relative to the pregnant/parenting student's status beyond what would be required for other medical conditions. Students who experience or observe alleged or suspected discrimination due to their pregnant/parenting status, should report to the TAMIU Title IX Coordinator (Lorissa M. Cortez, 5201 University Boulevard, KLM 159B, Laredo, TX 78041, TitleIX@tamiu.edu, 956.326.2857) and/or the Office of Civil Rights (Dallas Office, U.S. Department of Education, 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 1620, Dallas, TX 75201-6810, 214.661.9600). You can also report it on TAMIU's anonymous electronic reporting site, *Report It*, at https://www.tamiu.edu/reportit (https://www.tamiu.edu/reportit/index.shtml).

TAMIU advises a pregnant/parenting student to notify their professor once the student is aware that accommodations for such will be necessary. It is recommended that the student and professor develop a reasonable plan for the student's completion of missed coursework or assignments. The Office of Compliance (Lorissa M. Cortez, lorissam.cortez@tamiu.edu) can assist the student and professor in working out the reasonable accommodation. For other questions or concerns regarding Title IX compliance related to pregnant/parenting students, contact the Title IX

Coordinator. In the event that a student needs a leave of absence for a substantial period of time, TAMIU urges the student to consider a Leave of Absence (LOA) as outlined in the TAMIU *Student Handbook*.#As part of our efforts to assist and encourage all students towards graduation, TAMIU provides LOAs for students, including pregnant/parenting students, in accordance with the Attendance Rule and the Student LOA Rule.#Both rules can be found in the TAMIU *Student Handbook*.

For parenting-related rights, accommodations, and resources, contact the Parenting Liaison, Mayra Hernandez, at mghernandez@tamiu.edu, call 956.326.2265, or visit Student Center 226.

For pregnancy-related rights, accommodations, and resources, contact the TIX Coordinator, Lorissa Cortez, at lorissaM.cortez@tamiu.edu, call 956.326.2857, or visit Killam Library 159.

Anti-Discrimination/Title IX

TAMIU does not discriminate or permit harassment against any individual on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, educational programs, or employment. If you would like to file a complaint relative to Title IX or any civil rights violation, please contact the TAMIU Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity/Title IX Coordinator, Lorissa M. Cortez, 5201 University Boulevard, Killam Library 159B, Laredo, TX 78041, TitleIX@tamiu.edu, 956.326.2857, via the anonymous electronic reporting website, ReportIt (https://www.tamiu.edu/reportit) and/or the Office of Civil Rights (Dallas Office), U.S. Department of Education, 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 1620, Dallas, TX 75201-6810, 214.661.9600.

Incompletes

Students who are unable to complete a course should withdraw from the course before the final date for withdrawal and receive a "W." To qualify for an "incomplete" and thus have the opportunity to complete the course at a later date, a student must meet the following criteria:

1. The student must have completed 90% of the course work assigned before the final date for withdrawing from a course with a "W", and the student must be passing the course;
2. The student cannot complete the course because an accident, an illness, or a traumatic personal or family event occurred after the final date for withdrawal from a course;
3. The student must sign an "Incomplete Grade Contract" and secure signatures of approval from the professor and the college dean.
4. The student must agree to complete the missing course work before the end of the next long semester; failure to meet this deadline will cause the "I" to automatically be converted to an "F"; extensions to this deadline may be granted by the dean of the college. This is the general policy regarding the circumstances under which an "incomplete" may be granted, but under exceptional circumstances, a student may receive an incomplete who does not meet all of the criteria above if the faculty member, department chair, and dean recommend it.

WIN Contracts

The Department of Biology and Chemistry does not permit WIN contracts. For other departments within the college, WIN Contracts are offered only under exceptional circumstances and are limited to graduating seniors. Only courses offered by full-time TAMIU faculty or TAMIU instructors are eligible to be contracted for the WIN requirement. However, a WIN contract for a course taught by an adjunct may be approved, with special permission from the department chair and dean. Students must seek approval before beginning any work for the WIN Contract. No student will contract more than one course per semester. Summer WIN Contracts must continue through both summer sessions.

Student Responsibility for Dropping a Course

It is the responsibility of the student to drop the course before the final date for withdrawal from a course. Faculty members, in fact, may not drop a student from a course without getting the approval of their department chair and dean.

Independent Study Course

Independent Study (IS) courses are offered only under exceptional circumstances. Required courses intended to build academic skills may not be taken as IS (e.g., clinical supervision and internships). No student will take more than one IS course per semester. Moreover, IS courses are limited to seniors and graduate students. Summer IS course must continue through both summer sessions.

