

HCDE 517D: Usability Studies, Winter 2019

Thursdays 6:00-9:50 PACCAR 295

Class website: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1256250>

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Readings

Selected articles, available through the course [website](#). Other recommended readings also found on the website.

Required textbooks:

- Tullis and Albert (2013) *Measuring the User Experience* 2nd ed. Available online. [Books 24x7](#), ebrary (1st ed)
- *Handbook of Usability Testing*, Jeffrey Rubin & Dana Chisnell. Get the 2nd edition (the first is pretty dated). Available online: [Books 24x7](#), [ebrary](#)

Course Overview and Objectives:

HCDE 517 will introduce you to usability testing and to usability research as a user-centered design strategy. The course takes a process approach; you will learn how to define your audiences and issues, create investigative procedures that answer your questions, administer the procedures, analyze the results, and report your findings effectively.

Though we use primarily examples of computational systems in this course, many of the methods, strategies, and approaches apply to products in various media (software, hardware, or services). You are encouraged to bring a variety of examples into the class.

It is important that you keep up with the assignments and that you seek help, from the teaching team, your teammates, or your classmates — if you are struggling. The time to seek help is early in the quarter, not week 7, 8 or 9.

At the end of HCDE 517, you should be able to:

- Understand and explain to others what usability testing and usability research are and what they can contribute to a design effort
- Analyze the usability issues that a product has and prioritize those that merit investigation through a usability test; analyze the various audiences for the product and prioritize those that are most critical at the current moment
- Design a usability test that answers the questions you have for the audiences of interest
- Administer the test, analyze the results, and report the findings effectively
- Explain how usability issues or analysis might inform the design of new products or services

Work in this course – getting a grade

Each assignment is designed to test your achievement against one or more of the learning objectives. Different assignments emphasize different learning objectives. *Please note that some grading will be subjective in nature.

There are three categories of assignments:

- Reading discussion / presentation
- Class participation
- Project
- Final self and team evaluation report, reflecting on your learning and participation across the quarter.

Quality of Communication Assignments

All written assignments for this class must be of high quality: thoroughly proofread, well organized, and stylistically appropriate for the context. If in doubt, err on the more formal, polished, professional side. Writing quality will be a graded component of every written assignment, presentation clarity and engagement will affect your grades on all presentation assignments. In the workplace, if your results or ideas are of high quality but your communication is not, no one will be able to benefit from the work you do.

Course Outline

In this course, we will cover usability studies, including their role in the design process, what questions they can answer, and some of the different evaluations and tests you might perform. We will discuss how to plan and conduct usability tests, and how to report results from usability studies. To practice these skills, we will use in-class workshops and an accompanying, quarter-long project.

Success in the Course

The most common pitfall is not starting on any portion of the project soon enough. You'll be working with subjects/participants and (possibly) real world clients, and with technology that may have issues. Recruiting almost always takes longer than you think, people may not show up, or there may be a chance snow storm. The website you are studying might go down for maintenance. The app you are evaluating might auto-update to a new version, ruining the script for your evaluation. If you start early, you'll have time to manage these setbacks. If you don't, you won't.

Additionally, as relative newcomers to this material, you tend to need some time with your data (especially any qualitative data) to draw out a strong analysis and good discussion. Doing a study at last minute and then rushing your write-up and analysis tends to have poor outcomes.

Second, you'll be working in teams and it is important to attend to team dynamics. Early in the quarter, you should have a discussion in your team in which you review and negotiate communication expectations and your goals for the course and project. As the quarter progresses, check in, see how things are going, and adjust as necessary.

Schedule

A summary of the weekly course topics is listed below. This schedule is subject to change; details and updates will be found on the course website.

Week	Date	Topic
1	1/10	Course Overview Introductions: What is Usability?
2	1/17	Evaluating a product: Why do we need usability testing?
3	1/24	Project Planning: Stakeholders, timeline, scoping, concerns and issues (among other things)
4	1/31	Forming a test plan: What are the responsibilities of a tester? What is a test plan?
5	2/7	Designing a study: Test Design, Data collection
6	2/14	Conducting a study: Thinking aloud, what is the key to successful facilitation?
7	2/21	Data analysis and reporting
8	2/28	Presenting your findings: Highlight tapes, creating actionable results
9	3/7	Usability in the field; moving forward
10	3/14	Final Presentations
Finals week		<i>no class, but there will be stuff due</i>

Assignments

The following are the assignments for this course:

Component	Weight
Reading Presentation & discussion	10%
Preliminary Proposal	C/NC
Interaction Map	10%
Usability Study plan	15%
Usability Study Kit	15%
Study Results (divided between presentation and report)	35%
Self & Team Peer Review	10%

Class Participation	+/- 5%
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Assignments In detail:

Date due:	Component	Description	Weight
TBD – sign up by Jan 12th	Reading Presentation	Most weeks, there will be assigned readings. You will be responsible for presenting one of these readings to the class and lead a short discussion.	10%
Due week 3 Jan 24	Preliminary Proposal	Statement of Audience and Issues for Usability Test For this first project assignment, you will provide a one-page overview of the audience and issues that will be the focus of your usability test.	C/NC
Due week 4 Jan 31	Interaction Map	At the beginning of your study, it helps to have a good understanding of the system, its functionality, and how this functionality is available to users. Develop a graphic -- using screenshots, mockups, or other representations (e.g., photos, if a physical product) -- that shows common and important interaction flows through your system, with particular attention to the features or interactions you plan to evaluate.	10%
Due week 6 Feb 14	Usability Study Plan	To guide your team’s usability testing activities, you will prepare a study plan that documents what your team will be doing and offer a rationale for key choices.	15%
Due Week 7 Feb 21	Usability Study Kit	All the things you may need to conduct a successful usability study	15%
Due Week 10 March 14	Study results- Project report	Your final deliverables consist of a presentation and a written report. Both should cover the same material. The presentation will be a short executive summary given in the last class session. The written report will expand considerably on the presentation and provide supporting material for the more interested reader. The report will be submitted online during finals week, after the presentation.	35%
Due Finals Week March 22nd	Reflection and peer review	To summarize and reflect on your learning and experience in the course, you will write a short report as a final reflection as well as review your work as well as your peers’ work.	10%

