Abstract: We want our students to be deeply engaged with our subject matter. We want them to work hard and take on intellectual challenges. We want them to take risks and try new things. And perhaps most importantly, we want our students to be resilient in the face failure. So why is it that the design of our educational system – including colleges and universities – encourages exactly the opposite behaviors? I propose that our grading and assessment systems are the heart of the problem.

In this talk, I describe an approach called gameful learning – based on observations of one of the most durable and natural environments for learning – learning from play. This is not about learning by playing games. Rather, this talk posits that learning in school is already a kind of game, but a poorly designed one. The goal is to design a better game, and a better system.

What makes for great engagement? Three keys: feeling like you can make choices that matter, being part of something bigger than yourself, and being supported as you develop competence. Great games do this. University courses… not often enough. This talk presents a vision for how university classrooms can be as engaging as good games, and introduces GradeCraft, an application designed at the University of Michigan, that supports “gameful” teaching and learning.

Biography: Barry Fishman is Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Learning Technologies in the University of Michigan Schools of Information and Education. His research focuses on the development of usable, scalable, and sustainable learning innovations through design-based implementation research (http://learndbir.org). He is the co-creator of GradeCraft, a game-inspired learning management system (http://gradecraft.com/), and currently serves as Faculty Innovator-in-Residence in the U-M Office of Academic Innovation. He was named the 2017 Michigan Association of State Universities “Distinguished Professor of the Year” and is a Fellow of the International Society of the Learning Sciences. He received his PhD in Learning Sciences from Northwestern University in 1996.

Important Publications:


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