

IS 597 Information Architecture (sec 001 and sec 002): Fall 2016
Thursday, 6:30pm-9:10pm

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an overview of the concepts and theories of information architecture (IA), as well as opportunities to use information architecture in practice. Students will develop an understanding of the theoretical principles of information architecture through assigned readings, and the practical application of those principles through individual and group assignments. The course looks at the ways in which traditional library science concepts such as organization of information and the behavior of information seekers apply to Web design. The course also introduces the concepts of Web standards, labeling, Website navigation, the basics of usability, project management, Web evaluation, and Website design as an ongoing, iterative process.

Catalog description: Introduces fundamental concepts, methods, and practices in information architecture for virtual space. Focuses on organization, navigation, labeling, and searching of Web sites and intranets.

II. COURSE GOALS/OBJECTIVES

This course is an elective that has been determined by SIS faculty to contain specialized knowledge useful to most information professionals. The course will provide skills that coordinate with those acquired by students in core classes 520 and 530 and are related to such specialized electives as 565, 581, 582, 585, 588, and 598. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- explain the main concepts of information architecture;
- master the basic principles and skills of user testing and metadata;
- explain Web design best practices based on the principles of information architecture;
- evaluate Websites based on the principles of information architecture using professional terminology;
- analyze the role of users in structuring shared information spaces;
- analyze the nature and use of labeling systems, including the role of thesauri, controlled vocabularies and metadata, in structuring information content;
- design/redesign Website navigation systems using various techniques;
- use diagramming software tools to design blueprints and wireframes for Websites;
- use software tools to design taxonomy;
- analyze emerging trends and issues in Web design and architecture.

III. COURSE CONTACT AND FEEDBACK

I encourage you to ask questions and give me feedback at any time so that I may assist you or adjust my teaching plan. The best way to reach me is by email (xzhu12@utk.edu). You are welcome to make appointments and meet with me in person or chat with me via Zoom (6086585155).

IV. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND REQUIREMENTS

This is an online course that relies heavily on synchronous learning technology. For most of the semester, we will meet online using the Zoom platform. We will also have at least one asynchronous class session (November 3rd), in which you will listen to a pre-recorded lecture at your own chosen time and perform activities assigned by the instructor during the lecture.

The sessions of this course consist of lectures, demonstrations, discussions, individual and group work, and hands-on lab activities. Listening to lectures and participating in class activities are essential to effective learning. You should watch the playback if you have to miss a class. You are required to complete the assigned readings before class meetings and participate actively in class.

This course has high demands for group work. Collaboration and group work are part of work practices in all information environments. You are responsible for contacting and responding to other group members in a timely manner and for coordinating efforts with others. If you cannot coordinate your efforts, you are responsible for informing your team members and, if needed, the instructor. I encourage you to use various tools (such as Zoom, Google Plus, and Skype) to meet in real-time with your group members outside class to work together on your group project or discuss course materials (for more group work requirements, see "VII: Class Policies").

It is expected that students have adequate computing skills, including use of word processing, Web browsers, e-mail, PowerPoint, the Blackboard Course Management software (<https://bblearn.utk.edu/>), and the Zoom software. You should regularly visit our Blackboard course site because class announcements, updates, assignments, and discussion boards will be made available via that venue. You are required to have a headset with a microphone to participate actively in the class. It is your responsibility to ensure that your technology is working.

If you have questions about administrative issues or course content, please post questions on the Blackboard discussion board under the "Q&A" forum (or send the instructor an email) and receive quick feedback from the instructor. I will usually answer within 48 hours. If you encounter technical problems during class meetings, please post questions on the text chat and receive feedback from Tech Support. For immediate Zoom support: call 865-974-3117 or 1-877-974-3117 (toll free).

Your UTK email address will be used as the default for all communications in this course. If you prefer to use your personal email, you should set up the feature to allow forwarding messages from UTK email to your preferred email. If you have not already done so, you should visit the Office of Information Technology (<http://oit.utk.edu/>) to get familiar with the resources and support.

V. TEXTS/MATERIALS/RESOURCES FOR THE COURSE

Required texts

Morville, P., Rosenfeld, L, and Arango, J. (2015). Information architecture: For the Web and beyond. Sebastopol, Calif.: O'Reilly. ISBN: 978-1491911686

Recommended texts

Watrall, E., and Siarto, J. (2009). Head first Web design. Sebastopol, Calif.: O'Reilly. ISBN: 978-0596520304

Readings on the Blackboard

In addition to the required textbook, we have some class readings available on the Blackboard course site, downloadable from the content area of "Class Schedule and Readings." Your computer must have Adobe Acrobat or a comparable pdf reader installed.