Ongoing	Participation	Although attendance is not graded, active participation and engagement with your peers is an important aspect of your learning. Your participation grade is based on your contributions to the group efforts.	+/-5%
	Total		100%

Grading

For graduate students, 2.7 is the minimum passing grade*. Grades between that and 4.0 are scaled linearly. I generally use this type of measure for grading, although it can change from quarter to quarter:

3.9-4.0:

Knock my socks off and demonstrate superior knowledge, application and understanding of the course materials, in addition to being generally creative, excellent execution and timely. This is usually between 97.5-100% of the total number of points. Although not impossible, few receive this grade.

3.5-3.8:

You completed all the projects successfully, you were timely and professional. You did the work, you are proud of it, and would feel comfortable submitting to a manager in an industry environment. This is going above the minimal requirements. This is usually 90-97.4% of the total points. I would expect that most of you will fall somewhere within this range.

3.1-3.4:

You probably completed most of the points and met the minimum requirements. Some projects might have been late. Some might have been rushed and had errors. You might feel that you could have done better in getting the deliverables in on time and in a professional manner. You definitely feel that your work could have gone through a few revisions to improve the final product. This is usually between 80-89% of the total points.

3.0 and below:

You did not complete the minimum requirements. Your work was sloppy and hurried or non-existent. You are likely aware of your performance. This is usually between 70-78.8% of the total points.

*The above is subject to change. If you google a UW grading scale, please remember that grading can vary wildly throughout the University, within the department, and even between instructors. Please see the [HCDE general grading policies](#) for further explanation.

Group project

The assignments for the group project will be assessed and graded based on the team’s work. Each member of the project team will receive the same grade for those assignments.

However, in the event of continuing evidence of a team member not fully contributing to the team effort, or being a disruptive influence on group dynamics, or otherwise negatively affecting team efforts,

I reserve the right to selectively lower that team member's grade on group assignments. Weekly status reports will help me understand each of your contributions.

Late assignments

In general, submitting late work is penalized 10% of its total grade per calendar day. This is to encourage you to keep up with the work and to be fair to all students. If there are legitimate extenuating circumstances for why you will be late submitting an assignment, at my discretion I will try to accommodate your needs.

No credit will be given for Weekly Status Reports that are submitted late, as they are only meaningful if delivered in a timely fashion.

Policies

The following general policies apply to this course:

Respect

If there were only one policy allowed in a course syllabus, I would choose the word respect to represent our goals for a healthy and engaging educational environment. Treating each other respectfully, in the broadest sense and in all ways, is a necessary and probably sufficient condition for a successful experience together. But because I am not limited to one policy, others are also stated.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class regularly. You are also expected to be on time and prepared for all sessions. Although attendance is not specifically graded, missing a significant number of classes (say, more than 2 sessions) will likely have a negative impact on your grade, as you will have fewer opportunities to participate in discussion and in-class activities.

If you must miss a class due to an illness or other extenuating circumstance, please let me know as soon as possible to make arrangements for a makeup of in-class activities.

Participation

Active participation in class activities is one of the requirements of the course. You are expected to engage in group activities, class discussions, interactions with your peers, and constructive critiques as part of the course work. This will help you hone your communication and other professional skills.

Collaboration

Working in groups or on teams is an essential part of all design and engineering disciplines. In most assignments and projects in this course, you will be expected to work with others and your success in those situations will be a part of your grade. (Some assignments will be individual, however.)

Academic Integrity

Simply stated, academic integrity means that you are to do your own work in all of your classes, unless collaboration is part of an assignment as defined in the course. In any case, you must be responsible for citing and acknowledging outside sources of ideas in work you submit. Please be

aware of the UW policies on this, as described in the Student Conduct Code:
www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html. These will be strictly enforced.

Assignment Quality

You are expected to produce work in all of the assignments that reflects the highest standards of professionalism. For written documents, this means proper spelling, grammar, and formatting. Adherence to these good practices will be considered in your grades. For visually-oriented material, I recognize that not everyone is an accomplished graphic designer, but you should strive for neat and clear visual communications in your work.

Privacy

Students have the right for aspects of their personal life that they do not wish to share with others to remain private. Please respect that policy.

Office Hours

Consultation outside of regular class meeting time is available upon request. Please email instructor or teaching assistant for an appointment.

Accommodations

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact UW Disability Resources for Students: depts.washington.edu/uwdrs. If you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please discuss any accommodations you might need in the class with me.

Acknowledgment

Thank you to all the previous instructors who have taught this course, whom I have borrowed extensively from: Rebecca Destello, Sean Munson, Andy Davidson and all others who have taught this class.

Permissions

Unless notified by you otherwise, I can use samples from your work in this course in future instructional settings (e.g., excerpts or examples in presentations).

Disclaimer

This syllabus, and all associated assignments, requirements, deadlines, and procedures are subject to change.