The University of Texas at Austin, School of Information
INF385E - Information Architecture and Design l Spring 2022

General Information:

Instructor: A. Fleming Seay, PhD
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Office Hours: by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Roza Atarod
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Class Meeting Time: Wednesday 6:30-9:30pm
Classroom: UTA 1.210A (Online Until Further Notice)

Description:

This course covers the theory and design of information architectures: models that provide structure and context for information to shape meaning, purpose, and utility towards understanding. The course provides student introductory insight into the design and execution of websites and applications with special emphasis placed upon the iterative design process.

Objectives:

- Participate generously in discussions, attend regularly, and complete assignments according to the schedule in this document.
- Critique a website design.
- Create a theoretical and practical review of an information architecture topic.
- Present a review of an information architecture topic.
- Learn to research, design, build, and refine information architectures using a variety of methods and software applications in the context of a group project.

Textbook:

Rosenfeld, L., Morville, P., & Arango, J. (2015). Information Architecture for the World Wide Web and Beyond (4th ed.). O'Reilly Media.

Laptop Policy:

Students are expected to keep all laptops and tablets closed and put away during the lecture and presentation portions of the class. If anyone is standing at the front of the room addressing the group, then notebooks and mobile devices must be closed and/or stored.

Assignments & Grading:

Classroom Participation (10%)

Students should arrive at class prepared to share their views on the week's assignments and readings. Professional conduct is required of each student. This includes but is not limited to: attendance, polite discussions, timely completion of assignments and group participation.

Primary readings will prepare you for what we will discuss in class. Bring questions and be prepared to participate in class discussions.

Design Critique Paper (20%)

The design critique is a five page written critique with accompanying "before" and "after" screenshots of the Web page(s) critiqued from a Web site approved by the instructor. This assignment is **due on Feb 23rd.**

You may choose to do a design critique of the one of these six pages: YouTube, Craigslist, Twitter, Imgur, Reddit, Facebook

Critiques include a screen shot of the current page, and a screen shot of your new design with commentary on why you are making changes to the design. Take into account the proposed user audience for the site, accessibility, labeling, navigation, colors, etc. (in other words, the topics we discuss in class) and make an attempt to improve on these current designs.

Ideal formatting would be five pages of text describing your changes and why you made them, and a "before" and an "after" picture. Also, send an email to the class list so others can learn from your ideas.

Digital designs are required (no sketches of design). Two main methods for preparing your proposed design:

1. Download the HTML and graphics for the page and modify the source code yourself and add (or resize) any relevant new graphics you require for your design.

2. Take a screen shot of the page and use a graphics editing program to "paint over" your proposed re-design.

It is strongly recommended that you annotate your design using numbering and/or arrows to call out the aspects of your design that you are discussing in the textual part of the design critique. Focus more on how the individual screen/view/page should work and then what a good IA would do to try to make those concepts and designs flow into the other pages.

Research Topic Presentation (25%)

A presentation on a specific Information Architecture research topic will also be required of each student. The presentations should include an oral and a multimedia (HTML or PowerPoint is fine) component. Be prepared for a brief Q & A session at the end of each presentation.

Class presentations will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the presentation evaluation form that we will discuss during class. Some possible topics are listed below.

Example List of Research Presentation Topics	
Taxonomies & Classification for Organizing Content	Color & Typography
Navigation & Menus	Logos, Icons and Descriptive Graphics
Web pages as User Interface: Forms & Internet Applications	Metaphors in Design and Navigation
Metadata and Meta Tags	Usability & Information Architecture
Search Pages and Results	IA & Advertising
Search Engine Optimization	IA & Gaming
Content Management Systems	Social Media
Design Systems	IA for Shopping
Architecting & Designing for Accessibility	IA for AR/VR Applications
IA & Entertainment Devices (Smart TVs, Consoles)	Database Driven Websites & Apps
Audio & Video	IA & Voice Interfaces
IA & The Blockchain, Crypto-currency & NFTs	IA & Wearables
IA & Remote Collaboration (Zoom, Teams & Beyond)	

IA Project (30%)

For the IA Project portion of the course, you and a team will plan, design, construct and test a website. A project proposal is required and must receive approval before additional project work begins. IA project steps include:

- Decide on the type of site you would like to build or population you would like to serve.
- Obtain approval for your IA project idea.
- Prepare and submit a proposal
- Plan project work and associated project deliverables and timeline
- Use iterative design and IA methodology as process framework for Web site information architecture and design
- Design Web site project per proposal
- Construct Web site frameworks, templates, sample Web pages & convert content
- Verify design & architecture with heuristic evaluation and lightweight user testing

Documentation and demonstration of your process is essential to success on this assignment.

