I310 Topics in Introductory Informatics: User Research
Unique number: 28075

Spring 2021
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 an online asynchronous class, and there will be no class meeting each week. You will complete most of the class activities and assignments in the Canvas site. Canvas will also be used to post announcements, readings and other course documents.

This course is divided into modules. Each week, I will release a new module (or two) that will focus on one topic of user research. You can learn each module at your own pace and browse the content anytime you want throughout the week. We will also have weekly assignment(s) that you need to submit no later than the designated date and time. 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 15 minutes)
- **Readings** –You will read one textbook throughout the semester, with some additional readings listed in each module as required readings. You will also find some additional readings or resources in each module that I recommend, if you would like to know more about the topic of the week. These readings are linked through the course Canvas site.
- **Discussion or Class Exercise** – Some weeks, you will engage in asynchronous discussions about the lecture, readings, and/or related topics of the week by posting on a discussion thread on Canvas. Some other weeks, you will work on a hands-on exercise and submit a short summary or report of the experience.

In addition to the above weekly activities, you will complete three **quizzes** and work on a **group project** (divided into 5 submissions) during the semester. I will also post extra credit assignments occasionally. 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][UT Library E-Book Link]

Supplemental readings will be available online via Canvas.

Schedule & Readings

Module	Date	Topics	Assignments Due
Module 0	1/19 - 1/25	Introduction to the course	o Self-introduction
Module 1	1/26 – 2/1	What is user research	o Discussion 1 o Syllabus quiz
Module 2	2/2 – 2/8	Logistics and preparation	o Class exercise 1 (p.121)
Module 3	2/9 – 2/15	Participants recruitment and interaction	o Class exercise 2 (p.163) o Extra credit
Module 4	2/16 – 2/22	User research methods overview	o Class exercise 3 (p.72)
Module 5	2/23 – 3/1	Usability testing and A/B testing	o Class exercise 4 o Group project proposal
Module 6	3/2 – 3/8	User interview and contextual inquiry	o Discussion 2
Module 7	3/9 – 3/15	Diary study and ethnography	o Discussion 3 o Mid-term quiz
3/15 – 3/22 Enjoy the Spring Break!			
Module 8	3/23 – 3/29	Remote user research	o Discussion 4 o Group project status report
Module 9	3/30 – 4/5	Survey and card sorting	o Discussion 5 o Extra credit
Module 10	4/6 – 4/12	Collaboration and communication among the team	o Discussion 6
Module 11	4/13 – 4/19	Analyzing your research data	o Class exercise 5 o Group project report draft
Module 12	4/20 – 4/26	Presenting your findings	o Class exercise 6
Module 13	4/27 – 5/3	Group project & Wrap-up	o Final discussion (learning reflection) o Final quiz
5/7 - Group project final report, video presentation & member evaluation form due			

Assignments

Assignments	Due date	Points
Class Exercise	The following Monday	12 points
Discussion	The following Monday	26 points
Quizzes		
Syllabus quiz	Feb. 1st	2 points
Mid-term quiz	Mar. 15th	10 points
Final quiz	May 3rd	10 points
Group project*		

Proposal	Mar. 1st	10 points
Status report	Mar. 29th	5 points
Research report draft	Apr. 19th	5 points
Final report	May 7th	10 points
Final video presentation	May 7th	10 points
Member evaluation form	May 7th	
*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 (12 points)

We will have 6 class exercises throughout the semester. Each exercise is relevant to the topic of a certain week and is designed to help you gain hands-on experiences of user research. Most of the exercises are adopted from the textbook, and you will have to refer to the textbook for instructions to complete the exercise. Each exercise is worth 2 points.

Discussion (26 points)

To share your learning and thoughts to your peers, we will be having 6 online discussions throughout the semester. Discussions will be graded on a 4-point scale: 2 points for your original submission and 2 points 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 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 a few 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.

In addition to the six formal discussions, we will have a self-introduction discussion (1 point) at the first week and a final discussion (1 point) at the end of the semester to reflect upon your learnings. These two discussions don't require your responses to your peers, but you are welcome to leave a note or react on others' posts if something catches your eyes.

Quizzes (22 points)

We will have three quizzes at the beginning (syllabus quiz), middle (mid-term quiz), and end (final quiz) 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 throughout the semester. This is an opportunity for you to practice what you have learn from the course in the real world setting and re-design a digital product informed by the results of your user research. This time, we will target 3 services that most college students have been using or visiting a lot since the start of the pandemic. Guess what are they? **Zoom, Canvas, and the UT website**. Each group will pick one service from the three and specify the feature(s) or research goal(s) they want to focus on while conducting the user research. *For example*, if a group chooses to do user research for Zoom, they can further narrow down the research goal or scope to be improving the breakout room design and experience for meeting hosts (or for meeting attendees).

There are four deliverables and a final video presentation associated with this group project. All written 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 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) of the user research to be performed with the following three required sections:

- 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 (p.s. methods that can be done remotely) you plan to use. Please apply at least *two different methods* in your user research. Some questions you should answer in this proposal include:
    - o Which service/product will your group research upon?
    - o What feature(s) or function(s) of this product will your group focus on?
    - o What are your research questions or research goals? Or what does your user research try to accomplish or solve?
    - o What research methods does your group plan to use? And why you choose these methods?
    - o Who are the targeted participants of your research? And what is your plan to recruit your participants?
- 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 (5 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, and etc.)
- Research Methods (e.g., methods used, data collection & analysis procedure, and etc.)
- 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 (10 points)

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

Final video presentation (10 points)

Last, you are asked to record a 5-minutes video presentation as a group to present your user research to your peers. You can make the recording using Zoom, Panopto, or any other tools your group agrees upon, and then upload your video to the "final video presentation" discussion board on Canvas. You can have one representative to post the video in the assignment.

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, 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

Accessible and Inclusive Learning Environment

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.

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. 3rd. This is the last day to possibly get a refund if you drop a class.

The University Writing Center

The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance they provide is intended to foster students' resourcefulness and self-reliance. http://uwc.utexas.edu/

Counseling and Mental Health Center

The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. If you need any help from a mental health consultant, please visit the website at: http://cmhc.utexas.edu/

Behavior Concerns Advice Line

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

Basic Needs Security

Any student who faces challenges of affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believe this may affect their performance in the course, is encouraged to contact the Office of the Dean of Students – Student Emergency Services (SES) for support. Below are some useful links from the office.

- SES Concerns and Emergencies: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/concernsemergencies.php
- SES Food Pantry: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/pantry.php
- SES Confidential Advocacy and Support: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/advocacysupport.php
- Student Emergency Services: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/

IT Services Help

- Need help with technology? Submit a ticket to the UT IT service: http://www.utexas.edu/its/
- Need help searching for information? Ask UT librarians: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/
- Canvas help is available 24/7 at https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials