Game Design, M.A.

Degree Offered

- Master of Arts

Nature of the Program

The MA in Game Design is a 30-credit low-residency program for emerging game designers seeking to expand and build upon their conceptual, production, and project management skills, as well as to further their professional credentials.

The curriculum includes a 3-course foundational sequence that addresses game design, game theory and game production. In addition a series of 1-credit micro-courses allows each candidate to advance a specialized skill set. All courses are only available online, however a campus residency component brings all students and faculty together every summer for a dynamic games conference and game jam. Early in the degree course sequence, a capstone project is conceived and planned out for which the candidate designs and develops a functional and playable game prototype in order to complete the degree. For the capstone project each candidate serves simultaneously as the director of their project while also working in a production specialization role for a peer’s capstone project. The final requirement of the program is that each student present their capstone game project at their final residency.

Our selective enrollment ensures regular individual contact with dedicated, diverse faculty who are committed to a sustained professional exchange with each student. Students must be able to apply and communicate a diverse body of knowledge of historical, cultural, contemporary, and aesthetic issues to their professional practice. Students are expected to articulate and defend their capstone project proposal and final prototype within the context of the contemporary game field.

Admissions

The application deadline occurs annually on January 15. There is a two-step process for graduate applications.

Step 1: Apply (http://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/) to West Virginia University Graduate School online. This application will require you to upload your transcripts, resume, letter of intent, three letters of recommendation, and pay an application fee.

Step 2: Submit your portfolio (https://wvuart.slideroom.com/) to the WVU School of Art & Design.

Submit the following material for the degree you are interested in:

MA in Game Design: Portfolio: Up to 5 representative samples of your work with a total viewing duration of no longer than 60 minutes, including interactive projects, game prototypes, game components, graphic imagery, virtual environments, virtual character studies, photographs, or video documentation of the same. WVU School of Art & Design faculty will review portfolios and make recommendations for program acceptance.

Applicants may be required to take additional course work after careful review of undergraduate transcripts.

In addition to the application materials listed, transfer students must transfer graduate work completed elsewhere. Transcripts must accompany the written request. The acceptance of transfer credit is not automatic. The graduate faculty, the graduate advisor, and the School Director will determine how much, if any, previous graduate-level work may be transferred. The maximum allowable number of graduate transfer credits toward the degree is nine. All transfer credits must be in place by the end of the first semester.

Admission Requirements 2023-2024

The Admission Requirements above will be the same for the 2023-2024 Academic Year.

Major Code: 2546

Degree Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ART 502S</td>
<td>Game Design</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>ART 503</td>
<td>Game Theory</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>ART 505S</td>
<td>Game Production</td>
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<tr>
<td>ART 603S</td>
<td>Thesis: Concept &amp; Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>ART 604S</td>
<td>Thesis: Design &amp; Project Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>ART 606S</td>
<td>Thesis: Project Launch</td>
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<tr>
<td>ART 607S</td>
<td>Thesis: Production</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residency and Module *</td>
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<tr>
<td>ART 506</td>
<td>Game Design Residency</td>
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Students are required to take three hours of Game Design Residency and three hours of Focus Modules. If students only need two hours of Game Design Residency, they will be required to complete four hours of Focus Modules.

Suggested Plan of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Semester</th>
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<tr>
<td>ART 506</td>
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<th>Second Semester</th>
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<td>ART 503</td>
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<td>ART 507</td>
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<th>Third Semester</th>
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<td>ART 505S</td>
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<th>Fourth Semester</th>
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<th>Fifth Semester</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<td>ART 604S</td>
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<td>ART 606S</td>
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<td>ART 507</td>
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<td>ART 607S</td>
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<th>Seventh Semester</th>
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<td>ART 506</td>
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Total credit hours: 30

* The first semester in this program is a summer term.

** An accelerated track is also available. Candidates may consult their faculty advisor to learn more details.

Major Learning Outcomes

GAME DESIGN

1. Graduates of this program will be able to analyze the structure of a game to address theory, narrative, character, environment, and sound elements.

