

# TCOM 499: Special Topics - The Video Game Industry

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## FINAL GAME DESIGN AND PRESENTATION

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As part of the course conclusion, students will be asked to write an explanatory document for a video game that takes into account some of the concerns we've covered over the course of the term. You should use the chapter "The Design Document" from Tracy Fullerton's book *Game Design Workshop* as a model for how to structure your paper. The explanatory design document needs to discuss overall design of the game (interface, style and genre, platform, game purpose, etc. - See pp 396-399 of the chapter).

Because you can't address much of the technical detail that might go into a design document, your proposals need to pay special attention to the following issues: the ideal target audience(s) for their game, how your product or game broadens the markets the industry has focused on, and any companies or competing products your research has revealed, estimates of the costs and labor needed to produce your product, any externalities related to your product, and the social impact of the game as well as the educational/ideological potential for your product. Beginning your research with the reports from the ESA, IGDA, or any of the reference chapters on particular markets should help you begin to think through some of the challenges of particular markets and products.

In considering markets and audiences, your proposal should also explain how your game will serve to reach underserved markets, open new territory for character or avatar representation, or provide an educational or ideological point of view not typically represented in mainstream games. In other words, how will you expand the possibilities of representation – and tap into new audiences – in this industry? Be sure to cite the research you've done so far as evidence for why your product provides something new and groundbreaking in the gaming world. What are you adding that has been missing? Remember that your audience isn't just in the United States, but around the world. And as you've studied, the industry lacks diversity among its workforce, so include, too, what would you do to help ensure diverse employees as part of your strategy.

For example, a proposal focused on developing a game would want to address the storyline of the game, competing games and the companies that made them, the range of labor involved and estimates of cost of production. It should also describe the characters in the game, and to describe the environment and challenges posed on each of the major levels as well as how they intend to transition between those levels. Explain, too, what the overall meaning or message of your game is: what do you want players to think about at the end? What makes your characters compelling and dynamic? How will you challenge some of the problematic elements of

gameplay that you've studied in order to forge new kinds of stories and characters that appeal to wider segments of the market, including women, LGBTQ gamers, and gamers of color?

In contrast, a proposal focused on developing a new piece of hardware would need to consider supply chains, environmental impacts, labor, and externalities as part key parts of the proposal rather than focusing on story, character, and gameplay elements, while still needing to discuss how your product expands access and use of video games in its key market(s) as well as questions of equity and diversity in its manufacture.

As a way to help guide the groups through the design, a presentation will be made to the class during the final two weeks of the term. Presentations should cover the general concept of the game, your choice behind key avatar/agent designs, a brief story flow, who the target audience is and how the game expands the market for video games. Presentations should run approximately eight to ten minutes. Peer evaluation of the proposal will count as a portion of the grade, and knowledge of students' game ideas will be important for the final essays. This proposal is designed to raise questions for the students that they can incorporate into the final written project due the day of the final.

## Sources focused on Issues of Representation

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### Sample Games to Consider

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DeafVerse: <https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/deafverse/>

Kawaida's Journey: <http://www.kawaidasjourney.de/>

Never Alone: <http://neveralongame.com/>