The University of Texas at Austin
School of Information

Fall 2021
INF 385P: Usability
Unique: 28340
Room: UTA 1.208
(Zoom sessions on Canvas)
Monday: 6pm-9pm

Instructor
Tom Thornton
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Office Hours
Email for appointment

Course Description

Though this course is titled "Usability", it recognizes that usability as it is practiced today often entails a blurring of lines with the related disciplines of **Human-Computer Interaction**, **Information Architecture**, **Ethnography** and **Human Factors**. As such, what was traditionally known as usability, has over the past 20 years been substantially broadened, a fact reflected in its modern re-expression as "User Experience" (UX) research, "User-centered Design" (UCD), or even "Design Thinking".

Regardless of which name we use, or which specific domains we draw guidance from, all roads come together in the primary objective of this course: giving students hands-on training so they can start to acquire the "table-stakes" skills necessary for conducting user research in fast-paced industry environments. Specifically, this course will introduce some of the core UX research methods in use today, as well as how these methods are best applied to help development teams create successful products that are easy, fun, and efficient for people to use.

Accordingly, the class will cover 3 major areas
1. The role of UX testing in the design process, including which methods are best suited to specific types of questions and at specific points along the development cycle
2. The joint process of research planning, implementation, data analysis and synthesis, as well as the final reporting of findings to stakeholders
3. The "real world" application of these skills to industry-paced projects.

Objectives/Goals

The student who successfully completes this class will
– Have an in-depth understanding of some primary UX methods relevant to product development (e.g. Top Tasks, Heuristic evaluation, Depth interviewing, Moderated User testing, UX Benchmarking)
– Understand the principles of other important UX tools/methods (e.g. Information architecture tests (card-sorts, tree-tests), RITE testing, Competitive benchmarking, Kano analysis, Controlled vocabularies, Thematic coding of qualitative data, etc.)
– Have a working understanding of the most frequently used UX methods at each point of the development lifecycle, with a specific focus on which methods are best suited to evaluative research.

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– Learn the scientific underpinnings of the various methodologies, including the specific advantages and disadvantages of each.

Class Format

This course is a combination of intensive readings from journal articles and book chapters, self-directed learning within teams, as well as a semester long project. There will be substantial team work done in each class meeting. Attendance and participation in class are critical to each individual student's success and to the value that this type of interactive course provides. Students are expected to come to class prepared to engage in both smaller collaborative groups and in large class discussions and presentations. Students must complete all required readings prior to each class and submit all assignments on time.

Grades

All assignments are due at 6pm, on the date listed.
Assignments will be uploaded to Canvas.

Each student will be required to present an in-class synopsis of one assigned reading topic [see Canvas for the assigned reading assignments and dates for the in-class presentation]. There will be a PDF covering the instructions re: the reading presentations and self-directed assignments.

Along with the key deliverables for your course project, you will also be graded by your team member peers. Your peers will grade you in terms of your participation and the quality of your contribution to the overall small group effort. The peer grades will be combined as part of the final report grade.

Grade Breakdown
5% – Top Tasks (Group)
10% – Reading Presentations (Individual)
10% – Big Question (Group)
15% – Heuristic Evaluation (Group)
10% – Test Plan + Screener Qs (Group)
5% – Moderator Script
5% – Report Shell
5% – Report Draft
35% – Final Report & Presentation (10%, based on team peer reviews)

Required Textbooks

Portigal, S. (2013). Interviewing Users: How to Uncover Compelling Insights. Brooklyn, NY: Rosenfeld Media. ISBN: 9781933820118.

Fitzpatrick, R. (2014). The Mom Test: How to talk to customers & learn if your business is a good idea when everyone else is lying to you. London: Foundercentric. ISBN: 1492180742.

Rubin, J., & Chisnell, D. (2008). Handbook of Usability Testing: How to Plan, Design, and Conduct Effective Tests (2nd edition). Indiana: Wiley. ISBN: 0470185481.