Grade Changes & Appeals

Faculty are authorized to change final grades only when they have committed a computational error or an error in recording a grade, and they must receive the approval of their department chairs and the dean to change the grade. As part of that approval, they must attach a detailed explanation of the reason for the mistake. Only in rare cases would another reason be entertained as legitimate for a grade change. A student who is unhappy with his or her grade on an assignment must discuss the situation with the faculty member teaching the course. If students believe that they have been graded unfairly, they have the right to appeal the grade using a grade appeal process in the Student Handbook and in the Faculty Handbook.

Final Examination

All courses in all colleges must include a comprehensive exam or performance and be given on the date and time specified by the Academic Calendar and the Final Exam schedule published by the Registrar's Office. In the College of Arts & Sciences all final exams must contain a written component.

The written component should comprise at least 20% of the final exam grade. Exceptions to this policy must receive the approval of the department chair and the dean at the beginning of the semester.

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it. The Telus app is available to download directly from TELUS (tamiu.edu) (https://www.tamiu.edu/counseling/telus/) or from the Apple App Store and Google Play.

Distance Education Courses

Exam:

There will be one exam—the Final, which will be given on **Finals Day (July 2)**. See the course calendar in this syllabus for additional information. The exam will cover all reading materials and lectures (it's comprehensive). The exam will be taken online via Respondus Monitor. If you have not yet paid the **annual $15, that fee may be required to take the exam. Though I believe for school year 2025-2026 there is no charge for Respondus Monitor.**

Respondus Monitor is part of the LockDown Browser and requires a webcam for online exams. If you need assistance with Respondus Monitor, you may contact OIT or click the Student Support tab on Blackboard and search for Instructional Technologies section and select Respondus LockDown Browser. The download itself is free.

If you do not have access to a computer with a webcam, you may be able to check one out from OIT. Please contact OIT for additional information on borrowing a laptop.

Reading Assignments:

Reading assignments for the course are to be completed before the online lecture for which they are assigned. The reading assignments will prepare you for the content of the lectures, for the activities and writing assignments, as well as for the exam.

Make-up Work:

There is **NO** make-up option for a Final Exam.

Obviously, the best plan is to turn assignments in on time (the deadline) so they may be graded in a reasonable amount of time to give students necessary feedback. Assignments received late receive reduced grades for each day past the deadline (see Late assignments below). Late work **MUST** be made up within a week of the due date or by the day of the Final Exam, whichever comes first. Depending on the circumstances, the point loss will be decided upon by the instructor. Typically, the following rules will affect point deduction for late assignments, though the instructor may take special situations into consideration:

- For each class period an assignment is late, the work will take a 20-percent grade reduction.
- Students are required to contact the instructor about make-up work. The instructor will NOT make an effort to contact a student about make-up work. A student's ability to turn in late work will be decided at the discretion of the instructor. Reasons for the lateness of the work will be taken into account, especially in the case of medical emergencies and other University-approved absence excuses.

Blackboard Grade Book:

This is a great tool for your reference while in the course. I will do my best to keep it fairly updated with course information and resources. It may also be used as a place to ask questions (class discussions too), which I will try to monitor and respond to at my first availability. I strongly suggest everyone keep a running record of their grades as assignments/evaluations are returned. I also recommend keeping a copy of all of your papers/ assignments up until final grades are posted.

Late assignments:

Late assignments, will receive a grade reduction of 20% (two letter grades lost) for every day they are late. If you do not have a verifiable and accepted excuse, the late assignment grade reduction will be applied. A “verifiable excuse” is determined on a case-by-case situation by the instructor but normally includes things such as a doctor's excuse, military service, etc., in accordance with the policies of the College of Arts and Sciences. Since this is a summer course, each class day (Monday through Thursday) constitutes one day late. If something is due on Thursday and it's turned in after Thursday but before the end of Monday, it counts as one class day late.

Expectations:

Your overall class participation grade is determined by the discretion of the instructor. For online classes, this is made up of graded discussions. These points are factored based on online discussion participation and the following list of expectations:

- Adoption of an "I can do" attitude
- Being punctual and prepared for each class
- Positive participation in class discussions as well as professional behavior in all communication with other students and the instructor
- Being attentive and respectful during lecture and any student presentations
- Compliance with all Academic Policies & Requirements of Texas A&M International University and the College of Arts and Sciences

Your Grade Discussions:

If a student wishes to discuss their grade, please make a virtual appointment with the instructor. The instructor will not discuss grades of any form during class or lab time, or in front of other students. The student must work with the instructor to schedule a time when both are available.