Presentation of IA Project (15%)

The presentation of the overall information architecture of the project includes a graphical overview of the Web site, methodological insights (the post-mortem) and design functionality. Presentations should be 20-30 minutes, no extra time is allowed. You should perform a live demonstration of your Web site along with notes and commentary (most likely as a presentation with something like PowerPoint). Speak about why you made certain design decisions and how you organized the information in your project. **IA Project Final Presentations will be done in class on May 4th.** The grading criteria for your project presentations are outlined in the Project Presentation Evaluation form.

Services For Students With Disabilities:

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Course Outline / Schedule (Tentative) :

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics and essential information will be on the Canvas website at utexas.instructure.com. Check Canvas regularly. Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion if circumstances require. I will announce any such changes in class and will also communicate them via a Canvas announcement. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and I will do my best to ensure that you are notified of changes with as much advance notice as possible.

Week 1 - (Jan. 19, 2022) - Course Overview, Introduction

Activities & Deliverables
- Personal Introductions
- In Class: What do you expect from this course?

Week 2 - (Jan. 26, 2022)

Primary Readings
- Downes, S. What is an Information Architect?
- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapters 1-3

Activities & Deliverables
- Class Presentation Topic Selection
- Design Critique Topic Selection

Week 3 - (Feb. 2, 2022)

Primary Readings
- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapters 4, 5

Activities & Deliverables
- Site Ideas & Concepts Discussion
- Team Formation

Week 4 - (Feb. 9, 2022)

Primary Readings
- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture Chapter 6-9
- Karp, T. Art and Zen of Web Sites

Activities & Deliverables
- Presentations Begin
- Group Project: Initial Site Proposal & User Research Plan Discussion

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Week 5 – (Feb. 16, 2022)

Primary Readings
- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapters 10

Activities & Deliverables
- Presentations Continue
- Group Project: Initial Site Proposal & User Research Plan Due

Week 6 - (Feb. 23, 2022)

Primary Readings
- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapters 11

Activities & Deliverables
- Presentations Continue
- Individual Work: Design Critique Due
- Group Project: User Research Report I

Week 7 - (Mar. 2, 2022)

Primary Readings
- Nielsen, J. Top Ten Guidelines for Homepage Usability .
- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapter 12

Activities & Deliverables
- Presentations Continue
- Group Project: User Research Report II & Project Schedule Due

Week 8 - (Mar. 9, 2022)

Primary Readings
- Berners- Lee, T., et al. " The Semantic Web ". Scientific American, May 2001.
- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapter 13

Activities & Deliverables
- Presentations Continue
- Group Project: Strategy Document

Week 9 - (Mar. 16, 2022) – Spring Break - No Class Meeting

Week 10 - (Mar. 23, 2022)

Activities & Deliverables
- Presentations Continue
- Group Project: Design Document

Week 11 - (Mar. 30, 2022)

Activities & Deliverables
- Presentations Continue
- Group Project: Implementation Progress Report I

Week 12 - (Apr. 6, 2022)

Activities & Deliverables
- Presentations Continue
- Group Project: Implementation Progress Report II

Week 13 - (Apr. 13, 2022)

Activities & Deliverables
- Group Project: User Testing & Implementation Progress Report III

Week 14 - (Apr. 20, 2022)

Activities & Deliverables
- Group Project: User Test & Implementation Report IV

Week 15 - (Apr. 27, 2022)

Activities & Deliverables
- Group Project: User Test & Implementation Report V
- Group Project: Last Chance Site Review

Week 16 - (May. 4, 2022)
Activities & Deliverables
- Final Project Presentations
- Final Site Live
- Final Document Due