

INSC 461: INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE AND THE USER EXPERIENCE

SPRING 2016 SECTION 001

Delivered online via Asynchronous Distance Education (ADE)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Information Architecture (IA), with a focus on user-centered design. It will examine representational systems, and the interactive paradigms required for effective information systems. This class is about making information findable and understandable. This course will examine IA and user experience design including: research, strategy, task flows, and user testing, and tools such as wireframes. Topics include taxonomy creation, interface design, and techniques for user testing.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the principles of information architecture as an area of practice;
2. Articulate the basic principles of user-centered design, and employ the tools of practice;
3. Create, identify, and critique organizational schemes for web-based user interfaces;
4. Articulate the principles of web usability and necessity of usability testing;
5. Structure a basic usability test;
6. Have an awareness of emerging trends and issues in IA for the web *and beyond*.

REQUIRED READINGS

Textbook

Morville, P., Rosenfeld, L., & Arango, J (2015). Information architecture For the Web and Beyond. 4th ed. O'Reilly.

Recommended Materials

Krug, S. (2014). Don't make me think: A common sense approach to Web usability. 3rd ed. New Riders Press.

Articles/excerpts

Short readings will be assigned throughout the semester. Check Canvas for the week's readings.

ABOUT THE COURSE

INSC 461 will be delivered as an asynchronous online course, which means that each student will access each week's pre-recorded class sessions at a time of his or her choosing, during the course of that week. This course will have 1 – 2 recorded class sessions of no more than 75 minutes each, which will be made available to you each week. Exam weeks will have no sessions. UT School of Information Sciences (SIS) offers online courses for undergraduate classes, in order to help students cope with balancing their busy schedules of classes, homework, jobs, and extracurricular activities. In addition, online courses prepare students for future experiences in the 21st century workplace, in which online learn-on-demand courses are often used for continuing education, advanced certification, and professional development courses.

By taking this class, you will be gaining both greater flexibility in managing your time, and valuable experience with this alternative learning environment. UT SIS has successfully used distance education to deliver graduate classes for many years, and began offering undergraduate online courses in Fall 2009. It is important to recognize that taking an asynchronous online course is different from a traditional class, or even a synchronous DE class, where everyone attends online at the same time. There are a few simple guidelines to follow (listed below), which will ensure that you have a successful experience. I will uphold my responsibility to provide you with the same high level of support, access, and communication that you would want to have in a traditional classroom setting.

The course is structured to make it a rewarding learning experience that will also have meaning for you both for your subsequent education, and in your future professional life. Your part of the bargain is the same as it would be for a traditional class - you will need to demonstrate critical thinking skills as well as commitment and involvement with our online discussions and your assignments. Learning is not a passive process; it is about students actively engaging the material through reading, thinking, discussing (online), questioning, practicing skills, and ultimately understanding. Bring your best efforts, a positive outlook, energy, and curiosity to each of the class sessions. Together we can make the class as interesting, relevant, and exciting as possible.

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS

To take this course, you **must** have access to a computer with high speed Internet access, and you **must** use a UTK email account. You may use your own personal computer, or you may use the computers available in the various campus libraries or computer labs. The course software works well on either a PC or a Mac, but some students have found it works better to use Firefox, Safari, or Chrome as your browser, rather than Internet Explorer.

Starting in this spring 2017 semester, all Information Studies & Technology minor (INSC) courses will use the new learning management system Canvas, instead of Blackboard Learn, which is being discontinued after the spring 2017 semester. The Online@UT link currently goes to a page with login icons for both Canvas and Blackboard. For this course, you will use the Canvas login to access the course site for many activities, including accessing recorded class sessions, posting your responses to discussion topics, obtaining assignment instructions, and other activities. Online@UT is available at online.utk.edu.

Since Spring 2016, UT has used a virtual meeting application called Zoom to deliver online class sessions at UT, instead of Blackboard Collaborate. Zoom is much simpler to use from a student point of view, and attending our classes is similar to clicking on a YouTube video to make it play. An embedded link to each recorded class session, which are entitled Session 1, Session 2, etc., will be made available through the course Canvas site. Each class session is an audio recording, illustrated by PowerPoint slides or other visual aids, created using screen sharing.

Whether you are an experienced online student, or have never had an online class before, be assured that you will be able to easily access the class sessions, and any tech glitches that may pop up can be successfully solved. I will give you specific access instructions by email when the first class session is released, but in general, to “attend” class sessions you can simply log into Canvas, click on the INSC 461 course site box in your Courses list, then click on the Pages link in the left side navigation bar. There will be a separate Page there for each class session. You will click on the Page for the class recording that you want to attend, and then click as usual on the video to play or pause the video as desired.

IMPORTANT: YOU MUST ACCESS THE SESSION RECORDINGS BY USING THE EMBEDDED VIDEO LINK ON THE CANVAS SITE “PAGES” IN ORDER TO GET CREDIT FOR ATTENDING THE SESSION. Accessing the recording directly from the Office 365 Video Channel will prevent your attendance from being tracked, so be sure you follow these and any instructions sent to you in my reminder emails, to be sure you get credit for attending class. Prior to attending a session, the PowerPoint slides for each session will be available for you to download or print out for taking notes. Feel free to explore the course Canvas site, to see what is available.

ADE Success Guidelines for Students

Accept that you must be more self-reliant in an ADE class: Although students are always responsible for knowing everything in the syllabus and complying with the requirements of the course, this is especially true for ADE. Try to manage your time well and let me know if you have any questions or are confused about an assignment or topic.

Keep up with the weekly schedule outlined below: Because the schedule is flexible, it may be tempting to wait to do the readings or listen to the lecture. It’s difficult to catch up once you get behind. This class requires consistent work - the workload should be easily manageable as long as you keep up with it. Be fully engaged in the opportunities to interact with your fellow students and the instructor. These will include emails and comments on the Group Wikis.

Contact the Instructor

The best way to contact me is through email. My email is mfreem12@utk.edu. I check my email at least once a day, usually more often, and I will respond to your email as quickly as possible, most likely within 24 hours. Don’t be a stranger and if you have a question about a class, an assignment or just want clarification, please ask. If you do have a questions about an assignment please do not wait until the last minute – it is your responsibility to get assignments done on time.

UT ODS Disabilities Statement

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. Also contact me so we can talk about solutions.

CCI Diversity Statement

The College of Communication and Information 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.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Do all assigned readings prior to each class lecture. For the lecture, I'll assume you know the information that's in the readings, and I'll build upon that information.
- Complete all assignments and submit them on time, using the format and procedure specified.
- Check your e-mail and Canvas regularly. I'll use the Canvas Grade Center to return assignments and make clarifications, and email to solicit student input. Canvas will also be used for announcements, discussions and other interactive activities.
- Participate actively in the class by giving your best effort to the interactive activities using the discussion boards. In addition, treat your colleagues with courtesy and respect by reading and reflecting on their online comments, and responding to them appropriately.
- Timely online attendance is required. The course schedule below lists which class lectures you should complete at your convenience during each week. It is essential that you keep up by listening to the lectures in the proper week, so that you can complete assignments as scheduled.
- The statistics for attending the class sessions are checked each week.
- Attendance will be graded.

STUDENT EVALUATION

Breakdown of assignment points

Introductions: 30
Exams: 2@100 points each = 200
Group Assignments: 3@60 points each = 180
Website Evaluation: 60
Usability Lab: 30
Writing: 30
Attendance: 30
Comments/Participation: 40
Total points possible: 600

Grading Scale

A = 572 - 600 points
A- = 560 - 571 points
B+ = 544 - 559 points
B = 532 - 543 points
B- = 520 - 531 points
C+ = 500 - 519 points
C = 480 - 499 points
C- = 460 - 479 points
D = 440 - 459 points
F = 439 or below

Grades: It's important that you complete all the assignments. It's much better to do what you can on an assignment than to not turn it in. All of these assignments are designed to help you learn the material and be actively engaged in the class discussions.

ASSIGNMENTS

(Check Assignment Due Dates on Canvas)

All assignments will be posted in Canvas according to the week. There are instructions on how to submit assignments under the Assignments tab on the course site. Please do not email your assignments to me.

Introductions

Students will be asked to introduce themselves, provide a brief comment on their current understanding of Information Architecture and comment on a website that they use.

Website Evaluation

This evaluation should include the following: description of the organization, goal(s) of the website, identification and description of, at least, three user groups, and identification and description of problem areas of the website. This, essentially, is a heuristic evaluation.

Writing for the Web

Students will be asked to take a piece of text and re-write it for the web paying attention to structure and the possibility of embedded links.

Group Assignments:

There will be 3 group assignments during the semester. A brief summary of each assignment is located below. More detailed instructions will be posted on the course site and due dates will also be posted with the assignments. **The assignment links will not be available after the due date.** These assignments are each worth **60** points.

Card Sorting: Groups will create concept cards for their website. They will administer a card sorting procedure to five representative users of the site. Results will be analyzed and written up. Results of each user as well as aggregated results will be turned in.

Wireframe: Groups will create four wireframes, or schematics, of their website. One wireframe will consist of the overall architecture of the website. A second wireframe will consist of the layout of the home page. The third and fourth wireframes will consist of the layout of two main pages of the website.

UE Test Plan: Groups will create a plan to test the usability of their proposed websites. The plans will include tasks to be performed, user group, recruitment plan, pre/post-test questionnaire(s), testing method, and a proposed method of analysis.

Presentations

Students will post an Executive Summary (1 page) of each assignment to the discussion area provided on Canvas. It is expected that students will treat this as a formal presentation of their work.

Usability Lab

During the semester a visit to the usability lab in the Information Science building will be arranged. Several time slots will be made available. Attendance at one of these slots is required and this is an opportunity to see an important aspect of usability testing.

Comments/Participation:

Students are expected to comment in a meaningful way on the other groups' work (Executive Summaries). Students should provide comments and/or constructive criticism of the work that is presented. Please remember to be respectful when providing comments. These are individual comments, not group comments. Comments should be **at least 200 words** (or points will be deducted). If your contributions exhibit both quality of thought and frequent participation, you will earn top points for this aspect of your grade. You are also expected to communicate throughout the semester on the discussion boards.

Exams

- Exam 1 will be available beginning Monday, March 20 at 9:00 am – Friday, March 25 until 11:59 pm.
- Exam 2 will be available beginning during the week of Finals (Monday, April 24 at 9:00 am – Friday, May 29 until 11:59 pm).
- Exam links will not be available after the due date.

There will be two exams in this course. These exams will assess your knowledge of the textbook content and lectures. They will be administered through Canvas. All exams are open-book and open-note. Each exam is worth **100** points.

Submission of Graded Assignments

Instructions will be provided the first time you submit an assignment. Submit the assignments via Canvas, unless instructed to do otherwise. There are instructions on how to submit assignments through Canvas. The file name should make it clear what assignment it is and which group is submitting the assignment. Save the group assignments with the group name first and then the assignment name. For instance, if I were submitting the Final Report for my group for the Website Evaluation assignment I would save the document file as: **INSC 461 Group 1_Website Evaluation**.

Only one person per group should submit the final reports and post the executive summaries on Canvas. Please use Microsoft Word for the regular written assignments. If this is a problem, let me know. If, after reading the instructions, you still have questions about this email me or post them on the discussion board.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted in this course. The links for the assignments will not be available on Canvas after the due date and there are no make-up assignments in this course. If you miss the due date then those points are lost.

It is your responsibility to view and complete the assignments on time once I post an announcement and send an email to the class informing everyone that the assignment is available, where to find the assignment, and the when the assignment is due. There will be a list of what assignments are due each week. Canvas provides the date and time for every assignment submitted and every comment made on the discussion board.

COURSE POLICIES FOR GROUP WORK

The class will be divided into groups by the instructor. **Once the instructor has posted the members of each group it is the responsibility of the group members to get in contact with each other.** Each group should work together to complete the 4 group assignments in this course. Group members

should decide how often the group will meet, when and where the group will meet, how the parts of the assignments will be divided among group members and who will submit the final reports to the instructor and post the executive summaries on the Group Wikis.

Group Divorce Policy

Groups may remove any group member if that member is not participating and contributing to the group, with permission of the Instructor. If a member is removed from their group that person is solely responsible for the remaining project work. Evidence regarding the lack of participation must be given before anyone is removed from the group.

Once a member is removed from a group that member must complete all remaining assignments for the semester individually.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University of Tennessee operates with a strict student code of honor regarding academic integrity. All work submitted by a student must be that student's work. When you write for this class or when you find information through a search, remember that any sources you use must be credited and that materials from the Internet must be cited too. Use any standard style manual for citing sources as long as you are consistent in formatting the citations, although the preferred style for our college is APA (American Psychological Association) style. If you use someone's words or ideas without attribution - that's plagiarism. Remember, cheating and plagiarism are violations of scholarly and professional ethics and University policy; don't do it! It is never worth the risk; better to turn in C or D quality work that is your own, rather than to plagiarize. **If you cheat or plagiarize, you will fail the assignment** and will actually increase your workload because of remedial assignments that you will then have to do. A second incident of plagiarism will bring further penalties in accordance with University regulations, which may include failing the course or higher level academic sanctions. Further information is available in Hilltopics, the UTK student handbook. Note that the instructor reserves the right to use plagiarism detection software.

ABOUT THE COURSE CALENDAR

The next section of the syllabus has the course calendar. There will probably be changes and adjustments as the semester progresses, but I will give you plenty of notice if or when that happens. Whenever the name of an assignment is indicated in the assignment box, it means that is when the assignment will be available on the course site which will usually be on a Thursday. Most assignments in this course will be due by 11:59 pm EST on the Thursday indicated on the Assignment Due Dates document located on the course site under the Assignments tab. For instance, Week 1 indicates that Introductions on the discussion board and Scavenger Hunt are assigned.

Check the Assignment Due Dates document under the Assignments tab on the course site for all due dates and any exceptions.

NOTE: The instructor has the right to make changes to the schedule.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week	Dates	Topics	Additional Readings on Canvas	Assignments (g) - group
1	1/11 - 1/15	Review syllabus and tools (Canvas and Zoom)		Introductions Due: 1/18
2	1/17 - 1/22	Introduction to Information Architecture and Usability	See Canvas Week 2 Morville 1-2	
3	1/23 – 1/29	Heuristic Evaluation	See Canvas Week 3	Website Eval Due: 2/5
4	1/30 – 2/5	Usability and Goals	See Canvas Week 4 Morville 3-4	
5	2/6 - 2/12	Reading and Writing on the Web	See Canvas Week 5	Writing Due: 2/19
6	2/13 - 2/19	Context: Finding and Understanding	See Canvas Week 6 Morville 5-6	
7	2/20 – 2/26	Organization Systems and Labeling. Card Sorting	See Canvas Week 7 Morville 7	Card Sorting (g) Due: 3/5
8	2/27 - 3/5	Navigation Systems and Search Systems	See Canvas Week 8 Morville 8-9	
9	3/6 - 3/13	User Testing Plans and Usability Lab	See Canvas Week 9 Morville 11	Test Plan (g) Due: 3/26
10	3/13 - 3/17	Spring Break		
11	3/20 - 3/24	Exam 1		

12	3/27 - 4/2	Information Architecture Deliverables	See Canvas Week 12 Morville 12-13	Wireframes (g) Due 4/16
13	4/3 – 4/9	Thesauri, Controlled Vocabularies, and Metadata	See Canvas Week 13 Morville 10	
14	4/10 – 4/16	Search Engines and SEO	See Canvas Week 14	
15	4/17 - 4/23	Information Architecture and Beyond – Jobs and the Future	See Canvas Week 15	
16	4/24 – 4/28	Exam 2		