For more advanced learners

A list of articles, books, and online resources are available on the Blackboard course site, under "Course Materials" and "Useful IA Resources."

VI. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION METHODS

Documents/reports should be submitted electronically on the Blackboard course site. Submissions without identity cannot be credited. Due dates are stated in the Course Schedule. Due dates for Blog entries are stated in the "Blog" section below.

Overview: Total Points: 100 points

- Project Identification & Website Evaluation 10%
- Blueprint/Wireframe Exercise 10%
- Blog 10%
- Group Design/Redesign Project 50%
 - Project Documentation: 40% [Group]
 - Presentation 10%
 - Group 5% [Group]
 - Individual 5%
- Peer Review of IA Project 10%
- Participation 10%

Project Identification & Website Evaluation (10 points)

Each student should identify a Website design or redesign project as a candidate for the group IA projects. Each student will briefly (2-5 minutes) describe the project in the second class meeting and then submit a document (for due date see class schedule). This document should include two parts:

- 1) Project Identification (one page): This part includes a brief description of the organization, the reasons for design or redesign, the problems to be addressed in the design/redesign, and your initial assessment of the difficulty of the project.
- 2) Website Evaluation (1-2 pages): Based on your experiment with the “Navigation Stress Test” (<http://instone.org/navstress>), write an essay, evaluating the Website you have identified in the first part. Do not simply summarize the test results; do not include the actual test pages—you want to synthesize and evaluate. If you have identified a Web design project, then evaluate a Website that is similar to your project for this part of the document.

Each group will select one of these candidate Websites as the group project.

File naming: Lastname_projID

Blueprint/Wireframe Exercise (10 points)

In this course, you will learn to use professional tools that information architects use to create visual deliverables (i.e., blueprints and wireframes). It is largely your own responsibility to learn to use these tools, and you will submit exercises to show your learning outcome. You will use Lucidchart (<https://www.lucidchart.com/>), Microsoft Visio, or other diagramming tools to draw a high-level blueprint and two wireframes (one for the home page and the other for one of the second level pages) for a site (chosen by the instructor, TBA).

File naming: Lastname_bluePrint

Blog (10 points)

This blog will serve as an online space to discuss class readings and spur class discussions. Each student will rotate between three weekly roles: poster, commenter, and discussion leader.

1. Poster: Briefly summarizes the readings and poses comments or questions. You must post **by noon on Tuesday** preceding the class.
2. Commenter: Responds to posts by (1) answering posed questions, (2) taking a different position, (3) posing additional questions, or (4) elaborating upon the post. You must comment **by noon on Wednesday** preceding the class.
3. Discussion Leader: Responsible for leading discussions **in class**. You may briefly summarize the discussions in the Blog and raise further questions and comments.

In addition to supplementing class discussion, this blog is a good place to practice writing and thinking about information architecture. The blogs should be written with proper spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. Grading is based on the overall quality of your writing, arguments, and elaboration.

Students will be given a schedule of roles for the entire semester before the second class meeting, which will be posted as a class blog entry.

Group Project (50 points)

In the group project, you will work with other group members to design or redesign the information architecture of a Website. You will gain actual experience practicing the information architecture knowledge we learn in class. You will perform research and design actual information architecture. In this process, you will generate project documentation in the form of written products (including three interim products and one final report); at the end of the semester, you will present your project to the whole class. Each group should consist of 3-4 students. For the Group Work Policy, see section VII, "Class Policy."