Online Courses and On-Campus Meetings:

Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 2, Subchapter J, Section 2.202 (https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=2&rl=202), defines distance education as the formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50%) of instruction. Distance education includes hybrid and 100% online courses and programs as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB):

- **Hybrid Course** - A distance education course in which more than 50 percent but less than 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations.
- **100-Percent Online Course** - A distance education course in which 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations. **Requirements for on-campus or in-person orientation, testing, academic support services, internships/fieldwork, or other non-instructional activities do not exclude a course from this category.**

Course Structure:

Students are expected to log into Blackboard at least weekly, read course materials each week, follow each Blackboard Module in the order it's presented within the timeframe for each module, starting with the PowerPoints/lectures, then proceeding to online discussions, then proceeding to a weekly activity (for the first three weeks) and then finally to each week's writing assignment. Writing assignments are turned in via Blackboard Turnitin, unless otherwise noted. Activities are turned in via Blackboard Dropbox, unless otherwise noted. The more frequently you log into Blackboard each week, the better. Communication sent to the whole class is typically sent through Blackboard announcements; frequent online logins means you're less likely to miss important communications.

To get the most out of this course, it's best for students to complete things in the order they're presented. Each reading assignment prepares students for the PowerPoints/lectures, which hopefully make the reading assignments more clear (through examples, visuals, and context) and further the ideas established in those readings. This information is useful to help the students answer the weekly online discussion questions, as well as to complete the weekly activity (which depends on the knowledge they learned). The weekly activities are the building blocks to help students complete the weekly writing assignments. And the culmination of all of that is necessary for students to complete the Final Game Project, which requires all of the knowledge and skills they have gained up to that point. Everything in this course is interconnected. Students who approach things in the proper flow will be more successful in this course.

Student-Instructor Communication Policy and Response Time

Announcements/Course Messages/Emails:

The instructor will frequently use announcements during the regular summer course week (Mondays-Thursdays), especially on Mondays to kick off the week.

The instructor and students will also communicate via course discussions. There will be at least one required course discussion per week, for a grade. Students may also post to general discussion topics to ask questions (not graded) about activities, assignments, etc.

If a student is in need of a faster response, I recommend they email me directly to thomas.brown@tamiu.edu rather than use course messages. I check my emails much more frequently than I do course messages.

I do my best to respond to messages as soon as possible, but my schedule and yours may not match up in some respects. Please be patient, especially if you email over the weekend (Friday through Sunday).

Assignments and Assessments:

My goal is to complete some grading each week. Keep in mind there are about 35 students and this is a WIN course; writing assignments take time to grade and offer feedback. If you find that you need feedback to proceed with the next assignment, feel free to email me and I will offer you feedback directly so you can move on to the next assignment--especially if you're working ahead of schedule.

Course Communication Guidelines (Netiquette):

There are course expectations concerning etiquette or how we should treat each other online. We must consider these values as we communicate with one another. Visit **Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' web page on Netiquette (http://www.tamiu.edu/distance/students/netiquette.shtml)** for further instruction.

Accommodations/Accessibility Policy:

Texas A&M International University seeks to provide reasonable accommodation for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Director of Student Counseling and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodation. For more information, contact the online at **Office of Disability Services for Students (DSS)**, via phone at 956.326.3086 or by visiting the staff at the Student Center, room 118. A link to the Disabilities Services for Students site has also been included under the "Resources" tab inside the course.

Student Support Resources:

The University wishes to have all students succeed in their courses. To provide support to our students, an array of services in the areas of technology support, academic support, student support, and accessibility support may be found at the University. For more information, visit the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services page on **University Resources and Support Services**.

Computer/Technology Requirements:

In order to be successful in this course, in terms of its technology requirements, students will need access to a computer with Internet access sufficient enough to watch online videos. Students should have access to a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word, for their first three writing assignments and their activities. Students optionally may use Adobe Acrobat. All writing and activity assignments should be turned in as either .DOC, .DOCX, or as .PDF (except for the Final Game Project, which will be a .MOD file.)

Students will also need *Neverwinter Nights: Enhanced Edition* (Windows PC version). This includes the Aurora Toolset, which will be used for several Demos during the course, as well as for the Final Game Project assignment. The files created in the Toolset will save as a .MOD file. This is the file the student will turn in for a grade for the final project. NWN:EE may be purchased from Steam or other authorized Steam-key resellers. An email was sent to students with further details on this information before the class started.

Also, a hardware mouse is highly recommended for NWN:EE's toolset. Working in the toolset is much faster if students can zoom and rotate quickly on 3D environments--this works more efficiently on a mouse than on a laptop track pad.

