



the comm-unity newsletter

The Future of Game Design at Manhattan College Starts with Patrick Bender

by Sterling Grant

Manhattan College is constantly evolving, and with our new adjunct professor, Patrick Bender, learning game design has become a great opportunity on campus. Bender has a wealth of knowledge to share and develop now that game design will be a new major offered at Manhattan College in the fall.

Patrick Bender has had a passion for gaming, beyond teaching, which makes developing the program a full-circle moment for him.

“I’ve played games since I was a kid – I spent my formative college years thinking about the philosophy of mind,” Bender said. “I was transfixed on the role of technology in shaping our lives... It became clear to me that there were some deeply existential questions posed by games and digital systems in general — do our “selves” extend beyond the brain into our virtual worlds? Games were no longer fun and games, but cultural artifacts to examine – I pursued an MFA in game design to get formal training in the art and craft of game design.”

Applying this mindset, Bender’s journey at Manhattan College has now taken him into becoming the professor who will start up the program.

Bender expresses how excited he is to broaden the minds of students and work collaboratively with those interested in this field.

“I’m excited by this trajectory a great deal,” Bender said. “I think this emphasis on collaboration is exactly the right kind of direction. Students will learn a lot from each other. And hopefully these opportunities activate student interest across campus.”

Bender understands the transformative position he is in and is taking the opportunity very seriously. Even though the major is still in its early stages, he wants to make an impression in any way he can.

“Game designers are poised to play a unique role in our digital futures, and I hope to promote this perspective and empower all students to think about game design a little differently,” Bender says.

Since this is the first semester students are being exposed to game design content, he understands that a lot of it is new to them and that frustrations come with that. Bender and his students have formed a partnership to work together to get through these early stages of the unfamiliar. Although the class is a sort of pilot, there has been a significant amount of potential with respect to the value of the class.

“I have a great deal of respect for my students in general. They’ve exercised a lot of patience,” Bender says. “I can also tell that they are challenging themselves to reflect on some topics they may not have signed up for, yet have so many valuable insights on!”

Bender encourages his students to embrace the constant change in this field of work and to learn to adapt to it.

They can have an impact by playing a role in the formative moments of this program, their education, and their own contributions.

So while some elements of game design are cut and dry as it relates to logistics/best practices, a large portion of the field is actively shaped by their contributions (little or small) to larger cultural movement.”

Current and future students can become a part of the Manhattan College gaming evolution by joining Bender and other additions into the emerging program. Getting involved in this opportunity will mean becoming a progressive member of the Manhattan College game designing community, a foresight-oriented thinker, and a partner in the amazing possibilities to come.

“I’m very grateful for the freedom to teach game design alongside these larger cultural questions, and I think Manhattan College has a wonderful opportunity to teach both the theory and practice of game design,” Bender said. ★