INF 385G – Usability Evaluation Methods (Advanced Usability)

Syllabus

Unique Number: 24550

Semester: Fall, 2003

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Office: SZB 562BB

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.
And by appointment.

Class Time: Mondays, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Classroom: SZB 546

TA: Katherine Haack
khaack@ischool.utexas.edu

Textbooks:


* Ordered by the Co-op.

Additional readings will be placed on reserve in the ISchool IT Lab.

Synopsis:

Please note, this class sits at the transition point between the old and the new human/computer interaction and usability and information architecture focus within the School of Information. While “Usability Engineering Methods” was a title selected months ago, in fact this class is going to be taught as a second, advanced usability class. Thus, this class has as a prerequisite the School of Information class in Software Usability Engineering, or equivalent (to be assessed by the professor). This class will build upon the earlier usability class.

Advanced topics we may address include:
1. Remote usability testing.
2. Automated usability test tools.
3. Web UI standards.
4. Advocating for your data and your discipline.
5. Usability evaluation of systems for sophisticated users.
6. The politics of usability, and organizational placement of usability engineers.
7. How are web UIs different from Windows UIs, and how SHOULD they be?
8. How does usability dovetail with accessibility and internationalization?
10. Scientific comparisons of the effectiveness of various usability test and inspection methods.
11. Usability vs. learnability vs. discoverability.
12. Special needs of e-commerce sites vs. informational or intranet sites.
13. What’s new on the usability horizon?

Objectives:

This class is designed to help you if you:
- intend to become a usability engineer, or information architect, or think that you might.
- wish to gain confidence in your ability to maximize the usability of any human-computer interface or web site that you end up designing, in your career.
- anticipate being the advocate for user-centered design in whatever organization you end up working in.
- wish to be one of the (few!) people educated in usability, “the next competitive frontier.”

Instructional Techniques:

The course will entail various instructional techniques:
1 – lecture
2 – demonstration
3 – student-directed discussion
4 – group exercise
5 – self-instruction, and question-answering by the professor
6 – attention to the real world.

Expectations:

Expect to become an expert on one subtopic of usability, and lead a class discussion on that topic. (It will be the responsibility of the student to identify, at least a week before the discussion [and with the help of the instructor] a set of readings for the class to read, to come to class prepared to summarize the readings, and to lead the class discussion on the subject.) Expect to carry out one industrial-strength usability evaluation of a web site or a traditional user interface. Expect to be evaluated on the basis of the excellence of your written and oral presentation of that individual project, and your class participation. Expect to come out of the course with confidence in your own ability to conduct a usability evaluation. Expect to come to view all design as incomplete unless the user is considered.
Policies:

Grades:

Your grade will be based on four things:
1 – Class participation (25%)
2 – The class session you lead (excellence of preparation, excellence of presentation, excellence of leading the class discussion) (25%)
3 – Presentation of the usability evaluation (25%)
4 – Final, written report of the usability evaluation (25%)

Cheating:

Don’t. Dire consequences.

Late Assignments:

Your grade will be docked one grade per day late, for your written assignment.

Etc.:

- Attendance matters. When you aren’t hear, you deprive your classmates of your shared wisdom.
- If you have a question, please ask. I will be very receptive to emails at any time, and phone calls before 10:00 p.m.

Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignment (due BEFORE class)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M, 9/8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Introduction</td>
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<td>- Once around the room</td>
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<td>- Syllabus review</td>
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<td>- Where does usability fit in the world of information science?</td>
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<td>- The IRB process</td>
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<td>M, 9/15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>- Requirements analysis</td>
<td>- Have read, before class starts:</td>
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<td>-- Mayhew, Ch. 1 - 6</td>
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<td>M, 9/22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>- Design/Testing/Development</td>
<td>- Have read, before class starts:</td>
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<td>-- Mayhew, Ch. 7 - 16</td>
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<td>M, 9/29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>- Installation</td>
<td>- Have read, before class starts:</td>
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<td>- Organizational Issues</td>
<td>-- Mayhew, Ch. 17 – 21</td>
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<td>- Have the subject of your usability evaluation (product, web site) approved by the instructor.</td>
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<td>M, 5</td>
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<td>Student-led discussions,</td>
<td>- Submit IRB forms to gain approval</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity Descriptions</td>
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<td>10/6</td>
<td>Topics 1 and 2 for your usability evaluation.</td>
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<td>M, 10/13</td>
<td>Student-led discussions, Topics 3 and 4</td>
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<td>Test plans due</td>
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<td>M, 10/20</td>
<td>Guest lecture. TBD. (Bias at ASIST conference in Long Beach, CA.)</td>
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<td>M, 10/27</td>
<td>Student-led discussions, Topics 5 and 6</td>
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<td>M, 11/3</td>
<td>Student-led discussions, Topics 7 and 8</td>
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<td>M, 11/10</td>
<td>Student-led discussions, Topics 9 and 10</td>
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<td>M, 11/17</td>
<td>Final oral presentations</td>
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<td>M, 11/24</td>
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<td>M, 12/1</td>
<td>Final oral presentations</td>
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**Usability Evaluation Project**

Conduct a usability evaluation of some software product or web site. Include user testing; inspection methods can be used, but not exclusively. Get the human testing approved by the UT IRB. Get the test plan approved, in advance. Present the evaluation in the form of both a final written report and an oral presentation to the class. More details on the project as we make progress in the class.