Class Schedule (revised)

	DATE	TOPICS	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
1	8/30 In-Person	– Intros: Students + Me – Review Syllabus – Course Objectives – Overview of reading presentations – UX Trends 2021, UT Research – Figma	**For 9/13** – Ch. 1, 2 Fitzpatrick – Ch. 1, 2 Rubin & Chisnell – Articles 1 and 2	– Real-life poor UX, in class on 9/13 – Start Using Figma • Set up account • Intro. to basics • Learn FigJam
X	9/6	**No Class**: Labor Day Holiday		
2	9/13 Online	– Reading presentations #1 – Poor UX examples – Our Class Project (review big picture, milestones, deliverables) – Introduce the "Big Question" – Team Assignments	**For 9/20** – How to benchmark UX – Usability article 3 – Ch. 3, Rubin & Chisnell – Competitive 1 and 2 – Ch. 1 and 2, Portigal	– Big Question #1 (Teams 1, 2, and 3) – Set up Figma Teams
3	9/20 In-Person	– Reading Presentations #2 – Big Answers #1 – **Lecture**: Heuristic Evaluation (HE)	**For 9/27** – Usability 6 + 5-user article – Faulkner + 5-for-5 article – Ch. 3 Fitzpatrick – Ch. 3 and 4, Portigal	– HE Report due by 6pm on 9/27 – Schedule interview sessions
4	9/27 Online	– Debrief on HE reports – Reading Presentations #3 – Lecture: Depth Interviews	**For 10/4** – Ch. 5 and 6 in Portigal – Ch. 5, Rubin & Chisnell – Hack your body language for better interviews	– Interview Sessions – Top Tasks due by 10/4

5	10/4 Online	– Reading Presentations #4 – **Lecture 1:** Test Plan – **Lecture 2:** Screener / Recruiting	**For 10/11** – Ch. 7 and 8, Rubin & Chisnell – Remote moderated usability – Moderating UX with Zoom	Outline of Test Session due 10/11
6	10/11 In-Person	– Reading Presentations #5 – **Lecture:** Site Benchmarking & moderated usability	**For 10/18** – Ch. 4, p48-58, Rubin & Chisnell – Conduct the test session, Ch. 9, Rubin & Chisnell, p201-212	– Big Question #2 (Teams 4 and 5) – Start Recruit – Peer Review #1
7	10/18 Online	– Team check-in – Reading Presentations #6 – Big Answers #2 – **Lecture:** Moderator script – **Guest Lecture:** Tech Checks –	**For 10/25** – 10 things to know about task times – Average task times: what to report – SUS & UX benchmarks articles	– Finish recruit – Participant schedule due by 10/25 – Tech Checks
8	10/25 Online	– Reading Presentations #7 – **Lecture 1:** Data & Note-taking – **Lecture 2:** Participant Packet	*end of readings* Big Question #3 (Teams 6 and 7)	Dry Runs: 10/28 & 10/29
9	11/1 In-Person	– Team check-in – Big Answer #3 – Breakouts	Data Collection, 11/2 to 11/7	
10	11/8 Online	– **Lecture:** Analysis of success and time-on-task data – Breakouts	Make-up sessions + Data Analysis	
11	11/15 Online	– **Lecture 1:** SUS – **Lecture 2:** Report shell – Breakouts	Data Analysis (cont.) Report shell, due 11/22	
12	11/22 In-Person	– Debrief on Shell – **Guest Lecture:** TBD – Breakouts	Report draft, due 11/30	
13	11/29 Online	– **Lecture:** Other UX Tools – Breakouts: Feedback on report drafts	All Data & Final Report, due 12/6 Peer Review #2	
14	12/6 In-Person	– Last day of class – **Client Presentations** (3pm, 345pm, 430pm, 515pm)	Class Meet-up 6:30pm, TBD	

Land Acknowledgment (Please see the file attached for a [full document](#)).
(I) We would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Indigenous land. Moreover, (I) 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 reminder
Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas [Senate Bill 212](#)requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the [Title IX Office](#) regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit [http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/,](http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/) contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419.

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 unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, 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 in the course.

Class Recordings:
Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.