University of Gdańsk

Subject card

Subject name and code	Historiographical Game Design, PG_00215472						
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	2		ECTS credits	6.0			
Learning profile	academic		Assessment form	credit			
Conducting unit							
Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)	Subject supervisor						
	Teachers						
Lesson types	Lesson type	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
	Number of study hours	0.0	0.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	30
	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	30		30.0	90.0	150	
Subject objectives	The module aims to develop students' ability to design historical games as a form of historiography. Through a team project, students critically analyse sources and competing interpretations, formulate a historiographical argument and express it through game rules, world design and player choices. They learn to use playtesting to assess whether gameplay conveys the intended interpretation and to justify their research and design decisions in light of current theories in historical game studies. The module also develops skills in teamwork, project documentation and responsible representation of the past.						

Learning outcomes

Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
[GHDCMU2_U07] Uses English in oral and written academic and professional communication at a level of at least B2+ (CEFR), incorporating specialized terminology related to history, game studies, and digital heritage.	Communicates in English in speech and writing at B2+ level or higher.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU3] text preparation/written work
[GHDCMU2_W03] Explains advanced principles of iterative game design and prototyping—specifically regarding historical games as interactive models of the past, and cultural games as forms of engagement with 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_U02] Critically analyzes and synthesizes historical sources and scholarly literature to address complex research and creative problems, while taking into account the reliability and limitations of the material as well as competing interpretations.	Critically analyses and synthesises historical sources and scholarly literature to inform the design of the game, assessing their relevance and reliability.	[SU2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[GHDCMU2_U03] Effectively participates in the process of designing games focused on history and heritage, taking on various roles at different stages—from concept, prototyping, playtesting, and iteration, all the way to 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
[GHDCMU2_U05] Independently develops the results of research or creative work in the form of a scholarly text or project documentation, based on source material and a clear line of reasoning.	Produces comprehensive project documentation, including illustrative material, covering all stages of the creative process and the use of historical and cultural sources.	[SU2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[GHDCMU2_U08] Organizes and coordinates the work of an interdisciplinary research and development team, defining objectives, methods, resources, a schedule, the division of responsibilities, communication protocols, and criteria for evaluating results.	Organises teamwork through collaborative planning (agreeing on objectives, scope, schedule, task dependencies and the time and resources required for prototyping) and ongoing coordination (delegating tasks, running meetings, monitoring progress and risks, and communicating errors and excessive workloads).	[SU5] implementation of a problem task [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work
[GHDCMU2_W01] Critically examines theoretical and methodological approaches within historical research and historiography, taking into account their underlying premises, the principles of source criticism and assessment of source reliability, as well as debates over interpretation.	Justifies design and research decisions in light of current theories that understand historical games as a form of historiography.	[SW2] presentation/project/paper/ report [SW5] implementation of a problem task
[GHDCMU2_K04] Maintains professional ethics and standards of conduct in roles such as researcher, creator, or consultant, including the requirements for academic integrity and social sensitivity when working with historical and cultural material.	Applies principles of academic integrity, creative responsibility and social sensitivity when working with historical and cultural material.	[SK2] presentation/project/paper/ report [SK8] observation of student's independent or team work

Subject contents	Historical games as a form of historiography: current theories and analysis of selected examples. Critical assessment of the relevance and reliability of sources and comparison of competing interpretations of a historical problem. Formulation of a historiographical argument and its expression through mechanics, rules, the structure of the game world and the actions available to players. World design with attention to relationships between communities, conflicts and the limits of knowledge about the past. Team prototyping, playtesting and revision based on observations and feedback. Documentation of the links between sources, interpretation and design decisions. Academic integrity, creative responsibility and social sensitivity when working with historical and cultural material.
Prerequisites and co-requisites	

Assessment methods and criteria

Subject passing criteria	Passing threshold	Percentage of the final grade
Self-assessment in project postmortem	51.0%	100.0%
Instructor's observation of student work	51.0%	0.0%

Recommended reading

Basic literature

McCall, Jeremiah. 2026. *Designing Historical Games for Classrooms: A Practical Guide for Educators*. Routledge.

Bazile, Julien A. 2022. 'An "Alternative to the Pen"? Perspectives for the Design of Historiographical Videogames'. *Games and Culture* 17 (6): 855–70. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412022111539

Brandis, Rüdiger. 2026. 'Historical Theory and Game Design'. In *Writing Game Histories*, edited by Esther Wright, Iain Donald, and Nick Webber. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Reid, Darren. 2024. 'Video Game Development as Public History'. *The Public Historian* 46 (1): 74–107. https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2024.46.1.74.

Kynn, Tyler. 2025. 'A Digital Ottoman Road to Mecca: Time, Distance, and Game Design'. *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 14 (2): 347–63. https://doi.org/10.1386/ijia_00175_1.

Supplementary literature

Wright, Esther, Iain Donald, and Nick Webber, eds. 2026. *Writing Game Histories.* Bloomsbury Publishing.

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.

Brandis, Rüdiger. 2020. 'Tracing the Past with Digital Games. Historical Procedural Rhetorics'. In *History in Games: Contingencies of an Authentic Past*, edited by Martin Lorber and Felix Zimmermann. Transcript.

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?

Historiographical game: Drawing on current theories and definitions of historiographical games, assess the extent to which the game meets the defining criteria.

Worldbuilding: Design a game world grounded in reliable historical knowledge, taking care to represent and simulate the past accurately.

Team project: Agree on the project scope, allocate tasks and set a schedule. Build a game prototype, run a playtest and revise the prototype based on your observations and player feedback.

Work placement	Not applicable

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