



Courses 101-909: The Best of the Critical-Gaming Blog

organized by subject and intellectual challenge 11.22.2011

Before you start designing your own games, mods, or levels, it is important to have a firm understanding of the game design basics. If you are considering going to a [video game design school](#), having a firm grasp on the basics will put you ahead of the curve. This includes understanding interactivity, mechanics, interplay, variation, and emergence. On top of this, it wouldn't hurt to become familiar with the critical theories I've developed.

The 9 courses that follow provide a detailed game design curriculum so you can match a thorough understanding of design concepts with a detailed [critical-language](#). Before you start, if you can get your hands on a copy of the book [Half-Real by Jesper Juul](#), I highly recommend reading it. This book jump started my game design journey that resulted in Critical-Gaming.

Each course is organized by subject. If you print this document, you can keep track of your progress using the check boxes. Once you get through courses 101-303, feel free to jump to any course that interests you.

Game Design 101: The Foundations of Gameplay

Mechanics

- [Dialogue: The Mechanics of Language](#)
- [Mechanics and Abstractions part.1](#)
- [Mechanics and Abstractions part.2](#)
- [Mechanics and Abstractions part.3](#)

Introduction

- [Mario Melodies: Introduction](#)

Interplay

- [Mario Melodies: Interplay part.1](#)
- [Mario Melodies: Interplay part.2](#)
- [Neo*RPG Interplay](#)

Variation

- [Mario Melodies: Variation part.1](#)
- [Mario Melodies: Variation part.2](#)
- [Mario Melodies: Variation part.3](#)

Counterpoint

- [Mario Melodies: Counterpoint part.1](#)
- [Mario Melodies: Counterpoint part.2](#)
- [Mario Melodies: Counterpoint part.3](#)

I also recommend taking the [final exam](#) for the Mario Melodies series.

Game Design 202: Counterpoint Continued

- [Contrary Motion](#)
- [Suspension](#)
- [Variation, Rhythm, and Music](#)

Interplay 2

- [Counterpoint: The Depth of Interplay pt.1](#)
 - [Counterpoint: The Depth of Interplay pt.2](#)
 - [Counterpoint: The Depth of Interplay pt.3](#)
 - [Counterpoint: The Depth of Interplay pt.4](#)
 - [Counterpoint: The Depth of Interplay pt.5](#)
 - [Counterpoint: The Depth of Interplay pt.6](#)
 - [The Interplay of Mario Strikers Charged](#)
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- The Interplay of Advance Wars
- The Interplay of Brawl

Variation 2

- for the Love of Variation pt.1
- for the Feel of Design Space pt.2
- for the Steps of Development pt.3
- for the Scale of Balance pt.4

Level Design

- Folded Level Design
- Pure Organic Level Design
- LBP Workshop: Alternate Paths
- LBP Workshop: Sequence Breaking
- (P)layered Level Design
- Locks, Keys, & Obstacles pt. 1
- Locks, Keys, & Obstacles pt.2

Game Design 303: Dynamics (Space-Time) & Misc. Theory

Dynamics (Time & Decay)

- Gameplay Dynamics
- Dynamic Clarification
- Measuring Time: Real and Turn-Based
- Decay-Cycles and Natural Forms

Dynamics (2D/3D Space)

- 2D vs 3D: Lost in Space
- 2D + 2D = 3D pt.1
- 2D + 2D = 3D pt.2
- 2D + 2D = 3D pt.3
- 2D + 2D = 3D pt.4
- 2D + 2D = 3D pt.5
- 3D Control of 3D
- Compressing Space
- Farewell Ba3D

Misc. Design & Theory

- Organic and Inorganic Design
- Taking CHARGE
- Difficulty Design: A Difficult Endeavour
- Interplay....Gunplay
- Tension: Threats & Timers
- Video Game Climaxes
- Inward Innovation
- Mulling Over Multiple Goals
- Engaging Design
- Engage, Challenge, Interact
- Spectator Sport
- Counterpoint: Functional Blind Spots
- Wrinkles in Design Space

Game Design 404: Genre Specific

Platformer

- The Measure of Mario pt.1
- The Measure of Mario pt.2
- The Measure of Mario pt.3
- The Measure of Mario pt.4
- The Measure of Mario pt.5
- The Measure of Mario pt.6
- The Measure of Mario pt.7
- The Measure of Mario pt.8
- The Measure of Mario pt.9
- The Measure of Mario pt.10
- Everyone Is Doing The Mario

RTS

- Critical-Gaming Pikmin Course: Week 1
- Critical-Gaming Pikmin Course: Week 2
- Critical-Gaming Pikmin Course: Week 3
- Critical-Gaming Pikmin Course: Week 4
- Critical-Gaming Pikmin Course: Week 5

- Critical-Gaming Pikmin Course: Week 6
- Critical-Gaming Pikmin Course: Week 7 & 8
- Critical-Gaming Pikmin Course: Week 9, 10, & 11
- Critical-Gaming Pikmin Course: Final Presentations

Puzzle

- Puzzlement & Portability
- Puzzle Design & Decoder Reading
- Puzzle Design & Reading Failure
- Elegant & Brute Force Solutions

RPG

- Pokémon KKID'S PC pt.1
- Pokémon Records pt.2
- Pokémon Formula pt.3
- Pokémon Battle Box pt.4
- Pokémon Professor's PC pt.5
- Pokémon Dream World pt.6
- Pokémon Center pt.7
- Pokémon Mailbox pt.8

Game Design 505: Skill, Multiplayer, & Competition

Skill

- An Examination of Skill pt.1
- An Examination of Skill pt.2
- An Examination of Skill pt.3
- An Examination of Skill pt.4
- An Examination of Skill pt.5
- An Examination of Skill pt.6
- An Examination of Skill pt.7
- An Examination of Skill pt.8
- An Examination of Skill pt.9
- An Examination of Skill pt.10
- An Examination of Skill pt.11

- An Examination of Skill pt.12
- An Examination of Skill pt.13
- An Examination of Skill pt.14
- An Examination of Skill pt.15
- An Examination of Skill pt.16
- An Examination of Skill pt.17
- An Examination of Skill pt.18
- An Examination of Skill pt.19

- Knowledge Out Of The Blue

Co-op Design

- CO OP Mechanics and Design
- CO OP Mechanics and Design pt. 2
- CO OP Mechanics and Design pt. 3
- Co-unter-op Design

Competition

- Playstyles & Design pt.1
- Playstyles & Design pt.2
- Playstyles & Design pt.3
- Playstyles & Design pt.4
- Mixups pt.1
- Mixups pt.3

Misconceptions

- Competitive Multiplayer: Collective Misunderstanding pt.1
- Competitive Multiplayer: Collective Misunderstanding pt.2
- Competitive Multiplayer: Collective Misunderstanding pt.3
- Competitive Multiplayer: Collective Misunderstanding pt.4

Metagame

- Metagame Meditations pt.1
- Metagame Meditations pt.2
- Metagame Meditations pt.3
- Metagame Meditations pt.4
- Project M-etagame

Game Design 606: Complexity & Emergence

- Complexities You Can Count On
- Emergence You Can See

Clean Game Design

- The Coefficient of Clean pt.1
- The Coefficient of Clean pt.2
- The Coefficient of Clean pt.3
- The Coefficient of Clean pt.4
- The Coefficient of Clean pt.5
- The Coefficient of Clean pt.6
- The Coefficient of Clean pt.7
- The Coefficient of Clean pt.8
- The Coefficient of Clean pt.9

Evaluating Combat

- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.1
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.2
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.3
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.4
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.5
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.6
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.7
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.8
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.9
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.10
- Appraising the Art of Combat pt.11

Interesting Choices

- Interesting Choices: Interesting Gameplay pt.1
- Interesting Choices: Interesting Gameplay pt.2
- Interesting Choices: Interesting Gameplay pt.3
- Interesting Choices: Interesting Gameplay pt.4
- Interesting Choices: Interesting Gameplay pt.5

- Interesting Choices: Interesting Gameplay pt.6
- Interesting Choices: Interesting Gameplay pt.7
- Interesting Choices: Interesting Gameplay pt.8
- Interesting Choices: Interesting Gameplay pt.9

Digital Truth

- Digital Truth: Emergent Origins pt.1
- Digital Truth: Emergent Origins pt.2
- Digital Truth: Emergent Origins pt.3

Predicting Emergence

- Emergent Mathematics pt.1
- Emergent Mathematics pt.2
- Emergent Mathematics pt.3

Game Design 707: Learning, Motivation, and Behavior

Intuition and Discovery

- From Unintuitive to Eureka pt.1
- From Unintuitive to Eureka pt.2
- From Unintuitive to Eureka pt.3
- From Unintuitive to Eureka pt.4
- From Unintuitive to Eureka pt.5
- Random Knowledge Quirks

Interpreting the Mind from the Game

- Game/Mental State pt.1
- Game/Mental State pt.2
- Suckcess!
- Game/Mental State pt.3
- Game/Mental State pt.4
- Game/Mental State pt.5

Nuance

- Super Mario Nuance pt.1
- Super Mario Nuance pt.2

Simplification

- Complex Time Simplified pt.1
- Complex Time Simplified pt.2
- Complex Time Simplified pt.3

- Design-Space-Time Continuum pt.1
- Design-Space-Time Continuum pt.2
- Design-Space-Time Continuum pt.3

Fun

- The Zero-Sum Funomaly pt.1
- The Zero-Sum Funomaly pt.2
- The Zero-Sum Funomaly pt.3
- The Zero-Sum Funomaly pt.4
- The Zero-Sum Funomaly pt.5
- The Zero-Sum Funomaly pt.6
- The Zero-Sum Funomaly pt.7

Game Design 808: Story & Communication

Story

- Story Design - Story Telling pt.1
- Story Design - Story Telling pt.2
- Story Design - Story Telling pt.3
- Story Design - Story Telling pt.4
- Story Design - Story Telling pt.5
- Story Design - Story Telling pt.6
- Story Design - Story Telling pt.7
- Story Design - Story Telling pt.8
- Story Design - Story Telling pt.9

Examples

- Don't Start Nothing Won't Be Nothing
- Why Game Writers Need To Be Specific
- Linearity: Games vs Conversation

- Professor Layton and the Unwound Story
- Link: He Speaks Like No Child
- Death, Milk, and Diving Suits
- Sorry Sister. It's just business
- Look. Don't Touch.

Game Design 909: Back to the Basics

Controllers

- Mechanics & Interface: The Third Hand

- Controller Design: Buttons pt.1
- Controller Design: Analog Stick pt.2
- Controller Design: Touch Screen pt.3
- Controller Design: Pointers pt.4
- Controller Design: Motion pt.5
- Controller Design: Terminology pt.6
- Controller Design: Ergonomics pt.7
- Controller Design: Function vs Feel pt.8
- Controller Design: Customization pt.9
- Controller Design: Recap & Rebuttals pt.10
- Controller Design: Rebuttals pt.11

Save Systems

- Save System Design pt.1
- Save System Design pt.2
- Save System Design pt.3
- Save System Design pt.4

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