2. Graduates of this program will be able to produce functional game prototypes based on theoretical insight, factual observation, iterative processes, and a game design document.

3. Graduates of this program will be able to develop executive leadership, project management, and team management abilities to organize and manage a production pipeline in a remote team-based environment.

4. Graduates of this program will develop competence in usability testing for game quality control.
COURSES

ART 502S. Game Design. 3 Hours.
PR: First year graduate standing. Introduces the multiple components of a game environment and how to create meaningful interactive experiences on and off the computer. Focuses on core game design tasks in the professional practice of conceptualizing and prototyping board games and digital media-based games, including analytical and practical skills such as pitching, iteration, target audience identification, and planning for quality assurance.

ART 503. Game Theory. 3 Hours.
Critical theory and scholarship that addresses the idea of games as a form of designed human culture contained in complex aesthetic, immersive, and experiential artifacts. Addresses visual storytelling, temporal/spatial montage theory, and frameworks to understand player experience. Provides an overview of research methods and multi-disciplinary analytical paradigms for the study of games. Integrates the history of online and offline games.

ART 505S. Game Production. 3 Hours.
PR: ART 503. The technical creation of digital games, coding, game programming, and audio production for the game production pipeline. Hands-on development experience that transfers theoretical knowledge into the procedures and design decisions needed to production a functional game. Multiple game engines are employed in a series of game development project cycles.

ART 506. Game Design Residency. 1 Hour.
PR: Acceptance into the MA in Game Design program. Four-day all day on-campus annual game design conference; an online course frames and organizes the experience. Includes program orientation and on-boarding presentations for students newly accepted into the program, work-in-progress presentations by peers, and capstone project defense presentations by graduating students. Guest lecturers and game design competitions are included in residency activities.

ART 507. . 1 Hour.
PR: Acceptance into the MA in Game Design program. Focus modules vary in topic to address state-of-the-industry expectations for game designers. The purpose of each single credit focus module is to provide game design MA candidates with the ability to develop a specific skill in game design and development. A sampling of topics include animation, 3-D modeling, digital photography, project management, sound editing, among many others.

ART 513S. Graduate Painting. 1-15 Hours.
PR: Consent. Encompasses the significant issues and developments of contemporary painting, including visual resources, critical and pictorial structures, and technical proficiency to establish a coherent aesthetic vision in the medium. (May be repeated for credit).

ART 515. Arts Administration. 3 Hours.
This course provides a practical approach to understanding arts management in not-for-profit organizations. Topics include facilities management, leadership, programming, audience development, board relations, and fundraising.

ART 523S. Graduate Graphic Design. 1-15 Hours.
PR: Consent. Integration of current and historic resources leading to the development of design projects while working within the independent and existing courses. Areas of special interest include the book arts and electronic multimedia. (May be repeated for credit.).

ART 524S. Graduate Graphic Design/Professional Practice. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Students assist and work on projects in a model studio setting, helping to coordinate and manage communication with clients, printers, and undergraduate students in graphic design studio. (May be repeated for credit.).

ART 526S. Graduate Sculpture. 1-15 Hours.
PR: Consent. Encompasses the significant issues and developments of contemporary three-dimensional form, including visual resources, critical theory, historic foundations and technical proficiency to establish a coherent comprehension of the media. (May be repeated for credit.).

ART 530S. Graduate Printmaking. 1-15 Hours.
PR: Consent. Encompasses the germane aspects of contemporary printmaking including visual resources, theoretical and historic structures, and comprehension technical processes, designed to establish a rigorous comprehension of the medium. Areas of specialization include lithography, intaglio, relief, serigraphy, and electronic media. (May be repeated for credit).

ART 532S. Graduate Photography. 1-15 Hours.
PR: Consent. Engages the essential issues and developments of contemporary photography, from traditional to digital photo processes, theoretical and pictorial foundations, and technical proficiency designed to afford a coherent aesthetic vision in the medium. (May be repeated for credit).

