Business Foundations: Perspectives in Gaming and Esports
Spring 2025

Course Materials
Materials: Course readings will be provided in the slides.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This immersive program is about understanding and navigating the dynamic convergence of business and esports. Students will explore the intricate tapestry of the rise of esports and gaming, studying historical narratives from ancient to modern times, strategic business principles, and cutting-edge trends that have allowed the gaming industry to become the influential giant it is today.

This course goes beyond theoretical exploration: students will actively engage with business fundamentals through dynamic lessons and real-world examples. Diving into the inner workings of the gaming industry, the course meticulously dissects the values, growth trajectories, and social and global impacts through enlightening case studies featuring industry giants like Nintendo and Blizzard Entertainment. Students will be adept at applying these principles, fostering a comprehensive understanding of business world dynamics. This course promises to empower students with essential skills, strategic insights, and global perspectives, preparing them to confidently navigate the ever-evolving intersection of business, gaming, and esports.

Students will undergo weekly assignments that encompass a multifaceted array of content and activities (books, articles, podcasts, videos, and case studies). These assignments are meticulously curated to enrich students' learning experience and offer a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, providing unique industry insights not typically covered in other courses. The final project will result in a presentation on global perspectives on games or esports, with students analyzing the popularity of specific games, cultural influences, and assessing potential successful business models or innovations.

Course and Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the historical evolution and emerging trends of gaming and sports.

2. Develop proficiency in foundational business principles, such as marketing, strategy, and operations, through the lens of esports.

3. Recognize and understand the different components within business organizations, including their functions and roles.

4. Analyze and evaluate unique business models and strategic management within the landscape of esports.

5. Assess the global impact and influence of gaming on culture, including its reception, controversies, and modern-day connectivity.

Course Materials and Activities

Each week, students will be assigned content that supplements their learning.

- **Textbooks**: There are no specific required textbooks for this course. However, required reading materials will be provided, covering topics on business fundamentals, the history of gaming and esports, and contemporary issues in the industry.
- **Online Resources**: Students will have access to a variety of online resources, including case studies, scholarly articles, podcasts, and video content.
- **Guest Lectures**: Throughout the semester, guest speakers from leading gaming companies, esports organizations, and academic experts will provide insights into the industry.
- **Case Studies**: Students will engage with real-world case studies from companies such as Nintendo and Blizzard Entertainment to understand their business strategies, challenges, and successes and failures.

Course Topics:

The course is divided into 3 main units, each diving into different aspects of the gaming and esports industry. Guest Speakers from leading gaming companies and esports organizations locally and/or globally will also be giving their insights during the guest lectures. Classes can cover multiple topics, all of which are detailed below in the course description section.

The course material will be covered over 3 weeks, at a pace of 3 classes per week, each of which running for 2 and a half hours (150 minutes including breaks) for a total of 22.5 hours.

- Unit 1: Introduction to the Gaming Industry and Esports (7.5 hours)
  - History of Gaming and Esports (4 hours)
  - Cultural Impact and reach of Gaming and Esports (3.5 hours)
- Unit 2: Business Principles in Gaming and Esports (10 hours)
  - Foundations of Gaming and Esports Businesses (6.5 hours)
  - Case studies & Real-World Examples (3.5 hours)
- Unit 3: Futures of Gaming and Esports (5 hours)
  - Project Management in game development & esports projects (2.5 hours)
  - Future of Gaming and Esports (2.5 hours)

Graded Components

This course relies upon four main components: assignments, participation, quizzes, and projects. The following table shows the breakdown of each graded component:

Component	Description	Weight
Assignments	Completion of materials assigned before the start of class. Materials are to be checked by TA or professor before the start of lecture.	20%
Participation	Active and high-quality contributions during in-class activities that benefit the classroom and promote discussion. Appropriate use of technology.	20%
Quizzes	Brief assessment of knowledge of topics covered thus far. Quizzes will be announced ahead of time.	20%
Projects	Essays, reports, and analyses of business case studies. Includes final group project.	40%

A relative grading rubric will be used for this course. The following breakdown shows the percentage of students and their respective grade based on their relative performance comparatively to the total scores of students undergoing the same course internationally:

Grade	Percentile Rank
A	Top %10
B+	Next 20%
B	Next 40%
C+	Next 20%
C	Next 20%
D or F	Bottom 10%

Grading Process

Assignments: Assignments will not be graded and will be checked for completion at the start of class. Incomplete assignments will **not** be accepted.

Projects: Each project will be assessed based on a detailed rubric, which will be provided in advance. These rubrics will outline the criteria for evaluation, including depth of analysis, application of theoretical concepts, and clarity of communication. Feedback will be constructive and aimed at encouraging further development and improvement.

Participation: Each student is responsible for contributing to the educational experience and academic excellence of the institution. Behavior such as missing class, irresponsibly using technology, missing team meetings and worktimes, not contributing, and treating other students uncivilly will not be tolerated and will negatively affect your grade. The following grading criteria will be used to track your participation:

3 Points	Student comes prepared, actively participates, respects other students, pays attention, and uses technology appropriately.
2 Points	Student pays attention and uses technology appropriately.
1 Point	Student does not pay attention and/or uses technology inappropriately.
0 Points	Student is absent.

Missing and Late Assignments

All assignments must be submitted on or ahead of their due date. All assignments due on class days will be collected at the start of class, and all other assignments (essays, reports, projects) must be turned in by the specified due date and time.

