INF 385G: ADVANCED USABILITY

Syllabus

Unique Number   28190

Semester   Fall, 2021

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Office   UTA 5.424

Office Hours   By appointment.

Class Time   Monday, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Class Mode   Hybrid. (Note, this does NOT mean a student may choose how to participate, for any particular class meeting. Rather it means that we will have some meetings in person and some via Zoom. The first meeting will be via Zoom, the link to which can be found on our class Canvas page.)

Classroom   UTA 1.504

Textbook   Bias, R. G., & Mayhew, D. J. (Eds.) (2005). *Cost-justifying usability: An update for the Internet age, 2ⁿᵈ edition*. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann.

(Don't buy this – you can find it on the UT Library site and read it online.)

Synopsis

This class is designed to help students gain a professional level of expertise in usability engineering methods. It has as a prerequisite the School of Information class in Intro to Usability, or equivalent (to be assessed by the professor). This class will build upon the earlier usability class.

Objectives

This class is designed to help you if you:
- intend to become a usability/UX engineer, or information architect, or think that you might.
- wish to gain confidence in your ability to maximize the usability of any human-computer interface or web site that you end up designing, in your career.

- anticipate being the advocate for user-centered design in whatever organization you end up working in.
- wish to be one of the (few!) people educated in usability, "the next competitive frontier."
- wish to bolster your portfolio.

Instructional Techniques

The course will entail various instructional techniques:
1 – dealing with stakeholders
2 – demonstration
3 – self-instruction, with question-answering by the professor
4 – attention to the real world
5 – individual project.

Expectations

Expect to carry out one industrial-strength usability evaluation of a web site or a traditional user interface. Expect to be evaluated on the basis of the excellence of your written and oral presentation of that individual project, and your class participation. Expect to come out of the course with confidence in your own ability to conduct a usability evaluation. Expect to come to view all design as incomplete unless the user is considered.

Policies

Grades

Your grade will be based on four things:
1 – Class participation (30%)
2 – Presentation of the usability test plan (35%)
3 – Final, written report of the usability evaluation (35%)

Late Assignments

Your grade will be docked one grade per day late, for your written assignment.

Attendance

It matters. When you aren't here, you deprive your classmates of your shared wisdom.

Some Important Meta-points

Course Prerequisites

None.

UT-Austin Honor Code

"The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community."

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, as defined in the 1995 *Random House Compact Unabridged Dictionary*, is the "use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work." Within academia, plagiarism by students, professors, or researchers is considered academic dishonesty or academic fraud and offenders are subject to academic censure, up to and including expulsion. There, you see – I just did it myself! I copied those two sentences right off of Wikipedia and didn't give credit. Here's the citation: Plagiarism (2010). Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism. Web site accessed 1/13/2010. If you use words or ideas that are not your own you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism. Here's a resource designed to help you avoid plagiarism: www.lib.utexas.edu/plagiarism.

Cheating

Don't. Dire consequences. We've already talked about plagiarism. Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Services for Students with Disabilities

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability and need accommodations, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

COVID Guidance

To help keep everyone at UT and in our community safe, it is critical that students report COVID-19 symptoms and testing, regardless of test results, to University Health Services,

and faculty and staff report to the [HealthPoint Occupational Health Program](#) (OHP) as soon as possible. Please see this [link](#) to understand what needs to be reported. In addition, to help understand what to do if a fellow student in the class (or the instructor or TA) tests positive for COVID, see this [University Health Services link](#).

Safety and Class Participation/Masks

We will all need to make some adjustments in order to benefit from in-person classroom interactions in a safe and healthy manner. Our best protections against spreading COVID-19 on campus are masks (defined as cloth face coverings) and staying home if you are showing symptoms. Therefore, for the benefit of everyone, this means that all students are required to follow these important rules.

Every student must wear a cloth face-covering properly in class and in all campus buildings at all times.

Students are encouraged to participate in documented daily symptom screening. This means that each class day in which on-campus activities occur, students must upload certification from the symptom tracking app and confirm that they completed their symptom screening for that day to Canvas. Students should not upload the results of that screening, just the certificate that they completed it. If the symptom tracking app recommends that the student isolate rather than coming to class, then students must not return to class until cleared by a medical professional.

