Information about the course

Degree: Degree in Design and Narration in Animation and Video games

Faculty: Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences

Code: 2050330 **Name:** Psychology of gaming, gameplay and level design

Credits: 6,00 ECTS **Year:** 3 **Semester:** 2

Module: NARRACIÓN

Subject Matter: PSICOLOGÍA **Type:** Obligatoria

Branch of knowledge:

Department: Multimedia and Digital Arts

Type of learning: Classroom-based learning

Language/-s in which it is given: Spanish

Teachers:

2053A	Jose Luis Soler Domínguez **(Profesor responsable)**	joseluis.soler@ucv.es

Module organization

NARRACIÓN

Subject Matter	ECTS	Subject	ECTS	Year/semester
PSICOLOGÍA	6	Psychology of gaming, gameplay and level design	6	3/2
NARRATIVA AUDIOVISUAL	12	Animation and video game scripts	6	2/1
		Storyboards for animation and video games	6	2/2

Recommended knowledge

No prior knowledge is required.

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, the student must demonstrate having acquired the following learning outcomes:

R1 - Describe the main psychological behaviours of human beings in response to narrative, audiovisual and video game stimuli. 2.7

Learning outcomes of the specified title

Type of AR: Competencias

- Apply the principles derived from the concept of integral ecology to their proposals or actions, regardless of their scope, area of knowledge, and the contexts in which they are presented.

- Correctly apply their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional manner and be able to develop and defend arguments and solve problems within their area of study.

- Develop theoretical and practical responses based on the sincere search for the full truth and the integration of all dimensions of the human being in response to life's major questions.

- Respect and implement the ethical principles and action proposals derived from the Sustainable Development Goals, applying them to all academic and professional activities.

R2 - Develop stories and scripts taking into account the psychological behaviour of the audience and the sincere search for the whole truth and the integration of all dimensions of the human being in the face of life's big questions, applying the principles derived from the concept of integral ecology and respecting and putting into practice the ethical principles and proposals for action derived from the sustainable development goals. RA2.8 / RA6.11 / RA7.11 / RA8.13

Learning outcomes of the specified title

Type of AR: Competencias

- Apply the principles derived from the concept of integral ecology to their proposals or actions, regardless of their scope, area of knowledge, and the contexts in which they are presented.

- Correctly apply their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional manner and be able to develop and defend arguments and solve problems within their area of study.

- Develop theoretical and practical responses based on the sincere search for the full truth and the integration of all dimensions of the human being in response to life's major questions.

- Respect and implement the ethical principles and action proposals derived from the Sustainable Development Goals, applying them to all academic and professional activities.

R3 - Designing levels in video games from the perspective of player psychology. RA2.9

Learning outcomes of the specified title

Type of AR: Competencias

- Apply the principles derived from the concept of integral ecology to their proposals or actions, regardless of their scope, area of knowledge, and the contexts in which they are presented.

- Correctly apply their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional manner and be able to develop and defend arguments and solve problems within their area of study.

- Develop theoretical and practical responses based on the sincere search for the full truth and the integration of all dimensions of the human being in response to life's major questions.

- Respect and implement the ethical principles and action proposals derived from the Sustainable Development Goals, applying them to all academic and professional activities.

R4 - Recognise narrative structures based on their psychological impact on the recipient. 2.10

Learning outcomes of the specified title

Type of AR: Competencias

- Apply the principles derived from the concept of integral ecology to their proposals or actions, regardless of their scope, area of knowledge, and the contexts in which they are presented.

- Correctly apply their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional manner and be able to develop and defend arguments and solve problems within their area of study.

- Develop theoretical and practical responses based on the sincere search for the full truth and the integration of all dimensions of the human being in response to life's major questions.

- Respect and implement the ethical principles and action proposals derived from the Sustainable Development Goals, applying them to all academic and professional activities.

Assessment system

In-person modality

Assessed learning outcomes	Granted percentage	Assessment tool
R1, R4	20,00%	SE1 – Written exams.
R1, R2, R3, R4	30,00%	SE4 – Reflective assignments (essays, text commentaries, etc.).
R1, R2, R3, R4	50,00%	SE8 – Project development.

Observations

In accordance with Article 9 of the General Regulations for the Evaluation and Grading of Official Studies and UCV's Own Degrees (Títulos Propios de la UCV), the single assessment is linked to the impossibility of attendance for students enrolled in a face-to-face (in-person) modality degree. It is, therefore, an extraordinary and exceptional evaluation system available to those students who, with justified and accredited reasons, cannot submit to the continuous assessment system, and who formally request it from the course instructor. The instructor responsible for the subject will expressly decide on the admission of the student's single assessment request and will communicate the acceptance/denial.
With regard to the subject **Psychology of Play, Playability, and Level Design (Psicología del juego, jugabilidad y diseño de niveles)**, the minimum required attendance percentage is 80%. This is the limit to be taken into consideration for the potential request for single assessment.
Should it be granted, the alternative assessment will be based on:

- Submission of all course deliverables (on an individual basis)
- Presentation of an integrative project, to be defined with the course instructor.
- Presentation of a monograph on one of the course topics, with a research focus, to be defined with the course instructor.

USE OF AI:

In the subject **Psychology of Play, Playability, and Level Design**, and in compliance with the University's "Fundamental Principles for the Use of Artificial Intelligence," AI is considered a complementary tool to enhance learning, not to substitute the student's effort and reasoning.

The use of AI tools is permitted for:

·Consulting conceptual doubts about course content.

·Seeking inspiration or generating basic ideas for game mechanics or lore in early prototyping phases.

·Generating player persona profiles for use in design tasks.

The use of AI tools is **not** permitted for:

·Generating the entirety or the majority of the content for practical assignments, projects, or any other assessable activity.

·Creating any assessable material and presenting it as one's own work without substantial creative and technical contribution from the student.

·Directly solving the problems or exercises proposed in assessment tests.

Intellectual authorship and final responsibility for all submitted work rest exclusively with the student. Submitting material largely generated by AI without significant personal contribution will be considered a violation of originality and will be handled in accordance with the current academic regulations, similar to plagiarism. In accordance with the principle of mandatory transparency, if AI has been used as support in the permitted ways, the student must include a note in the submission specifying which tools were used and how they contributed to the development of their work (e.g., "ChatGPT was used to generate a base example of camera movement, which was subsequently modified and expanded by the student").

CRITERIA FOR THE GRANTING OF HONORS GRADE (MATRÍCULA DE HONOR):

According to Article 14.4 of the UCV's General Regulations for the Evaluation and Grading of Official Studies and UCV's Own Degrees, the "Honors Grade" (Matrícula de Honor) distinction may be awarded to students who have obtained a grade equal to or greater than 9.0. The number of such distinctions may not exceed five percent of the students enrolled in a group in the corresponding academic year, unless the number of enrolled students is less than 20, in which case a single "Honors Grade" may be awarded.

MENTION OF DISTINCTION:

The mention of “Honors” may be awarded to students who have obtained a grade equal to or greater than 9.0. Their number may not exceed five percent of the students enrolled in a group in the corresponding academic year, unless the number of students enrolled is lower.

Training activities

The methodologies to be used so that the students reach the expected learning outcomes will be the following:

M1 MD1: Flipped classroom

M2 MD2: Interactive lecture

M5 MD5: Case studies

M6 MD6: Project-based learning

IN-CLASS TRAINING ACTIVITIES

ACTVITY	RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES	METHODOLOGY	HOURS	ECTS
AF1 – Within the context of the flipped classroom methodology, the student will watch videos, visit websites, complete preliminary readings, and prepare materials.	R1, R2, R3, R4	MD1: Flipped classroom	6,00	0,24
AF2 – Active listening, elaboration and formulation of questions, summaries, concept maps and/or notes that organize the information received, and related work.	R1, R2, R3, R4	MD2: Interactive lecture	20,00	0,80
AF5 – Analysis of exemplary realities — real or simulated — allowing the student to connect theory with practice, learn from real-world models, or reflect on the processes used in the presented cases.	R1, R2, R3, R4	MD5: Case studies	4,00	0,16
AF6 – The student, individually or collectively, focuses on producing a tangible final result (product) that incorporates the knowledge and skills necessary for its realization.	R1, R2, R3, R4	MD6: Project-based learning	30,00	1,20
TOTAL			**60,00**	**2,40**

