ENGLISH 466/566: Usability

Section 01

Fall 2016 / Minnesota State University, Mankato

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: MW 9:00am-11am, Th 10am-11am, by appointment
Adobe Connect: https://connect.shot.smsu.edu/english466-566/

Communicating with the Professor

Include ENG 466 in the subject line of all email correspondence about the course as well as a concise topic of the message. I can also be reached by phone or email during office/online hours. Voice mail is recorded and forwarded to email, so please leave a message when you call my office if you want a reply.

General Information

Course Catalog Description

Introduces students to theories of usability and teaches students various methods to evaluate design for usability including heuristic evaluations, card-sorting, task-based evaluations, and fieldwork.

Course Materials

Books

- Rubin, J., & Chisnell, D. (2008). *Handbook of usability testing: how to plan, design and conduct effective tests*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Albert, W., & Tullis, T. (2013). *Measuring the user experience: collecting, analyzing, and presenting usability metrics*. Morgan Kaufmann.

Course Outcomes

English 466

- Understand theoretical bases of the usability discipline
- Use various methods to inform and evaluate designs for usability

English 566

- Understand fundamental principles of usability
- Interpret the findings of a usability evaluation
- Conduct a mid-sized usability evaluation
- Learn additional usability techniques

Course Concepts

The goal of this course is to equip students with the knowledge and experience to advocate for, design, develop, and execute user research. These are the threshold concepts we will focus on:

1. Usability specialists are strategists who assist in creating products, services, policies, and experiences across digital, physical, and hybridized environments. We use the term architect to describe this person because of their unique capability to oversee and participate in processes of design, research, and development.

2. Developing experiences requires empathy for people and an understanding of context of use. Technical Communications is a Humanities degree, which means we will always be focused on building technologies, services, and processes with people in mind. We will work from this shared focus to create valuable systems, helpful processes, and usable and engaging designs that are contextually responsive. User research will enable us to build the necessary empathy and understanding.

3. Understanding the cultural, political, and economic contexts in which technology is built, maintained, and deployed is vital to effectively participating in a space as a researcher and practitioner. When we develop experiences, we must also understand how they affect a person's life. This understanding enables us to create technologies, content, and policies that support, rather than contradict, people's goals and wellbeing.

4. Usability specialists are always in conversation with new technologies, techniques, policies, and experts. Your capability to take the lead in learning emerging methods, locating resources, evaluating tools, and sharing information with others is a critical professional skill, and this ability is what makes you a specialist.

5. The ability to work collaboratively with others is vital to a usability specialist's success. Working with and learning from people who are different from you--and recognizing your commonalities and strengths--is critical to working productively and successfully on project teams. Usability specialists must be effective communicators in individual and group settings to take on leadership roles.

Course Format

We will meet for a group chat on Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:30 PM CDT/CST (depending on the time of the semester) via Adobe Connect (URL: https://connect.shot.smsu.edu/english466-566/). You do not need

any software nor do you need to create an account to join the chats. The remainder of the work will be completed on your own, including weekly asynchronous discussions using the D2L content management system.

Bookmark this page in your browser: https://connect.shot.smsu.edu/english466-566/

Troubleshooting advice

1. Connect appears more stable using the Firefox browser.
2. Ask other members of your household to turn off their wireless devices and avoid streaming movies or other activities that consume Internet bandwidth for the duration of the meeting.
3. When possible, use an Ethernet connection rather than a wireless connection to the Internet.
4. When using audio and/or video during a meeting, be prepared for technical problems.
5. Use the Audio Setup Wizard to test your computer. Try logging out of the meeting and then returning if the wizard is not able to restore your ability to broadcast audio and/or video.

Attendance, Participation, and Late Work

University classrooms work best when we all engage and participate. Participation includes engaging with your peers and with me, engaging with your readings, and responding in our digital spaces. If you do not participate, your course grade will be lowered. **Late work is not accepted.** If you must miss class, notify me immediately. **Missing more than two class sessions will result in an F for this course**. Plan to spend at least 12-15 hours a week on readings, homework, and projects. If you cannot keep up, this class is not for you.

Institutional Information

Academic Honesty

All work must be original. Plagiarism occurs when a writer, speaker, or designer uses someone else's language, ideas, images, or other material without fully acknowledging its source by quotations marks, in footnotes or endnotes, and in lists of works cited. All documents are to be your own original work (in collaborative contexts, generated 100% by you and your teammates). Any articles, images, music, interviews, websites or other electronic media—any content beyond what you have created—must be documented. **Plagiarism will not be accepted.**

The Academic Honesty Policy for Minnesota State University, Mankato can be found at https://www.mnsu.edu/policies/approved/academichonesty.pdfz

Academic Support

The Center for Academic Success is the primary on-campus source for free academic support in the areas of writing, speech, modern languages, math, science, and business. Students can work with trained consultants to receive objective, constructive feedback on their academic work in these areas. This includes paper reviews, speech development and rehearsal, modern language tutoring, math, and science problems and projects, and business/accounting coursework. For more information, visit them online at www.mnsu.edu/success.

Disabilities Accommodation

Minnesota State University, Mankato provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodation to participate in educational programs, activities, and/or services. Students with documented disabilities requiring accommodation to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should first register with Accessibility Resources (Memorial Library 132, telephone 507-389-2825, TDD 711) to establish an accommodation plan and then contact me as soon as possible.

Assignments & Grades

According to university policy, a "C" is equivalent to average performance, a "B" represents better than average performance, and an "A" represents superior work.

You may use any standard style guide (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, for example) for any citations, although instruction on them will not be provided in class.

Major Assignment Descriptions

Knowledge Sharing

The exciting part about usability studies is that there's always something new - new people, products, policies, websites, new apps, new technologies, and new uses. It's also the biggest challenge - how can we stay on top of it all? During most classes, we will hear from one of you about recent innovations, compelling people, and current events relevant to user research.

Goal: Improve your analysis skills and presentation skills. Usability specialists are called upon to locate, assess, and present on new technologies and materials. This assignment is your chance to practice these kinds of skills.

Deliverable: 5-7 minute presentation. Must include link to the source material (show it to us in the form of screen captures and live demo), image of whatever it is you are reporting on, and your analysis of the material from the perspective of a user researcher. Format can vary (presentation via google or powerpoint, pdf, prezi, etc.). Turned in on the day of your presentation for credit.

User Research Assignments

During the middle of the semester, we will work on learning new methods in user research. We will discuss the method in class, share examples, and then send you out to practice this method. At the end of that week, you will write a brief paper (2-4 pages) on how it went and share deliverables.

Goal: Learn how to plan, manage, execute, analyze, synthesize, and present research.

Deliverables: Each week, we'll decide on deliverables

Usability Study (Group Project)

This user research project will allow you to apply multiple methods to better understand and possibly answer a research question. Undergraduates will participate in this assignment as the testers of the product/policy/app/website, etc. that the graduate students will introduce to their testing groups.

Goal: Learn how to participate in a usability study.

Deliverables: Undergraduate students will take screen shots/keep surveys, etc. that were administered during the study and submit those as evidence of taking part in the study. Graduate students will submit a study proposal, administered testing, and a usability report once the study is completed.

Teams: You'll work in teams of three to five. The key to working together on a project this large and this long is setting expectations, creating ways to communicate, and making that work transparent to each other. Graduate students will lead these teams and undergraduates will be assigned to the teams.

Reflection & Assessment

This will be a report at the end of the semester that assesses the different types of usability studies, your participation in the group project, and a reflection of the semester. You will think about when each

method is appropriate, how your usability group participated in a method, and why that method was or wasn't appropriate. This will be a detailed report with a reflection on your participation, a discussion of how usability studies works in a real situation, and how the particular projects you worked on could be designed for the user experience.

Goal: Analysis and reflection of course materials – to show your level of understanding and your role within the course projects.

Deliverables: 5-10 page paper; can use appendices for evidence.

Grade Scale

A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%
D+	67-69%
D	64-66%
D-	60-63%
F	59% & below

Assignment/Discussions Point/Percentage Allotment

English 466			English 566		
Assignment	**Points**	**Percentage**	**Assignment**	**Points**	**Percentage**
Knowledge Sharing	5	5%	Knowledge Sharing	5	5%
Interviewing	10	10%	Interviewing	10	10%
Surveys	10	10%	Surveys	10	10%
Card Sorting	10	10%	Card Sorting	10	10%
Field Studies	10	10%	Field Studies	10	10%
Heuristic Evaluations	10	10%	Heuristic Evaluations	10	10%
Usability Testing	10	10%	Usability Testing	10	10%
Usability Study Participant	20	20%	Usability Study Leader	20	20%
Reflection & Assessment	15	15%	Reflection & Assessment	15	15%

Totals	**100**	**100%**	**Totals**	**100**	**100%**

Course Schedule

MUE: Measuring the User Experience

HUT: Handbook of Usability Testing

*Schedule may be altered as we progress. All assignments due in D2L by 11:55pm on due date. No emailed assignments will be accepted.

Week / Date	Topics	Readings/Videos	Assignments	Due Date
1 **Aug 23**	**Course Introduction**		Read for Week 2	
2 **Aug 30**	**What is Usability?**	HUT: Chapters 1 & 2 Usability Testing: https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/usability-testing.html Cognitive Walkthrough: http://www.pages.drexel.edu/~zwz22/CognWalk.htm	In class: Sign up for Knowledge Sharing Assignment (KS) Discuss Usability	
3 **Sept 6**	**What is User Experience?**	MUE: Chapter 1 User Experience Basics: https://www.usability.gov/what-and-why/user-experience.html A New Way to Listen: http://alistapart.com/article/a-new-way-to-listen Videos: Tomer Sharon https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bELsstQ5CpY Klaas Kaasgaard http://itsourresear.ch/kaasgaard.html William Gribbons http://itsourresear.ch/gribbons.html	In class: KS Discuss User Experience and the role of Usability in User Research	
4 **Sept 13**	**Learning about Product Users & Social Participants**	HUT: Chapter 7 & pgs 293-299 UXPA Code of Professional Conduct: https://uxpa.org/resources/uxpa-code-professional-conduct AoIR Ethics: http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf Videos: Indi Young: https://vimeo.com/98714873 Jared Spool: http://itsourresear.ch/spool.html	In class: KS Discuss who participants, stakeholders, and end users are; discuss the importance of ethics; discuss empathy	

		Jay Trimble: http://itsourresear.ch/trimble.html		
5 **Sept 20**	**Choosing a Research Activity**	MUE: Chapter 3 HUT: Chapter 3 & 5 Videos: Whitney Quesenbery: http://itsourresear.ch/quesenbery.html Jeff Sauro: http://itsourresear.ch/sauro.html	In class: KS Discuss planning and developing a research project	
6 **Sept 27**	**Methods of Research**	MUE: Chapter 7 HUT: Chapter 8 Interviewing Humans: http://alistapart.com/article/interviewing-humans Interviewing Users: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/interviewing-users/ Videos: Bertice Berry: http://itsourresear.ch/berry.html Coding Interview data: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRL4PF2u9XA	In class: KS In class: Discuss interviewing Paper: User Research: Interviewing	Oct. 3
7 **Oct 4**	**Methods of Research**	MUE: Chapter 6 Better User Research through Surveys: http://uxmastery.com/better-user-research-through-surveys/ Organizing & Coding data: http://toolkit.pellinstitute.org/evaluation-guide/analyze/enter-organize-clean-data/ Videos: Qualtitative & Quantitative UX Research: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjsfblXdocg Designing a Qualitative Survey: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PI4h2tmBkw Running a Qualitative Survey: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIz7eZmXaQQ Analyzing a Qualitative Survey: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev577zsBuXQ Analyzing a Qualitative Survey 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrxdQpGBYtA	In class: KS In class: Discuss Surveys, types of data Paper: User Research: Surveys	Oct. 10

8 Oct 11	**Methods of Research**	MUE: Chapter 9 Card sorting: https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/card-sorting.html Online or offline card sorting: https://www.optimalworkshop.com/blog/moderated-card-sorting-with-optimalsort/ Prioritization Card Sort: http://goodkickoffmeetings.com/2010/04/prioritization-card-sort/ Card Sort analysis: http://www.uxbooth.com/articles/open-card-sort-analysis-101/ Videos: Card Sorting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmioMessMbY The Card Sorting Technique: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTzHeYPB9c8 Understanding card sorting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9i4ByDKnR4	In class: KS In class: Discuss Card Sorting Paper: User Research: Card Sorting	Oct. 17
9 Oct 18	**Methods of Research**	MUE: Chapter 5 HUT: Chapter 6 Field Studies Done Right: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/field-studies-done-right-fast-and-observational/ Field Study: http://www.usabilitysciences.com/services/field-studies-and-focus-groups/field-studies-ethnography Videos: Customer Journey Map: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSxpVRo3BLg	In class: KS In class: Discuss field studies Paper: User Research: Field Studies	Oct. 24
10 Oct 25	**Methods of Research**	MUE: Chapter 11 HUT: pgs 299-313 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/ User Experience Evaluation: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Arnold_Vermeeren/publication/221248254_User_experience_evaluation_methods_current_state_an	In class: KS In class: Discuss Hueristic Evaluations Paper: User Research: Hueristic Evaluations	Oct. 31

		d_development_needs/links/0c96051c1587c23c53000000.pdf An Overview of Expert Heuristic Evaluations: http://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2014/06/an-overview-of-expert-heuristic-evaluations.php Video: How to evaluate usability using heuristics: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Zp6qzzCqeY		
11 **Nov 1**	**Method of Research**	HUT: Chapter 9 A primer on A/B Testing: http://alistapart.com/article/a-primer-on-a-b-testing Running a Usability Test: https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/running-usability-tests.html Chapter 1: Remote Research: http://rosenfeldmedia.com/app/uploads/2014/11/Remote-Research-Excerpt.pdf?331fe5 Videos: Everyone is Different: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ic8OO4ORl8	In class: KS In class: Discuss Usability and remote testing Paper: User Research: usability and remote testing	Nov. 7
12 **Nov 8**	**Usability Study**	When to Use Which User-Experience Research Method: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/which-ux-research-methods/	In class: KS	
13 **Nov 15**	**Collecting & Analyzing Data**	HUT: Chapter 10 & 11		
14 **Nov 22**	**Prioritizing, Presenting, Reporting, and Incorporating Findings**	HUT: Chapter 12 Videos: Jeff Gothelf: http://itsourresear.ch/gothelf.html Rolf Molich: http://itsourresear.ch/molich.html	In class: Discuss Findings Paper / Documentation: Usability Study	Nov. 28
15 **Nov 29**	**Future for UX Research**	HUT: Chapter 14 Seeing the Elephant: http://alistapart.com/article/seeing-the-elephant-defragmenting-user-research Lou Rosenfeld: http://itsourresear.ch/rosenfeld.html	In class: future of UX Paper: Reflection & Assessment	Dec. 2

16 Dec 6	End of Semester!	No class – no final exams		