Information regarding [safety protocols with and without symptoms](#) can be [found here.](#)

If a student is not wearing a cloth face-covering properly in the classroom (or any UT building), that student must leave the classroom (and building). If the student refuses to wear a cloth face covering, class will be dismissed for the remainder of the period, and the student will be subject to disciplinary action as set forth in the university's Institutional Rules/General Conduct 11-404(a)(3). Students who have a condition that precludes the wearing of a cloth face covering must follow the procedures for obtaining an accommodation working with Services for Students with Disabilities.

In Case of an Emergency

The following are recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety/ :

- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

-         In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.

-         Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

-         Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050

-         Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency

Cell phones and computers

Here's the deal on cell phones. If you have kids, you get to leave your cell phone on. If you don't have kids, therefore, you get to leave you cell phone on, too. But please leave it on vibrate, and leave the room (or Zoom session) if you need to take a call or respond to a text message.

Personal Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they have added a "preferred name" with the Gender and Sexuality Center, which you can do so here:
http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and-resources

I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc.). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit

https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/profile-pronouns.

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Indigenous land. Moreover, we would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Lipan Apache, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, Tigua Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas, here on Turtle Island.

Title IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and

working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:
- Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
- Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
- Investigate and discipline violations of the university's relevant policies.

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered "Responsible Employees" or "Mandatory Reporters," which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. **I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX-related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX-related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit the Title IX Office or email titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

Online Instruction

All students must use a UT Zoom account in order to participate in classes, office hours, and any UT affiliated events.

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. The University is well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found on such sites that are associated with a specific student, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure of the course.

Some University Deadlines

- Last day to drop for possible refund – September 10
- Final class day – December 6.
- There will be no final exam for this course.

Your Questions and General Level of Comfort

If you have a question, please ask. I will be very receptive to emails at any time, and phone calls before 10:00 p.m. If it is important, I'll be receptive to phone calls at any hour.

Schedule:

Date	Day	Topics	Assignment (due BEFORE class)

8/30	1	- Introduction - Once around the room - Syllabus review - Lessons/insights/surprises from previous usability work. - Decide on which chapters to "own," for class discussion.	
9/13	2	- Decide on projects. - Summaries of chapters from *Cost-Justifying Usability* (to be assigned).	- Have read, before class starts: -- Bias and Mayhew (2005)
9/20	3	Presentation by iSchool doctoral student and IX Lab Technician Nilavra Bhattacharya on end-user testing.	
9/27	4	Guest presentation by Natalie Miller, UX professional and iSchool alumna	
10/4	5	Presentation of test plans	
10/11	6	More presentation of test plans?	
10/18	7	Usability testing workshop	
10/25	8	Usability testing workshop	
11/1	9	Usability testing workshop	
11/8	10	Usability testing workshop	
11/15	11	Usability testing workshop	
11/22	12	Usability testing workshop	
11/29	13	Informal review of final projects.	Final test reports due
12/6	14	- Decide on projects. - Discussion of lessons learned and insights. - Discussion of final interaction with stakeholders. - What's next?	

Usability Evaluation Project

Conduct an "industrial-strength" usability evaluation of some software product or web site. By "industrial strength" I mean I expect this piece of work to be as good as it would be if you were being paid to do this work by a client. Include user testing; inspection methods can be used, but not exclusively. (One key aspect of "industrial strength" is that you need to test representative users, not just a convenience sample, as you may have in Intro to Usability.) Present the test plan, in class, and get feedback from your professor and peers. Present the evaluation in the form of both a final written report and likely to the stakeholders of the site/app/UI you're evaluating.

You are free to pick (with my approval) some web site, web-based app, mobile app, traditional desktop app, or other artifact, to evaluate. For those of you who don't have a particular project in mind, I will offer some possible projects in class on Day 1. Some things to consider as you choose, I offer humbly, are:

- Will I enjoy this and be proud to have done this work?
- Might this piece of work look good on my resume?
- Relatedly, might this work help me land a job, either directly or indirectly?
- Will I be able to finish on time?!

SOME Potential Usability Projects . . .

Will be presented in Week 1. You will also be invited to propose your own.