ART 534S. Alternative Media. 1-15 Hours.
PR: Consent. Engages the primary issues and developments of alternative and interdisciplinary media such as installation, video, performance art, or other media along with the critical foundation and technical proficiency to establish a comprehensive utilization of chosen forms. (May be repeated for credit.).

ART 540S. Graduate Ceramics. 1-15 Hours.
PR: Consent. Involves the essential concerns and developments of contemporary ceramics, including traditional and current practices. Emphasis is on technical processes designed to provide a rigorous comprehension and expression in clay. Area of specialization include both functional and sculptural ceramics. (May be repeated for credit.).
ART 564. Intro to Art Education. 3 Hours.
PR: Limited to graduate students who are seeking certification for teaching art. Introduction to objectives, procedures, resources, and activities related to art education for the culturally responsive and creative elementary arts educator. Emphasis on content knowledge and student growth and achievement connected to self-motivation, emotional wellbeing and active engagement. Limited to students enrolled in art education majors, or consent of school. Online lectures and activities.

ART 565. Pre-Student Teaching. 3 Hours.
PR: ART 564. Focuses on curriculum development to prepare students for teaching art. Studies curriculum theory and research, practices, and addresses the wide range of issues and topics of curriculum necessary for new teachers in the art field. Includes discussions of historical, sociopolitical and cultural aspects of schooling as they relate to art curriculum.

ART 566. Art Education: Secondary. 3 Hours.
PR: ART 564. Forms a foundation for using arts as an active process for learning at the secondary school level. Offers experiential and theoretical tools for understanding creativity and critical thinking in arts education, beginning with critical theory, visual culture, and individual pre-service teachers’ art studio practice. Pedagogical approaches include an introduction to social justice issues and an anti-bias education.

ART 567. Technology Methods in Art Education. 3 Hours.
PR: Any graduate art or education major. Examines multiple aspects of classroom technologies used in art and design education. The course combines hands-on computer techniques, critical analysis of digital art and practical experiences in the K-12 classroom and focuses on the integration and teaching of new and emerging technologies within elementary and secondary school classrooms.

ART 580. Art and Environment. 3 Hours.
PR: Registered graduate student. Interdisciplinary studio/seminar course investigating art's relationship to the environment through readings, field trips, presentations, and studio practice.

ART 590. Teaching Practicum/Professional Practice. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. This course is designed to develop aspects of college teaching experience such as writing a syllabus, organizing a classroom, or improvising with materials or topical issues. Preparation for establishing professional practice as a studio artist will be addressed.

ART 591. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of advanced topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

ART 592. Directed Study. 1-6 Hours.
Directed study, reading, and/or research.

ART 593. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

ART 594. Seminar. 1-6 Hours.
Special seminars arranged for advanced graduate students.

ART 595. Independent Study: Graduate Studio. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. (May be repeated for credit.) Intensive, self-directed research involving special projects in studio production. Areas of study include, but are not limited to painting, drawing, intermedia, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, and design.

ART 600. Graduate Exhibition and Thesis. 3-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. (May be repeated for credit.) Research will be directed towards the production of a solo exhibition and a written thesis which documents the processes and philosophical principles of the artwork.

ART 602. Master’s in Art Education Project. 3-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. This course is designed to develop the master's project in art education. The in-depth project must be approved by the advising committee.

ART 603S. Thesis: Concept & Research. 3 Hours.
PR: (ART 502 or ART 502S) and ART 503 and (ART 505 or ART 505S). Develop the thesis game concept based on game industry, player experience, and artistic intention. Involves research of the digital games industry, identification of a design opportunity, development of a research question, systematic investigation, and formation of a game conceptual design in response to research conclusions.

ART 604S. Thesis: Design & Project Plan. 3 Hours.
PR: ART 603 or ART 603S. Design game and create the game design document, develop and document a detailed project plan to produce the game using original concept document and applying project management techniques. Define production team needs.

ART 606S. Thesis: Project Launch. 3 Hours.
PR: ART 604 or ART 604S. Begin thesis game production to create a functional game. Execute game development project plan to build a playable digital game. In order to complete the course, the game must receive faculty approval and be presented in demo format at a game conference.

