The Analog Game Experiment

Now that we've unpacked the larger theoretical underpinnings of games and understand *players, 'fun',* and *engagements*–it's time to approach the nitty, gritty, and thrilling work of **building our own games**. In this Experiment, you are going to **create a prototype for your own analog (non-digital) game.** This will be no easy feat, but we'll be building tools, resources, and writing/testing/playing together.

The Quest Ahead

Over the course of the next month, you (individually or collaboratively) are going to create the prototype for an analog (non-digital) game of your own making. This might be a card game, board game, or roleplaying game component. The key here will be to identify a key mechanic, idea, and/or purpose to build your game prototype around. Your prototype will need to provide a good indication of how the game works and will be playtested. Guidelines and resources are laid out on the following pages.

Your goals should be:
1. To **identify a genre** of game that you want to create and **learn the conventions, tools, and mechanics** of that genre.
2. Build your prototype around **1-2 key mechanic(s)** that you will research and theory-craft extensively.
3. Build your prototype and gear your mechanics to successfully orient around **one or two core modes of engagement.**
4. Be especially mindful of your **scope**, and set clear and reasonable goals for yourself.

Tabletop Games

If you choose to create a board or card game, you'll have opportunities to explore mechanics, writing, and art in its physical craft. You might choose to prototype a **trading card game, a party game, board game,** or some other variant. Whatever you do, your focus in the design will likely be on **game balance**, **clear rules**, and **consistency of the play experience.** In the aesthetic your focus will likely be in the **writing, art,** and **emotion** (humor, sadness, betrayal, etc.) of the game.

Be aware:
Building a board game will require often complex craftwork. For the sake of this class, it's fine to prototype (this doesn't need to look professional)– but you'll want to give a real indication of what this *would/will* look like as a tangible game.

Resources for Physical Games

- You can get templates for box art, boards, cards, and more from https://www.thegamecrafter.com/publish/products. Note that you don't actually need to buy their products– just select the one you want and download the template that they offer.
- You can also get image and Photoshop/Illustrator templates from https://www.printplaygames.com/prototypes/formatting-guidelines/card-formatting-templates/.
- Tricks for prototyping cards cheaply: https://youtu.be/l0t6PBypahI
- Software you can use for prototyping: Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator (you get both of those free), PowerPoint, GIMP, Paint.NET.

Roleplaying Games

If you choose to create a tabletop roleplaying component, you'll have opportunities to explore mechanics, writing, and art in its interaction design. Your most likely approaches to this will be:

1. Write something (a **short module, setting, alternate rules or class)** for an existing system.
2. Write **a short one-off, basic rules, or micro adventure** for your own system.

Whatever you do, your focus in the design will likely be on creating a **clear setup, clear 'actions',** and **toolbox for the Game Master.** In the aesthetic, you will likely focus on the **writing**, the **narrative-potential**, and **thematic unity**.

Be aware: Building for roleplaying games involves numerous layers of audiences: not only players, but a game master, etc. You will have to balance designing an experience that can be consistent at multiple tables, but also doesn't become overbearing for the person running it.

Resources for Roleplaying Components

- If you're designing for an existing system, you can often find the fonts, textures, and templates for the system you're using (or fan approximations). For *D&D 5e,* style templates are in our [Mage's Tower](#).

- If building your own system, remember indie RPGs can accomplish much without hundreds of pages of rules. Some examples: [One Seven Design's](#) games, like [Lady Blackbird](#) (1-3 sessions), [Lasers & Feelings](#) or [The Mustang](#) (micro RPGs).

- You'll want to think about how to convey the themes, aesthetic, and mood of your RPG. This can be through the art you incorporate, or baked into the mechanics themselves (for a good example, check out Stephen Dewey's *Ten Candles*) in the Mage's Tower.

- For now, feel free to use stock art (with attribution). [Adobe Stock](#) gets you decent thumbnail size without paying. (Most of our images are from artist [grandfailure](#)!)