TRAINING ACTIVITIES OF AUTONOMOUS WORK

ACTVITY	RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES	METHODOLOGY	HOURS	ECTS
AF8 – Independent work. Study, memorization, exam preparation, practice of practical skills, preparation of assignments, essays, reflections, metacognitive activities, portfolio development, etc.	R1, R2, R3, R4	MD1: Flipped classroom MD2: Interactive lecture MD5: Case studies MD6: Project-based learning	25,00	1,00
AF6 – The student, individually or collectively, focuses on producing a tangible final result (product) that incorporates the knowledge and skills necessary for its realization.	R1, R2, R3, R4	MD6: Project-based learning	24,00	0,96
AF1 – Within the context of the flipped classroom methodology, the student will watch videos, visit websites, complete preliminary readings, prepare questions, and generally prepare for class (non-presential work), as well as engage in presentations and/or discussions with the professor and classmates in class, resolving doubts, etc.	R1, R2, R3, R4	MD1: Flipped classroom	20,00	0,80
AF5 – Analysis of exemplary realities — real or simulated — allowing the student to connect theory with practice, learn from real-world models, or reflect on the processes used in the presented cases.	R1, R2, R3, R4	MD5: Case studies	21,00	0,84
TOTAL			**90,00**	**3,60**

Description of contents

Description of content necessary for the acquisition of learning outcomes.

Theoretical content:

Block of content	Contents
Psychological Foundations of Play and Motivation	This block establishes the theoretical basis of the course. It will explore the key **psychological theories** that explain why we play (intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation) and how games satisfy human needs (Self-Determination Theory, Maslow). Central concepts such as **Flow** (optimal experience), **reward, punishment,** and **cognitive biases** applied to design will be analyzed. The goal is to understand the player as a psychological system in order to design meaningful experiences.
User Experience (UX) and Usability	This block focuses on **Player-Centric Design**, applying **UX (User Experience)** and **Usability** methodologies to optimize player interaction and enjoyment. It will explore **Information Architecture** in game design (how content and menus are structured), effective **User Interface (UI)** design, and the importance of clear and consistent **Feedback**. Research techniques such as creating **Player Personas** and conducting **Playtesting (player trials)** with a rigorous UX focus will be covered to identify and solve friction points (pain points) and ensure that gameplay is intuitive and satisfying.
Level Design, Structure, and Environmental Narrative	This block applies psychological and gameplay principles directly to the **creation of levels and game spaces**. It will cover **level structures** (linear, non-linear, open-world) and how they influence the player's decision-making and sense of agency. The use of **perceptual principles (Gestalt)** and **environmental psychology** to guide the player, establish visual hierarchies, and communicate **environmental narrative** (telling stories without words) will be analyzed. Finally, techniques for **rapid prototyping** of levels that reinforce desired gameplay goals will be explored.

Temporary organization of learning:

Block of content	Sessions	Hours
Psychological Foundations of Play and Motivation	8	16,00
User Experience (UX) and Usability	12	24,00
Level Design, Structure, and Environmental Narrative	10	20,00

References

1. Psychology and UX in Video Games (UX/Psychology Focus)

Title: The Gamer's Brain: How Neuroscience and Cognitive Psychology Can Design Better Games

·**Author: Celia Hodent**

·**Description:** This is an essential text that directly applies the principles of **neuroscience** and **cognitive psychology** to game design. Hodent, former Director of UX at Epic Games, provides a practical framework for understanding how the brain processes information in a game. It covers topics such as attention, memory, decision-making, and how to design clear **User Interfaces (UI/UX)** and intuitive **gameplay** to reduce **cognitive load** and enhance the player experience. It is fundamental for the course's UX focus.

2. Experience Design and Flow (Motivation/Design Focus)

Title: Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience

·**Author: Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**

·**Description:** While not strictly about video games, this book is the cornerstone for understanding **intrinsic motivation** and the **design of satisfying experiences**. It introduces the concept of **"Flow"** (optimal experience), the state of total immersion that occurs when the level of **challenge** is perfectly balanced with the player's **skill** level. It is crucial for the first block of the course on motivation and the basis for designing an appropriate **difficulty curve** in level design.

3. Principles of Level and Space Design (Level Design Focus)

Title: Level Up! The Guide to Great Video Game Design

·**Author: Scott Rogers**

·**Description:** A highly accessible and practical resource that covers the entire game design process, but with very valuable sections on **level design** and **game structure**. This book helps to ground psychological concepts in practice, addressing topics such as the use of **space**, **pacing**, the creation of **puzzles**, and how to use **environmental cues** to guide the player. It is an excellent reference for the third block focused on level design and the application of *game design* principles.