ART 607S. Thesis: Production. 6 Hours.
PR: ART 606 or ART 606S. Complete thesis game and present for MA defense and professional conference. In order to complete the course, the game must receive faculty approval and be presented in demo format at a game conference.
ART 610. Introduction to Visual Arts Therapy. 3 Hours.
PR: Must have a bachelors degree in art, counseling, psychology, education, or special education. Introduces students to basic principles and practices of visual arts therapy through historical background, theoretical frameworks, and in-field issues. Provides information on pioneers in the field, how and where art therapists practice, training required for the profession, as well as interactive art explorations to incorporate art therapy principles into their own teaching and/or artistic practice. Online lectures and discussion.

ART 611. Theory of Art Education & Art Therapy. 3 Hours.
PR: Graduate standing. Introduces students to the historical, theoretical and philosophical foundations of visual arts therapy. Provides students with an overall understanding of how visual arts therapy relates to practice in art education. Specific theories relating to creativity development and visual literacy are explored.

ART 612. Art Methods/Materials for Special Populations. 3 Hours.
PR: ART 611. Provides students with in-depth understanding of art methods and materials used in artistic development of children, adolescents and adults, while using creative process of art making to enhance the physical, mental and emotional well being of individuals of all ages. Research, assigned readings, online discussions, and hands-on projects and critiques. On-campus art-making seminar is required.

ART 613. Art Assessments and Evaluations with Special Populations. 3 Hours.
PR: ART 611. Explores the assessment and evaluative practices of techniques, tools and concepts used in Visual Arts Therapy projects. Course consists of research, assigned readings, online discussions, written essays and visual explorations. A one day off-campus practicum is required.

ART 620. Advanced Problems in Art Making. 3 Hours.
PR: ART 611 and ART 612 or students who have completed an MFA or an MA in Art Studio may waive this course per the consent of the instructor. Provides students with an in-depth understanding of advanced studio art experiences and practices used to enhance learning outcomes for students with physical, emotional or social disabilities. Students will teach individual lessons to a select population using the modified lesson plan developed in this course. On-campus seminar and off-campus practicum is required.

ART 690. Teaching Practicum. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Supervised practice in college teaching of art. Note: This course is intended to insure that graduate assistants are adequately prepared and supervised when they are given college teaching responsibility. It also provides a mechanism for students not on assistantships to gain teaching experience. (Grading will be P/F.)

ART 691. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation in advanced topics that are not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

ART 692. Directed Study. 1-6 Hours.
Directed study, reading, and or research.

ART 693. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

ART 694. Seminar. 1-6 Hours.
Special seminars arranged for advanced graduate students.

ART 695. Independent Study. 1-9 Hours.
Faculty supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

ART 696. Graduate Seminar. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Each graduate student will present at least one seminar to the assembled faculty and graduate student body of his or her program.

ART 697. Research. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. Research activities leading to thesis, problem report, research paper, or equivalent scholarly project, or dissertation. (Grading may be S/U.)

ART 698. Thesis or Dissertation. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. This is an optional course for programs that wish to provide formal supervision is needed during the writing of student reports (698), theses (698), or dissertations (798). (Grading is Normal.)

ART 699. Graduate Colloquium. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. For graduate students not seeking coursework credit but who wish to meet residency requirements, use the University’s facilities, and participate in its academic and cultural programs. Note: Graduate students who are not actively involved in coursework or research are entitled, through enrolled in their department's 699/799 Graduate Colloquium to consult with graduate faculty, participate in both formal and informal academic activities sponsored by their program, and retain all of the rights and privileges of duly enrolled students. Grading is P/F; colloquium credit may not be counted against credit requirements for masters programs. Registration for one credit of 699/799 graduate colloquium satisfies the University requirement of registration in the semester in which graduation occurs.

ART 930. Professional Development. 1-6 Hours.
Professional development courses provide skill renewal or enhancement in a professional field or content area (e.g., education, community health, geology). These tuition-waived continuing education courses are graded on a pass/fail grading scale and do not apply as graduate credit toward a degree program.