**INF382C, Understanding & Serving Users**

**27675**

**FALL 2018**

**Class Meets:** Thursdays, 12-3pm, 1.502

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| **Instructor:** Andrew Dillon. **Office hours:** Tue, 9-11am | | |
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| **Email:** adillon@ischool.utexas.edu | |
| Email is always the best method of contacting me | |

**Understanding and Serving Users**

Information systems exist to serve human needs but how do we know what people want? How can we ensure that the information products or services we deliver to people fulfill their expectations or assist their work? How can we anticipate human responses to information problems and situations? In what ways are people alike and different and how do we change with experience?  To really deliver on the promise of information, we must be able to shape solutions that matter for real people, so this course is a deep dive into the psychology and behaviors of people when they use information.

The course will provide you with a strong theoretical understanding of the drivers, limits and variations of human responses to design and explore methods that will guide our decisions as we create and evaluate solutions for real contexts. We will explore both the commonalities and differences between people, consider how learning and skill development occurs, what culture can tell us about users, why new technologies are accepted or resisted, all the while considering how knowledge of this kind can be leveraged to help us design and implement more humanely useful information systems.

The goal is for you to have a deeper and applicable sense of user-centeredness as a core value of the information field rather than an advertising attribute or brand claim. You will apply the material we cover to real-world observations of information designs and learn to frame the interactions in ways that can support practical improvements and trade-offs. You will also have the chance to tailor your final deliverable to a problem or topic that is meaningful to you in more than just this course. It is my intent that you leave the course with a new, richer, understanding of how our information world is being shaped and how you can ensure the human experience of this world is improved.

## What will I learn?

### Main skills and attitudes to be developed:

* Origins and meaning of user-centered design thinking
* Critical understanding of core human attributes in information processing
* Contextual awareness of organizational and cultural shapers of use
* Awareness of typical approaches to studying and reporting user experience

### Learning Outcomes

1. Ability to articulate and justify user-centered design of information systems
2. Ability to observe and identify design problems and justify recommended improvements
3. Knowledge of the basic skills and methods applied by user-experience professionals
4. Understanding the role and literature of user-centeredness in contemporary information experiences

## How will I learn?

## This is a readings and discussion graduate seminar. Active involvement in classes is essential to learning. The deliverables for the course require you to observe and apply the materials to real world situations.

## Pre-requisites for the course: There are no prerequisites, students from all backgrounds are welcome. You do not need coding or design skills, statistical knowledge or experience in IT to learn in this course. You don’t need to be committed to specific career path to benefit from a deeper understanding of people who use information products and services, all iSchool graduates will find ways of making this material relevant to their professional careers.

## How to succeed in this course: Read, discuss, keep an open mind and explore the concepts in ways that make personal sense for you. Understanding users requires you to challenge your own beliefs about what is good design or an appropriate solution for others. You will learn that humans are both alike and unalike on many important dimensions and that the science of human experience offers rich insights into how we can create the information infrastructure of our world. Find a topic that is meaningful to you for your final paper and relate your readings and understandings appropriately.

## Required Materials

Reading material and weekly breakdown will be presented via Canvas. I will make suggestions for supplementary materials as we progress.

## Classroom expectations

**Class attendance** Students are expected to attend and come prepared to participate in all class meetings.

## Assignments

1. **Design Diary** *(*Identify and document design problems and justify recommended improvements)

50% of grade – create an observational diary of user interactions with any information environment (computer, person, facility) where the interactive experience is challenged by poor or uninformed design choices. These interactions can be personally experienced or observed in others. Each entry should cover the context of occurrence, the nature of the problem from the user’s perspective, an analytical/theoretical framing of the experience, and a clear recommendation for re-design that would improve the experience. Cite appropriate literature for each entry. The diary can be a mix of text, figures, photos, or any medium that conveys your point and is shareable with me. The complete diary should consist of 10 distinct entries. This deliverable gives you room to explore user concerns in whatever form makes most sense for you.

#### Research paper (Understanding role and literature of user-centeredness experiences)

50% of grade. Compose and present to the class a term paper (5000 words approx.) on a topic of your choosing that deals with our understanding of humans and the design of more humanly acceptable and usable information systems. You have broad remit here to cover material that is meaningful to you and your programs of study. The paper should demonstrate a critical and referenced treatment of your topic. It must be original, individual work and produced in a form that is presentable both in class as a talk but also as a written document for final submission.

A note on group projects: There are none. Your deliverables are your individual work, and you are graded accordingly

**Course Outline**

All instructions, readings, and essential information will be on the Canvas website at

[https://utexas.instructure.com.](https://utexas.instructure.com/) Check this site regularly and use it to ask questions about the course schedule. Note, the readings provided are *foundational* but *not sufficient* for delivering on your research paper. They represent a minimal reading load for the material covered in the classes but you should be prepared to seek out further readings based on your own interests and needs. There are several books among the readings, and while I direct you to specific chapters, you can take it as given that reading the whole book is worthwhile.

It is the nature of this type of graduate course that we pursue ideas as the emerge in the course discussions**.** Consequently, further readings or adjustments to the schedule may occur as we progress and as user issues become noteworthy in the media. I will always make this clear in class and via regular communication but it is your responsibility to note these changes and adjust as needed. I have intentionally left one class in the schedule open toward the end of the semester. This is often useful if the readings and discussions take us deeper into topics that we wish to explore or if concerns about the looming deliverables necessitate specific treatment of issues. We will collectively determine the best use of this meeting nearer the time.

