



Spring 2021

INF 385P: Usability
Unique: 28340
Room: Online
Tuesdays: 3:00–6:00pm

Instructor

Tom Thornton
tlthorntonjr@gmail.com

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 the top qualitative UX methods relevant to product development (e.g. Heuristic evaluation, Competitive evaluation, Cognitive walkthroughs, Depth interviews, Thematic coding)
- Understand the principles of several important quantitative UX methods (e.g. Information architecture tests (card-sorts, tree-tests), Surveys, 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
- Understand the value of data-driven UX research and the importance of keeping return-on-investment (ROI) front-and-center.

Class Format

This course is a combination of intensive readings from journal articles and book chapters, as well as a semester long project. There will be substantial group 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 7am, on the date listed.

Assignments will be uploaded to a secure Google Drive (details will be provided in each assignment's specific instructions within 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.

Along with the key deliverables for your course project, you will also be graded at two intervals by your group member peers. Your peers will grade you in terms of your participation and the quality of your contribution to the overall group effort. These grades will be averaged to form a single overall grade for each group member.

Grade Breakdown

10% – Reading presentation (Individual)

10% – Heuristic Evaluation (Group)

10% – Competitive Analysis (Group)

10% – Recruitment Screener (Group)

15% – Test packet, Moderator Script, and Participant packet (Group)

35% – Reading presentation (individual)

10% – Individual's review by Group members

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Required Textbooks

Portugal, 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

	DATE	TOPICS	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
1	1/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Introductions– Syllabus– Canvas Review– Reading Presentations	<i>Required</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Fitzpatrick (p. 1-64)– Articles 1, 2	
2	1/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Reading Presentations– Heuristic Evaluation Principles / Cognitive Walkthroughs– Introduce Project– Lecture: Using Figma	<i>Required</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Rubin & Chisnell (Ch.1,2,3)– Articles 3 & 4 <i>Optional</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Portugal (Ch. 1)	
3	2/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Reading Presentations– Lecture: Competitive Analysis	<i>Required</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Rubin & Chisnell (Ch. 5,6)– Articles: Competitive (1, 2) + Checklist-Competitive <i>Optional</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Portugal (Ch. 2)	<i>*Heuristic Evaluation</i> (due 2/8 by 7am)
4	2/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Reading Presentations– Heuristic Evaluation Debrief– Lecture: Screeners & Recruiting Users	<i>Required</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Rubin & Chisnell (Ch.7)– Articles 5, 6, 7, 8 <i>Optional</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Portugal (Ch. 3)	<i>*Competitive Analysis</i> (due 2/15 by 7am) <i>*Screener</i> (due 2/15 by 7am)

5	2/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Debrief: Competitive Analysis – Debrief: Screener – Reading Presentations – Lecture: Interview Materials & Packets – Lecture: Pre/Post questions, SUS, TAM, etc. 	<i>Required</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rubin & Chisnell (Ch. 4 & 8) – Articles 10, 11 	
6	2/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reading Presentations – Lecture: Conducting Depth Interviews – Dry-Run – Guest Lecture: Intro. to Prototyping in Figma – Begin Recruiting 	<i>Required</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rubin & Chisnell (Ch. 9) – Portigal (Ch. 4,5,6) – Articles 12,13 	<i>*Interview Materials</i> (Due 3/1 by 7am) <i>*CITI Training</i> (Due 3/1)
7	3/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Debrief: Interview Materials – Lecture: Data Collection Methods – Reading Presentations – Begin User Testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Portigal (Ch. 7, 8) – Rubin & Chisnell (Ch. 11) – Article: Intro. To Qual 	
8	3/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lecture: Basic Data Analysis – Retrospective vs. Concurrent Think Aloud (pros & cons) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Portigal (Ch. 9) – Rubin & Chisnell (Ch. 10) – Articles 16, 17 	
9	3/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lecture: Data Visualization & Report Creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rubin & Chisnell (Ch. 12) – Articles 9, 20 	
10	3/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Guest Lecture: Grounded Theory & Thematic Coding – Lecture: Controlled Vocabularies & MS-desirability toolkit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Article: MS toolkit 	
11	4/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lecture: Journey Maps / Value Maps – Guest Lecture: Agile Methodology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Article 21 – Article: Journey Mapping – Article: Service Design 	<i>*Draft Presentations</i> (Due 4/12 by 7am)
12	4/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Debrief: Report Drafts – Lecture: Information Architecture (Card Sorting & Tree Testing) – Intro. to Optimal Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Article Card Sort – Article: Tree Test 1 – Article: Tree Test 2 	

13	4/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lecture: Survey development (structure, question types, scales, logic)- Intro. To Survey Monkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Article: Surveys- Article: Writing good questions	
14	4/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Executive Summary Presentations with Stakeholders		
15	5/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Last Class Day: Q&A with UX researchers		