

INF 315C Topics in Human-Computer Interaction: User Research
Unique number: 27439

Spring 2020
School of Information
The University of Texas at Austin

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Course Description & Objectives

This is an introductory course designed for undergraduate students of all majors who are interested in the topic of user research in human-computer interaction and user experience design. Throughout the semester, you will learn the basics of how to conduct user research (e.g., user research methods, preparation for research, and participant recruitment), as well as how to analyze and report your research results to inform product design.

Course Format & Communication Tools

This is a web-based course, which means there will be no class meeting each week. You will complete most of the class activities and assignments in the Canvas site. Canvas (<http://canvas.utexas.edu/>) will be used to post lectures, announcements, readings and other course documents, and assignments. We recommend that you check the email address being used by the University and your “notification settings” on Canvas to make sure that you are receiving all relevant information.

You may also need regular access to the following tools:

- Internet – If you do not have access to a personal computer, you may use the iSchool lab (UTA 1.210) while enrolled in this course. You do not need to sign up for an iSchool account. The iSchool lab has both Macs and PCs, as well as lots of great software. I encourage you to check out the lab!
- Email – You can open an email account through UT, Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, etc. if you do not already have one. Make sure you register your official email account with the university. All correspondence for this course will use your official UT email, and "I didn't get the email" is not accepted as an excuse for missing an assignment!
- Adobe Acrobat Reader – Several articles we will read are in .pdf format so you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader (you most likely already have it).
- UT Box – UT offers you unlimited storage for your files and make them available to you anywhere. All you need is an Internet connection and a Web browser. Set up UT Box synch and keep your local files backed up to the cloud automatically! As a student, you have already paid for this service. Use it! Set up an account with your UTEID.

The course is divided into modules, and each week I will release a new module (or two) that will focus on one topic of user research. You can do the work whenever you want throughout the week as long as you submit everything no later than the designated date and time for each assignment. I recommend setting up a few 3-hour time blocks that will help you keep up with the class.

Each module contains the following activities:

- **Video lecture** - Each module begins with a video lecture from me (about 20 minutes)
- **Guest lecture** – Some weeks, we will have recorded guest lectures from user research professionals in the industry.
- **Readings** –You will read one textbook throughout the semester, with some additional readings listed in each module. These additional readings are available through the course Web site, Canvas, UT Library Online, or through the World Wide Web.
- **Discussion** – Students will engage in discussions about the lecture, readings, and/or related topics each week using the discussion board section set up by the instructor. You will find more information on discussions in the “Assignments” section of this syllabus.
- **Exercise (occasionally)**

In addition to the above weekly activities, students will complete three **quizzes** and work on a “**group project**” (divided into 4 submissions) during the semester. Details about the assignments are described in the “assignments” section below.

Required Textbook

Brad Nunnally and David Farkas. 2016. *UX Research: Practical Techniques for Designing Better Products (1st ed.)*. O'Reilly Media, Inc. [[Amazon link](#)]

Supplemental readings will be available online via Canvas.

Schedule & Readings

Module	Date	Topics	Assignments
Module 0	01/21-01/27	Introduction to the course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion
Module 1	01/28-02/03	What is user research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion ○ Syllabus quiz
Module 2	02/04-02/10	Logistics and preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise (p.121) ○ Discussion
Module 3	02/11-02/17	Participants recruitment and interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise (p.163) ○ Group project proposal
Module 4	02/18-02/24	User research methods overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise (p.72) ○ Discussion
Module 5	02/25-03/02	Usability testing and A/B testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise ○ Discussion
Module 6	03/03-03/09	User interview and contextual inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise (p.29) ○ Discussion ○ Group project status report
Module 7	03/10-03/16	Diary study and ethnography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise ○ Discussion ○ Mid-term quiz
03/17-03/23	Enjoy the Spring Break!		
Module 8	03/24-03/30	Survey and card sorting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise ○ Discussion

Module 9	03/31-04/06	Collaboration and communication among the team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise (p.176) ○ Discussion
Module 10	04/07-04/13	Analyzing your research data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise (p.196) ○ Discussion ○ Group project report draft
Module 11	04/14-04/20	Presenting your findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class exercise (p.212) ○ Discussion
Module 12	04/21-04/27	Design for the trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion
Module 13	04/28-05/04	What's next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion ○ Final quiz
	05/11	<i>DUE: group project final report & member evaluation form</i>	

Assignments

Assignments	Due date	Points
Class Exercise	The following Monday	10 points
Weekly Discussion	The following Monday	28 points
Quizzes		22 points
Syllabus quiz	Feb. 3 rd	2 points
Mid-term quiz	Mar. 16 th	10 points
Final quiz	May 4 th	10 points
Group project*		40 points
Proposal	Feb. 17 th	10 points
Status report	Mar. 9 th	10 points
Research report draft	Apr. 13 th	5 points
Final report	May 11 th	15 points
Member evaluation form	May 11 th	
*Group member evaluation applies. Rules are explained in assignment details.		

General requirements

- Assignments must be submitted by midnight (11:59PM) on the due date.
- Please submit all assignments using Canvas. Assignments submitted via email will not be counted.
- In fairness to students who turn in assignments on time, all late assignments will be penalized by deducting 10% of the total points each day that the assignment is late.
- No assignment submitted more than one week after the due date will be accepted.
- These deadlines may be negotiable for students who have documented disabilities, health issues, and family emergencies. Students need to inform the instructor and discuss about their situations.