1. **Requirement Analysis** (10 points). This document should include at least the following components as a result of your research:
 - a. Specify the purpose of the organization and the organization's goals.
 - b. Specify the purpose of the Website—what should it accomplish?
 - c. Specify the goals of the Website redesign/design.
 - d. Describe data collection technique(s) used, how data was collected (e.g. email, in person), and the number of participants. At the very least, identify 2-3 major user groups. Collect data from users in each group. Use one or more of the data collection techniques we learn in class to gather "task analysis" information about your users. (1) Develop a persona for each user group. Follow instructions at: <http://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/personas.html> (2) Develop one "elaborated" scenario for each persona. Follow instructions at: <http://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/scenarios.html>
 - e. File naming: GroupNumber_analysis
2. **Site Structure** (10 points). These are the deliverables from the IA designing process. This document should include the following components:
 - a. Blueprints with accompanying text. Include a high-level blueprint to describe the current structure of the Website that you are redesigning (this can come from one of your blueprint/wireframe exercises). To show your redesign, use Visio/LucidChart to draw at least three blueprints: 1) one high-level blueprint which reflects the high-level structure of the redesigned Website (examples: M&R Figure 13-1 and 13-2); 2) one or more detailed blueprint(s) that reflects the details of redesign (example: M&R Figure 13-8); and 3) a task-oriented blueprint (example: M&R Figure 13-5).
 - b. Wireframes with accompanying text. Include two Wireframes for the current Website: one for the home page and the other for one of the second level pages (this can come from one of your blueprint/wireframe exercises). To show your redesign, use Visio/LucidChart to draw at least five wireframes: 1) one wireframe of the home page, 2) at least two wireframes of the major category pages, 3) at least one wireframe of an application page, and 4) at least one wireframe of one of the content pages.
 - c. Requirements: 1) use Garrett's visual vocabulary for blueprints; 2) you may use van Dijk's stencils and Finck's stencils for elements that are not in Garrett's visual vocabulary, but please be consistent; 3) on every blueprint/wireframe, include a legend with all the elements on the diagram; 4) save each diagram as a .jpg file and insert it into the report (a Word document, preferably in .docx format); 5) diagrams are not always self-explanatory, therefore each of your diagrams in the report should include a narrative explaining what it means and how it reflects your redesign.
 - d. File naming: GroupNumber_structure
3. **Controlled Vocabulary** (10 points). You are going to develop a metadata scheme and a thesaurus for your project.
 - a. Metadata Scheme: Create a metadata scheme that can be used to describe each of your Webpages. If you have a special collection on your Website, you may design a metadata

scheme for that special collection instead. You are encouraged to draw elements from existing metadata schemes (such as Dublin Core and MODS). For each element, specify: element name; definition; function of the element; type of the element (descriptive, administrative, or structural); how to use the element (Is it repeatable? What can its value be?); and example(s). You should include both descriptive metadata and administrative metadata. Format: the Dublin Core document is a nice example to follow <http://dublincore.org/documents/dces/>.

- b. Thesaurus: Create a classic thesaurus with at least 45 preferred terms based on the content of your Website. The thesaurus should include equivalence relationship (preferred terms and variant terms), hierarchical relationship (broader terms and narrower terms), associative relationship (related terms), and scope notes. For each preferred term, define all of the above that apply and provide hyperlinks. Also provide an index that includes all the terms (hyperlinks), including preferred terms and variant terms. See <http://eric.ed.gov/?ti=all> for reference.
 - c. File naming: GroupNumber_CV
4. **The Final Report** (10 points). This is the culmination of the interim reports and the final product of the group project. In addition to the corrected/revised version of the interim reports—1, 2, and 3, the final report should also include the following content:
- i. An executive summary of the full report
 - ii. A brief plan for usability testing
 - iii. A memo to the instructor, summarizing specific steps taken by you to respond to or accommodate my comments or questions on the interim reports.
 - iv. Individual task specifications: Each student will submit a personal reflection as part of the final report detailing your work on the group project throughout the semester. Provide a list of things you have done for the group project and a brief description for each thing on the list.
 - v. File naming: GroupNumber_final
5. **Presentation** (5 points for the group's overall performance and 5 for each individual's performance). Each group will give an online presentation at the end of the semester. The presentation should be delivered as if you are speaking to your clients. Explain what you have learned from your research, how the research informed your decision-making, why you have designed/redesigned the site in a particular way, and how this new design would help achieve the organization's goals. Show your design using various visual tools. Both the group's overall performance and each individual's performance will be graded. Criteria will be available on Bb course site later in the semester. Slides file naming: GroupNumber_presentation.

Peer Review (10 points)

Each student will review one other group's final report and their presentation. After the final reports are submitted, I will send one report to each student and you will write a critique essay (600-800 words), analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the final report and the group presentation. The critique should include comments on both the style (format, writing, presentation skills, etc.) and the content (e.g., evaluating the site structure and the controlled vocabulary). You should also compare the project with your own group projects.

File naming: Lastname_review

Attendance & Participation (10 points)

Class attendance is essential. There will be a penalty of 3 points for each class you missed without acceptable reasons (illness, serious family emergencies, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, August, 2016

etc.). Contact the instructor as soon as possible if you cannot attend class. Listen to the session recording if you miss a class, as assignments are largely based on lectures.

Full attendance does not guarantee full points for participation: you also need to participate actively in class, e.g., answer the instructor’s questions and participate in class discussions. Failing to speak up in class will lower your grade.

Writing Style

All assignments, except blog entries, should be in .docx format, letter size, with an 11 or 12-point font and 1” margins on all sides. Use **single line spacing** and reasonable paragraph spacing (0-12 pt). Include page numbers. Run spelling check and grammar check before submitting each assignment. The final report can include multiple files, but make sure they all use the same format and style. Whenever you use external material for a course assignment, follow the APA Style Manual or the Chicago/Turabian style guide for citing sources and be consistent in formatting the citations.

All reports/documents/reviews should be written using best practices for writing Web content described in Chapter 15 of http://www.usability.gov/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_book.pdf
The most important elements include:

- useful headings and subheadings (also see Usability.gov guidelines, Chapter 9)
- short sections
- short paragraphs (not more than six sentences, but not just two sentences either!)
- short sentences—use active voice! (Chapter 15:9)
- topic sentences
- lists (bulleted or numbered)
- tables & pictures

Assignments that do not follow the writing style requirements will get a deduction of 2 points.

Submission of Assignments

Assignments must be submitted via the Blackboard course site by deadlines. Be sure to properly name each file you submit; incorrectly named files will have a one-point grade deduction. Note that the file designation for each assignment is specified above. Always include your names in the assignments.

Grading Scale

Grade	GPA	Points	
A	4.0	92-100	Outstanding performance
B+	3.5	86-91	Very Good
B	3	80-85	Good
C+	2.5	70-79	Satisfactory
C	2	60-69	Below Standard
D	1	<60	Unsatisfactory

VII. CLASS POLICIES

Late Work Policy: Late submissions are subject to point deductions (1 point per day) and will not be credited if the graded assignments have already been returned to the rest of the class. Mark your calendars for due dates.

Group Work Policy: Each group will remain the same during the semester and under usual circumstances changing groups is not possible. If the situation does arise where it is impossible for you to work in your group, then you will have to negotiate with other group members to warrant an exchange. If there are complaints from group members about a lack of professionalism (e.g., poor or untimely communication and inadequate contribution) and unreasonable behavior from one group member, then disciplinary action will be taken against that group member. For example, if a group member does not respond to group communication within 48 hours or misses a group meeting without reasonable plans/measures to make up for the absence, the group may work on the assignment without this member. This member, consequently, will not gain a grade for the assignment. If there are problems in the group, do not wait until the end to tackle the matter: address, negotiate, and resolve the problem right away. At the end of the semester, each student will fill out a group member evaluation form for each of your group members. At least 30% of group assignment grades will be based on these reviews.

Attendance Policy: See “VI: Assessment and Evaluation Methods,” under “Attendance and Participation.”

Academic honesty: You must agree to abide by the UT honor statement: “An essential feature of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.”(For more information, see <http://dos.utk.edu/files/Hilltopics2013-2014.pdf>)

Grade Dispute: Grading by its very nature is a subjective process, and it is virtually impossible to design exercises that can be objectively quantified with precise numeric scores. If you need clarification for the grade you receive, please make your request immediately after the distribution of the assignments; after one week, the grades reported to you are final.

Special Needs: Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 865-974-6087 in 100 Dunford Hall to document their eligibility for services. ODS will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

CCI Diversity Statement: CCI recognizes and values diversity. Exposing students to diverse people, ideas and cultures increases opportunities for intellectual inquiry, encourages critical thinking, and enhances communication and information competence. When all viewpoints are heard, thoughtfully considered, and respectfully responded to, everyone benefits. Diversity and fairness unite us with the wider professional and global community.

Policy on Inclement Weather & Unforeseen Circumstances: If the university is officially closed, classes will be canceled. Any changes and make-up classes will be announced via Blackboard and email.

Driving Policy: SIS does not recommend that students attend class while driving or riding in motorized vehicles. You will assume full responsibility for attending class while driving or riding in motorized vehicles.

VIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

See Blackboard course site under “Course Schedule and Readings.”

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE, ALTER AND/OR AMEND THIS SYLLABUS, AS NECESSARY. STUDENTS WILL BE NOTIFIED IN WRITING AND/OR BY EMAIL OF ANY SUCH REVISIONS, ALTERATIONS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.