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| Week | Date | **Class Topic** | **Readings**  **Assignments due** |
| 1 | 8/30 | Intro and class overview | Vicente, K (2004) *The Human Factor*, chapter 2  Kujala, S. (2003) User involvement: a review of the benefits/challenges |
| 2 | 9/6 | History and emergence of user-centered design | Iavari and Iavari (2006) Varieties of user-centeredness  Ritter et al (2014) User-centered design, a brief history.  Vardouli, T. (2016) User design: constructions of the user |
| 3 | 9/13 | Human information processing 1  (the cognitive architecture) | Jeff Johnson: Designing with the Mind in Mind: chapters 1-5 |
| 4 | 9/20 | Human information processing 2  (controlled & automatic processing) | Jeff Johnson: Designing with the Mind in Mind: chapters 6-10 |
| 5 | 9/27 | Human Information processing 3  (individual differences) | Jeff Johnson: Designing with the Mind in Mind: chapters 11-14 |
| 6 | 10/4 | Cultural dynamics  (how the world of users varies) | Hofstede, G. (2011) Dimensionalizing Cultures  Venaik and Brewer (2016) National Culture Dimensions: the perpetuation of cultural ignorance |
| 7 | 10/11 | Socio-technical models of use | Baxter and Sommerville (2011) Socio Technical Systems  Lai (2017) Literature review of technology adoption models |
| 8 | 10/18 | Acceptance and resistance | Alexandre et al (2018) Acceptance and Acceptability Criteria  Girardi and Chiagouris (2018) The digital marketplace |
| 9 | 10/25 | Putting it together in design  (defining and measuring user experience) | Bevan et al (2015) What have we learned about usability since 1998?  Jun and King (2008) The role of user participation: implications |
| 10 | 11/1 | Getting data from users | Nessler D. (2017) [How to nail user interviews](https://uxdesign.cc/how-to-nail-a-user-interviews-in-a-ux-hcd-or-design-thinking-process-full-guide-17d4eeee8dc3)  Sauro and Lewis (2016) Standardized Usability Questionnaires, Chapter 8 of *Quantifying the User Experience* |
| 11 | 11/8 | Basic analysis of user data  (statistical reasoning about users) | Suaro J. and Lewis (2016), *Quantifying the User Experience*, Chapters 2,3,4, and 5 |
| 12 | 11/15 | Buffer zone  (allowing for refresh & exploration) | As needed – reflection, revisiting and redressing |
| 13 | 11/22 | Thanksgiving holiday | No class |
| 14 | 11/29 | Class presentations | Students will present their research paper for Q&A |
| 15 | 12/6 | Class presentations | Students will present their research paper for Q&A |

**Classroom Policies**

**Statement on Learning Success**

Your success in this class is important to me. We all learn differently and I want this to be an environment for all. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know. Together we’ll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT. Many are listed below – never hesitate to ask if you have concerns – your time here matters.

**Grading Policies**

While following the standard grade structure for graduate work at UT and as outlined in the MSIS Handbook for iSchool students, I do not grade on a curve. All submitted work is read and assigned a grade by me. Clearly, with research papers and design diaries, final grades have a certain subjective quality. I will discuss this as we proceed through the semester as it is my aim to free you to think deeply and do your best work, not worry about points.

For each assignment I look for clarity, evidence of background reading and analysis, and originality. Grades of A reflect excellence, B+ is above satisfactory, B is work that I expect from any graduate student at a minimum, while B- represents work that gives me concern as to the student’s viability in our program. While equal weighting is given to the two major assignments in the course, borderline grades are determined up or down based on class participation and the general engagement of the student in the course over the semester.

#### Late work

#### As both major deliverables are due at the end of the semester, there is no late work. You can of course be early!

#### Absences

#### You are adults, I will treat you as such. If life challenges your ability to attend a class, please let me know and we can agree the best process. If life challenges your ability to attend several classes then you might have the wrong schedule for this class and should determine this in advance with your advisor.

#### Student Rights & Responsibilities

* You have a right to a learning environment that supports mental and physical wellness.
* You have a right to respect.
* You have a right to be assessed and graded fairly.
* You have a right to freedom of opinion and expression.
* You have a right to privacy and confidentiality.
* You have a right to meaningful and equal participation, to self-organize groups to improve your learning environment.
* You have a right to learn in an environment that is welcoming to all people. No student shall be isolated, excluded or diminished in any way.

With these rights come responsibilities:

* You are responsible for taking care of yourself, managing your time, and communicating with me and with others if things start to feel out of control or overwhelming.
* You are responsible for acting in a way that is worthy of respect and always respectful of others.
* Your experience with this course is directly related to the quality of the energy that you bring to it, and your energy shapes the quality of your peers’ experiences.
* You are responsible for creating an inclusive environment and for speaking up when someone is excluded.
* You are responsible for holding yourself accountable to these standards, holding each other to these standards, and holding the teaching team accountable as well.

#### Personal Pronoun Preference

#### 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. I will gladly honor your request to address you differently than what appears on the roster. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

#### University Policies

#### Academic Integrity

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.” **Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT.**Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php>

#### University Resources for Students

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we’ll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. There are also a range of resources on campus:

#### *Services for Students with Disabilities*

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. If appropriate, also contact Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329- 3986 (video phone). <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>

*Counseling and Mental Health Center*

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. <http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/individualcounseling.html>

*Student Emergency Services*: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

#### Important Safety Information:

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn’t feel right – it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

***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:

* 1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
  2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
  3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university’s [relevant policies](https://titleix.utexas.edu/relevant-polices/).

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](mailto:advocate@austin.utexas.edu) For more information about reporting options and resources, visit [titleix.utexas.edu](http://titleix.utexas.edu/) or contact the Title IX Office at [titleix@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu).

The following 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.
* Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at:

[www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency)