University of Gdańsk

Subject card

Subject name and code	Historical Game Design, PG_00216096						
Field of study	Historical Games and Digital Heritage						
Date of commencement of studies	October 2027		Academic year of realisation of subject	2027/2028			
Education level	Master's studies		Subject group	Obligatory subject group in the field of study Subject group related to scientific research in the field of study			
Mode of study	full-time studies		Mode of delivery	at the university			
Year of study	1		Language of instruction	English			
Semester of study	1		ECTS credits	6.0			
Learning profile	academic		Assessment form	credit			
Conducting unit							
Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)	Subject supervisor		dr hab. Michał Mochocki				
	Teachers						
Lesson types	Lesson type	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
	Number of study hours	0.0	0.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	40
	E-learning hours included: 0.0						
Learning activity and number of study hours	Learning activity	Participation in didactic classes included in study plan		Participation in consultation hours	Self-study	SUM	
	Number of study hours	40		65.0	45.0	150	
Subject objectives	The module develops skills in independent and collaborative historical game design through developing and testing a role-playing game prototype. Students learn to analyse sources critically, translate historical knowledge into game mechanics, rules and narrative, create characters, storylines and scenes grounded in a particular historical setting, and test their design choices. The module also develops skills in documenting design decisions, organising teamwork and representing the past responsibly.						

Learning outcomes	Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
	[GHDCMU2_W02] Has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of concepts in historical and cultural game studies and their connections with historiography, particularly the relationships between game content, mechanics and technology, player agency and cultural context in the interpretation and representation of the past and the construction of historical knowledge.	Comprehensively analyses selected historical games, examining how they represent the past and culture through game mechanics, aesthetics, technology, content and interaction systems.	[SW2] presentation/project/paper/ report
	[GHDCMU2_U07] Uses English at a level of at least B2+ of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in spoken and written communication in academic and professional contexts, employing specialist terminology from history, game studies and digital heritage.	Uses English at a minimum of B2+ in academic and project communication, applying specialist terminology from historiography, game studies and historical game design when presenting the game concept, justifying design decisions, participating in team discussions and preparing documentation.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU3] text preparation/written work
	[GHDCMU2_U08] Organises and leads the work of an interdisciplinary research, development or project team, defining objectives, methods and resources required to carry out tasks, planning schedules, assigning responsibilities, establishing communication procedures, and monitoring and evaluating outcomes.	Plans and coordinates a selected stage of the design team’s work, defines tasks and their schedule, allocates responsibilities, monitors progress and evaluates the results of joint work.	[SU5] implementation of a problem task [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work
	[GHDCMU2_K02] Is prepared to initiate and co-organise activities promoting the responsible interpretation of history and the protection and popularisation of cultural heritage, taking into account the public interest, diverse perspectives and the accessibility of these activities to different audiences.	Proposes ways to represent history responsibly in games, considering diverse historical perspectives, audience needs and accessibility, and helps implement them in a team project.	[SK5] implementation of a problem task
	[GHDCMU2_W03] Has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the principles and methods of iterative game design and prototyping, particularly historical games as interactive models of the past informed by historical knowledge and source interpretation, and culturally themed games as forms of engagement with cultural heritage.	Explains advanced principles of the iterative game design and prototyping process, including through examples from their own projects, with attention to the specific challenges of working with historical and cultural material.	[SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion
	[GHDCMU2_U03] Independently develops and refines design solutions in the creation of games focused on history and cultural heritage, drawing on historical knowledge and critical source analysis, selecting appropriate methods and tools during concept development, prototyping, playtesting and iterative refinement, and collaborating within an interdisciplinary team to prepare the outcomes for dissemination to audiences.	Participates effectively in the historical game design process, carrying out tasks in three integrated areas: 1. creating, testing and modifying functional prototypes to achieve intended player experiences; 2. designing gameplay by selecting and combining mechanics, dynamics and interaction structures; 3. designing and writing the narrative layer (world, characters, scenes and dialogue).	[SU5] implementation of a problem task [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work

Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
[GHDCMU2_U05] Independently prepares and presents the results of research or creative work concerning history, its interpretation or representation in games and digital heritage, in the form of a scholarly text or project documentation, drawing on critically selected source material, formulating logically reasoned conclusions and justifying the adopted research or design solutions.	Prepares comprehensive documentation for a historical game project, covering source analysis and selection, justification of design decisions, mechanics and narrative approaches, prototyping and testing, and conclusions from the project	[SU2] presentation/project/paper/ report

Subject contents

1. Historical games as interactive representations of the past: design fundamentals.
2. Critical analysis of historical sources and their use in game design.
3. Translating historical material into rules, mechanics and player decisions.
4. Designing game worlds, characters, conflicts and scenes.
5. Writing historical narratives and dialogue grounded in the period setting.
6. Prototyping a role-playing game and documenting the design process.
7. Playtesting, analysing feedback and refining the prototype.
8. Team organisation and project management.
9. Responsible representation of the past and accessibility of designed content.

Prerequisites and co-requisites

Assessment methods and criteria

Subject passing criteria	Passing threshold	Percentage of the final grade
Instructor's observation of student work	51.0%	0.0%
Team-based postmortem and individual presentations	51.0%	100.0%

Recommended reading

Basic literature	McCall, Jeremiah. 2026. Designing Historical Games for Classrooms: A Practical Guide for Educators. Routledge. Suckling, Maurice. 2025. Paper time machines: Critical game design and historical board games. Taylor and Francis. Smith Nicholls, Florence., & Cook, Michael. 2025. Archaeological Gameworld Affordances: A Grounded Theory of How Players Interpret Environmental Storytelling. Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3714036. Fullerton, Tracy. 2024. Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games. Fifth edition. CRC Press.
Supplementary literature	Wright, Esther, Iain Donald, and Nick Webber, eds. 2026. Writing Game Histories. Bloomsbury Publishing. Digital Culture & Society, Vol. 11, Issue 1/2025 – Digital Games through Muddled Pasts and Modded Histories. Cook, Kate, Robert Houghton, and Chris Kempshall, eds. 2027. The Routledge Companion to Video Games and History. Routledge. Tremblay, Kaitlin. 2023. Collaborative Worldbuilding for Video Games. Taylor and Francis. Engelstein, Geoffrey. 2027. Building Blocks of Tabletop Game Design: An Encyclopedia of Mechanisms. CRC Press.
eResources addresses	

Example issues/ example questions/ tasks being completed	**Adapting historical material:** Which aspects of the selected historical material can be translated into game rules, player choices and their consequences? **Characters and story:** Develop characters with distinct goals and write a scene in which player choices shape what happens next. **Team project:** Agree on the project scope, allocate tasks and set a schedule. Build a role-playing game prototype, run a playtest and revise the prototype based on your observations and player feedback. **Creative writing:** Write dialogue or a scene description set in a chosen historical context. Explain your choice of language and details. **Individual analysis of a design decision:** Choose one element of the historical game you developed, such as a mechanic, narrative device, model of social relationships or representation of historical events. Explain which sources and historical interpretations underpin it, which alternatives were considered and how testing shaped the final design.
Work placement	Not applicable

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