All written assignments need to meet basic college-level writing standards. Completing your assignments at the last minute usually result in a poor grade. Your writing will be graded on the following criteria:

- Grammar and spelling
- The clarity of thoughts and structures demonstrated in your writing (use headings as you see fit)
- Your use of resources (including citations)
- The overall quality of the writing

You must cite all sources you have used in your written submissions and provide complete citation information at the end of your submitted documents, including any module readings or the online lecture. Remember that citing others' materials without proper reference may result in plagiarism and suffer strict academic consequences. All citations should follow a formal citation style (e.g., APA & Chicago). For more information on citation styles, please see the Purdue University OWL guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

All writing assignments will be passed through Turnitin for plagiarism check. The results of this software analysis are not the only method I use to determine whether something is plagiarized. Plagiarism is my least favorite thing to deal with in this course. So avoid it!

Class Exercise (10 points)

We will have some class exercises occasionally, and most of the exercises are adopted from the textbook. Each exercise is 1 point.

Weekly Discussion (28 points)

To actively engage students in learning, there will be an online discussion each week throughout the semester. Discussions will be graded on a 2-point scale: 1 point for your original submission and one point for your responses to two other students. You must complete all three parts of the submission (original post and two responses) and meet the minimum requirements to receive credit. For your original submission, it should be at least 200 words and make it clear to the instructor that you have viewed the lecture and the readings for that week. Detailed instructions are listed on each discussion assignment. Your responses to two other students should be at least two sentences long and should move the conversation forward. Responses of "I agree. This happened to me once." or similar short responses will not receive credit.

Quizzes (22 points)

We will have three quizzes at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. Quizzes are open book, so consider them more of a review than a "test of knowledge". Quizzes time out after 3 hours, so set aside an appropriate amount of time to work through the quiz.

Group project (40 points)

Students will be assigned into a group (3-4 people) to work on a group project. This is an opportunity for you to practice what you have learn from the course in the real world setting and design (or re-design) a digital product informed by the results of your user research. The digital product can be a website, a smartphone application, or a device you have been using frequently. You can also turn an insightful idea into a brand-new product. Be creative!

There are four deliverables associated with this group project. All writing deliverables should be in word or PDF format and uploaded to Canvas. Feedback from the instructor will be given in one to two weeks. Details about the deliverables will be described below.

Group members may need to meet occasionally in-person or through video conferences to discuss the project. Prompt email or message exchanges among the group is also significant to the success of the project.

Project proposal (10 points)

The proposal should provide an overview (at least 500 words) for the user research to be performed with the following three required sections:

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- A cover page listing your group number, group members, and project name
- A brief description of your project, your research question(s)/goal(s), and the research methods you plan to use. (e.g., what digital product will your group research upon? why you choose to redesign (or create) this product? What does your user research try to accomplish or solve? Who are the targeted users of this product? etc.)
- A tentative schedule demonstrating how you will manage the project over the course of the semester and how the workload will be divided among the group members. (It can be revised later if necessary)

Status report (10 points)

In this status report, you are asked to update your project progress by answering the following questions:

- What has been done? (you can include some preliminary results if having any)
- Who did what?
- Any problems or challenges encountered thus far?
- What's your plan afterward?

There is no strict format for this report as long as you've answered the above questions clearly in at least 500 words. The purpose of this report is to help your group reflect on the work you've done and plan ahead of the things left.

Research report draft (5 points)

Your report draft should be half written towards the final version (~1000-1500 words). The structure of the report should have the following sections with minor changes if necessary:

- Introduction (e.g., background information, research questions and goals, significance of the project, ...)
- Research Methods (e.g., methods used, data collection & analysis procedure, ...)
- Results
- Design Suggestions
- Conclusion & Reflection (e.g., your major findings, limitations of your research, or the challenges or risks that you have faced when conducting the project.)
- Contribution Table (What each group member has done? It can be as detailed as things such as who formatted the document style)

You are encouraged to include relevant visual elements generated from your user research (e.g., graphics, screenshots, or photos) in your report. If you do so, please properly caption your figures and indicate them in your writing.

For sections or paragraphs that are under construction, please make a note to inform the instructor in the submitted document.

Final report (15 points)

The final version of your report should be 2000–2500 words and fully written, with the required sections mentioned above.

Member evaluation

Because this is a group project, we will add a member evaluation component to each student's group project grade, to reflect one's contribution to a group. You are asked to submit a group member evaluation form assessing your peers in a scale from 0 to 100%. Your group project grade will be

multiplied by the average percentage rating you get from your team. For example, if your group receives 40 points for the group project finished, but the average rating you get from your group members is 90%, your final grade for the group project will be reduced to 36 points (=40 x 90%).

Grading

This class uses the traditional UT Austin undergraduate grading scale:

A	94 – 100
A -	90 - 93
B +	87 - 89
B	83 - 86
B -	80 - 82
C +	77 - 79
C	73 - 76
C -	70 - 72
D+	67 – 69
D	63 - 66
D-	60 - 62 (minimum for pass/fail students to pass)
F	Below 60

University Information and Policies

Special needs

The instructor is happy to provide all appropriate accommodations for qualified students with documented disabilities. The University’s Office of the Dean of Students at 471.6259, 471.4641 YYT, can provide further information and referrals as necessary. More information can also be found at: <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/>

Religious holy day observance

If an assignment or exam falls due on a day when you are observing a religious holy day, the instructor will work with you to find a time to submit the work.

Academic dishonesty and plagiarism

UT honor code applies in this class. Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, cheating, or academic fraud, will not be tolerated in this class. Please refer to the UT General Information Bulletin, Appendix C, Sections 11-304 and 11-802 for more information. For further information, please visit <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/academicintegrity.html>

The twelfth class day

The twelfth day of the semester is Feb. 5th. This is the last day to possibly get a refund if you drop a class.

Behavior concerns advice line

Use this resource to help fellow UT members about whom you have concerns **BCAL: 512-232-5050**