

*Note: This syllabus may represent a past offering of this course and future course offerings may differ.*

## **HCDE 407: Software User Assistance**

Instructor: David K. Farkas

Quarter/Year: Winter 2013

Course Schedule: TTh, 11:30AM – 1:20PM

Course URL: <http://faculty.washington.edu/farkas/HCDE%20407-2013/index.html>

### **Course Description**

Software User Assistance (UA) is an important part of the user experience. UA specialists create content that enables people to better understand and better use digital technology. They also design and manage community support for software products. UI (user interface) designers need to understand UA because UIs will not be effective if they try to convey what really should be part of the UA.

### **Course Objectives**

In HCDE 407, you will learn to write procedures and embedded (pop-up) help that is displayed directly from the UI. You will also learn about help systems, SDK and troubleshooting content, wizards, videos, online demos/tutorials, and manuals. You will learn to write clear and compelling technical explanations, including white papers and marketing content. You will also learn how content management systems enable the reuse of UA content.

### **Grading and Assignments**

Grading is based on the following:

- A website, your course project.
- A 15-minute presentation explaining the site's design and construction. The presentation may be given to the entire class or only to the instructors.
- An exam covering all readings and class discussion
- A mid-quarter design document (creative brief) in which you fully describe your proposed website
- An analysis of selected Web pages

The grading will be calculated on the basis of a scoring system with a mathematical maximum of 460 points. If you get 400 of the possible 460 points, you get a 4.0 for the course. If you get 360 of the 460 points, you get a 3.6. The current version of the scoring system may be modified during the quarter.

You may also receive "bumps" of 1-3 points for a successful oral presentation to the class or for other special course contributions.

### **Course Schedule**

Week 1

*Tuesday*

Introduction to course

Introduction to user assistance (UA)

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*Thursday*

Kinds of UA; Key issues in UA

UA and UX

Planning a comprehensive user support strategy

Examine the AM/FM Flashlight UI Exercise and UI graphic and be prepared to discuss them in class.

Read *Microsoft Manual of Style* (MMS), "Microsoft Style and Voice."

Week 2

*Tuesday*

Introduction to target software application: Priority Contact

Overview of UA genres

Plans for course project

Examine Priority Contact.

Read MMS, "Content for a Worldwide Audience."

*Thursday*

Designing and writing procedures

Procedure-writing workshop

Read course notes, "How to Write Procedures."

Read course notes, "Writing with a Task Orientation."

Read MMS, "Procedures and Technical Content" (through p. 113).

Week 3

*Tuesday*

Introduction to task-hierarchy user assistance

User task flow and UA task hierarchy

Plan task hierarchy for Priority Contact

Read Farkas, "The Logical and Rhetorical Construction of Procedural Discourse."

*Thursday*

Audiences and personas

Procedure workshop

Introduction to technical explanations

Submit procedure exercise (Bring two extra two extra copies for workshop activity.)

Read MMS, "Accessible Content."

Week 4

*Tuesday*

Findability

Minimalist documentation and layering

Read MMS, "The User Interface" (first half of chapter).

Read MMS, "Indexes and Keywords."

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*Thursday*

Designing and writing reference and embedded help

Read "Embedded Help Analysis."

Read DeLoach, "Divide and Conquer: Providing Web-based User Assistance at the Point of Use."

Read MMS, "Content for the Web."

Read MMS, "Procedures and Technical Content" (second half of chapter).

Week 5

*Tuesday*

The user's cost-benefit analysis

Centralized help systems and manuals

Peruse sample manuals and help systems as assigned.

Read DeBoard, "Heuristic Evaluation Questionnaire."

Read MMS, "The User Interface" (second half of chapter).

*Thursday*

Usability testing in UA

Procedure and overview workshop

Read course notes, "Evaluation and Usability Testing."

Read Rosenbaum, "Stalking the User."

Read the sample usability test reports as assigned.

Week 6

*Tuesday*

Designing and writing troubleshooting content

Responding to user queries in support forums

Read Farkas, "The Diagnosis-Resolution Structure in Troubleshooting Procedures."

Peruse sample troubleshooting content as assigned.

*Thursday*

Designing and writing tutorials and demos

Designing and writing wizards

Peruse sample tutorials, demos, and wizards as assigned.

Read Tidwell, "Design Pattern on Wizards."

Read MMS, "Content for the Web."

Week 7

*Tuesday*

Video in UA

Watch sample videos as assigned.

Read MMS, "Practical Issues of Style."

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Submit procedure assignment.

*Thursday*

Guest class: Bob Watson, Microsoft and HCDE

Designing and writing SDK/developer documentation

Peruse SDK (software development) documentation as assigned.

Read Delaney, "Wallaby Specification" (a strategy document for creating an SDK).

Read MMS, "Grammar."

Week 8

*Tuesday*

Designing and writing marketing content

Read Radding, "The Whitepaper Whitepaper."

Peruse sample white papers as assigned.

Read MMS, "Punctuation."

*Thursday*

Guest class: Joe Welinske, Welinske.com

UA for mobile

Read selections from Welinske, *Developing User Assistance for Mobile Apps*, as assigned.

Examine, Villamor, Willis, & Wroblewski, *Touch Gesture Reference Guide*.

Review the section "Gesture," on pp. 83-84 of the MMS and the individual gesture entries listed on p. 84.

Week 9

*Tuesday*

Exam

*Thursday*

No Class: Writers UA Conference

Week 10

*Tuesday*

Review Exam

Standard production processes (including localization)

Content management systems and DITA

Read Fisher, "Moving from Single Sourcing to Reuse with XML DITA."

Upload group projects.

*Thursday*

Course wrap-up

Presentations on group projects