Assignments turned in late will lose a full grade for each day or partial day, including Fridays and Saturdays, the moment after the deadline passes. For example, an assignment due at 10:00 pm on Thursday that is turned in at 10:30 pm on Thursday will be counted a day late and will lose one full letter grade (ex. if the assignment earns an A-, it will be officially recorded as a B-).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Class	Title	Class Description	Learning Outcomes
Unit 1: Introduction to the Gaming Industry and Esports			
1	Ancient Pastimes: The Birth of Games and Sports	This class explores the origins of ancient strategic sports and games like Kabaddi and Chaturanga. Students will examine how these early forms of competition laid the groundwork for modern gaming and esports. This class lays the foundation of "play" by establishing the history and innate need for humans to find new and innovative ways to play and compete.	Students will gain a large spectrum of understanding "play" in the lens of different disciplines. Students will compare and contrast ancient strategic sports with modern gaming and recognize shared elements and developments. Students will understand the continuity of the search for play
	The Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The First Evolution of Games	The class explores the evolution and standardization of games from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment. Students will examine the influential games of the period, including Chess and card games, and how certain games were adopted by and fed into class differences and identities.	Students will understand the nuanced evolution of games and how games often reflect societal issues and norms. Students will assess the influence of cultural movements in the development of games, and how games went hand in shaping new knowledge, such as probability theory.
2	Modern Times: The Evolution of Broadcasted Games, Esports, and Culture	This class will assess the impact of radio, TV, and internet and how each successive evolution in media broadcasting changed the landscape of sports forever. The class will understand the history of how sports had rapidly changed from ancient times in just one century.	Students will analyze the media culture and effect of media to influence public opinion. Students will assess famous athlete profiles and understand the intersection between culture and sports- and the power of sports to change the world around it.
	Strategic Shifts in the Gaming Landscape: 1970s to 1990s	This class will explore how the invention of computers and screens changed the landscape of play and competition forever. Students will be introduced to business topics and understand	Students will assess the impact of the video game crash of 1983, and why many large companies could instantly go bankrupt. Students will understand the rich and troubled history of games, and why certain

3		the ever-evolving nature of both play and business.	best practices from giants such as Sony and Nintendo allowed them to flourish.
	Gaming Giants Case Study: Nintendo	This class will explore the evolution of Nintendo from a small playing card company to the globally influential giant it is today. Students will examine the key decisions and risks that Nintendo undertook, including many of their calculated risks.	Students will learn business theories and key takeaways from Nintendo. Students will identify key strategies, such as the Blue Ocean strategy, that allowed Nintendo to contest the top competitors in the space.
3	Cultural Resonance and Impact of Gaming	This class will explore the lasting impacts of games and debate whether they can be treated as art. Students will examine the rich storytelling aspects of games and cultural footprints left by gaming that can be seen in every major industry.	Students will learn about the scope of gaming and its ability to impact the world outside of its direct industry Students will assess the reasons why some games and their music or art imbue deep cultural meaning.
	The Globalization of Esports and Games	This class will explore the impact of the internet to create and foster esports as the next natural evolution of sports. Students will examine esports in America and South Korea, and how it grew from grassroots to the global sensation it is today.	Students will identify key similarities and differences between the acceptance of esports in America vs. South Korea. Students will understand the process of industrialization and how esports changed from garage contests to a global industry.
Unit 2: Business Principles in Gaming and Esports			
4	Introduction to Business Models	Inspired by Alexander Osterwalder's "Business Model Generation", these two classes will provide students with an introduction to business models and the nine blocks to creating a successful and sustainable business.	Students will be introduced to and learn business terms. Students will understand how different business sectors work together to create a working model of a company.
5	Foundations of Management	This class provides a comprehensive foundation to management principles and best practices managing organizations.	Students will understand the roles of managers, strategic planners, and other leadership roles in organizations. Students will examine case studies of management wins and disasters and key lessons learned.

	Foundations of Finance and Operations	This class provides a comprehensive introduction to finance and operations principles.	Students will understand the importance and stories that a business' numbers can tell. Students will gain knowledge in creating balance sheets and statements. Students will understand financial forecasting theories and practices.
6	Foundations of Marketing	This class provides a comprehensive foundation to marketing principles. Students will be challenged to learn the "why" and "how" of marketing, not just what it is.	Students will understand the marketing mix and 4 P's. Students will assess good and bad examples of branding in the industry worldwide. Students will explore modern market research and marketing techniques.
	Gaming Giants Case Study: Blizzard	This class will provide students a unique inside look at Blizzard Entertainment along with its wins and controversies.	Students will examine key findings and learnings from Blizzard's successes and mistakes.
7	Lessons and Challenges in Esports & Gaming Management	This class explores the management of esports organizations, as well as unique challenges and opportunities that are native to esports.	Students will examine esports organization structure and strategy Students will understand the importance of revenue diversification and brand identity
	Guest Speaker: Industry Professional in Esports (Business)	-	-
Unit 3: Futures of Esports and Gaming			
8	Introduction to Project Management, Group Preparation/Research	This class provides a comprehensive introduction to common principles and best practices of project management.	Students will explore fundamental concepts, methodologies, and tools to effectively manage a project. Students will understand project life cycles and frameworks. Students will understand communication and collaboration best practices.
	Guest Speaker (any Esports or Gaming topic)	-	-

9	Future Horizons of Esports	This class explores the new and prospective opportunities for the esports ecosystem to expand and take a hold of, as well as current issues in the esports industry.	Students will understand the current state of esports and its trends. Students will understand global perspectives in esports and their increased acceptance and inclusion, such as the Asian Games and Olympics.
	Exponential Technologies and Their Implications	The class will explore current exponential technologies, as well as their uses and sectors. The class will assess the intersection of gaming, esports, and the societal, ethical, and economic implication of exponential technology.	Students will understand exponential technology theory, such as Moore's Law. Students will explore current trends in AI, biotechnology, quantum computing, and robotics. Students will understand the unlimited potential of these applications to inform their next business project idea.