Optional: Steam may be required software if students purchased their NWN:EE through Steam or purchased a Steam key from a third-party reseller.

When participating in distance education courses, it is vital to consider the technology involved in order to have a successful course. Online students will need regular access to a personal computer that runs on a broadband Internet connection.

It is recommended that you meet the technical requirements listed on the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' webpage when using the learning management system (LMS) of the University.

Additional Hardware. For this class, you will need the following additional hardware: **Webcam (for the Final Exam).** Recently purchased laptops may have these built-in web cameras. If you do not have this equipment, it is recommended to purchase a stand-alone webcam, microphone, or a webcam with a built-in microphone from your local electronic store or any online store.

NOTE: Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services may check out available webcams to students on a first-come, first-served basis. To check out a webcam, please stop by Killam Library, Room 259, and request an available webcam.

TAMIU Students may access online versions of Microsoft Word and PowerPoint software through their Dusty Office 365 account at **https://dusty.tamiu.edu/**. This site also provides students access to download the Microsoft suite for educational use. **See instructions for downloading the Microsoft Office suite**.

Note: Students, if you do not own the required hardware or software or do not have access to the Internet, it will be highly challenging for you to make any progress in this class. However, my goal is to assist you in finding solutions and guide you appropriately most of the required materials can either be found free of charge at TAMIU's library, classrooms, and available computer labs. **Visit Media Services' web page on the availability of on-campus computer labs.** In addition, you may also purchase any of these hardware items at any electronics store.

Learning Management System (Blackboard):

Students are provided with an orientation (*eLearning (Blackboard) Student Orientation*) and access to guides on how to use the Blackboard LMS. Guides may be available at **Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' Student eLearning Tutorial Videos page** or by contacting the eLearning team at **elearning@tamiu.edu**.

Minimum Technical Skills Expected:

When participating in distance education courses, it is vital to consider the technology involved in order to have a successful course. Students in distance education should have knowledge of basic computer and Internet skills, as mentioned on the **Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' webpage**.

This particular course may require students to have increased computer skills for working in the Aurora Toolset. While advanced computer skills (like programming) are not required, they can be helpful for the course. An understanding of how computers process data is useful, as is an understanding of file types, and a minimal knowledge of computer graphics requirements.

Technical Support Services:

Because of the nature of distance education courses, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) computing and information services are vital to the success of online students. This webpage covers contact information for Distance Education Services (Blackboard Support), the OIT Help Desk, and E-mail support: **Technical Support Services**.

Web Conferences/Synchronous sessions:

If you need to discuss your grades or get help from the instructor, you may schedule a virtual meeting. These virtual meetings will be held through Blackboard Collaborate. You must request a meeting via email (thomas.brown@tamiu.edu) at least 24 business hours in advance and offer suggested times when you are available. I will do my best to accommodate your schedule, within reason, and I will email you a link to the Collaborate virtual meeting. Meetings should be scheduled for Mondays through Thursdays.

Grading Scale/Schema:

In determining the final course grade, the following scale is used in point value.

- *900+ = A*
- *800-899 = B*
- *700-799 = C*
- *600-699 = D*
- *599 or below = F*

Rubrics:

Rubrics are available online in the course content in the Resources course module. Note: for the most part, I use the standard WIN Rubric.

Course Evaluation:

At the end of this course, students are encouraged to complete a course evaluation that will be distributed to them via email and through a course link on Blackboard.

Turnitin Policy Or Other Types of Assignments in Other Systems:

Students may turn in Turnitin or Drop Box assignments in DOC, DOCX, or PDF formats. Do NOT use Pages format.

For the Final Games Project assignment (Writing Assignment 4), students should submit a .MOD document from NWN:EE.

Proctoring:

Please see the section titled "Exam:" up above. This course's Final Exam will be through Respondus LockDown Browser with Monitor (web cam required).

Accessibility and Privacy Statements on Course Technologies:

At Texas A&M International University, we believe that all students should have equal technology opportunities in the classroom. These technologies/sites may also require user data, such as the creation of a username and password. You may find the accessibility and privacy policies of the technologies used in this class on the following pages: **Accessibility Statements and Privacy Statements**.

In this class, we will utilize: Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Blackboard, Neverwinter Nights: Enhanced Edition, and possibly Steam.

Syllabus Subject to Change:

While information and assurances are provided in this course syllabus, it should be understood that content may change in keeping with new research and literature and that events beyond the control of the instructor could occur. Students will be informed of any substantive occurrences that will produce syllabus changes.