

The University of Texas at Austin, School of Information INF385E - Information Architecture and Design I Spring 2014

General Information:

Instructor: A. Fleming Seay, PhD

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Phone: (412) 334-1682

Office Hours: by appointment

Class Meeting Time: Thursday 6:30-9:30pm

Classroom: UTA 1.210A

TA: Ran Xu

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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.
- Understand the primary functions of an information architect
- Critique and Map a Web site 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.
- Develop a solid understanding of Web technology and software applications.

Textbook:

Morville, P. & Rosenfeld, L. (2006). [Information Architecture for the World Wide Web](#) (3rd ed.). Cambridge ; Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly.

Blackboard:

The Blackboard system will be used for a great deal of class business including posting and submission of assignments, class announcements, and sharing of lecture slides. Please check it often.

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.

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.

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.

Research Presentation Topics	
Taxonomies & Classification for Organizing Content	Color & Typography for the Web
Navigation & Menus	Logos, Icons and Descriptive Graphics
Web pages as User Interface: Forms & Web applications	Metaphors in Web Design and Navigation
Metadata and Meta Tags	User IA - blogs, RSS and WIKIs
Search Pages and Results	IA & Web Advertising
Search Engine Optimization	Information Architecture and Games
Content Management Systems	Social Media
Dynamic Web Pages (Javascript, Flash, etc.)	IA for Shopping & Shopping Baskets
Usability and Information Architecture	IA and B2C Interaction
Architecting & Designing for Accessibility	

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 February 20th**.

You may choose to do a design critique of the one of these five pages:

YouTube
craigslist
Twitter
Gizmodo
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.

Divide your new design into some kind of quadrants or use arrows with numbers (or something like that) to note the sections you're discussing in the textual part of the design critique.

Focus more on how the individual page (the Home page, what you're critiquing) should work and then what a good IA would do to try to make those concepts and designs flow into the other pages.

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.

Each student may apply for a new account for your IA project. To sign up for a iSchool account, please fill out the [iSchool Account Sign-up form](#).

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 1st.** The grading criteria for your project presentations are outlined in the [Project Presentation Evaluation](#) form.

Course Schedule:

Week 1 - (Jan. 16, 2014) - Course Overview, Introduction

Primary Readings

- Course Syllabus (reviewed in class)

Activities & Deliverables

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

Week 2 - (Jan. 23, 2014) - Information Architecture & Design Overview

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
- Using your iSchool account short course
- Using Visio/OmniGraffle/Dreamweaver short courses

Week 3 - (Jan. 30, 2014) - Information Architecture Structures & Tools

Primary Readings

- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapters 4, 5, & 16

Activities & Deliverables

- Site Ideas & Concepts Discussion
- Team Formation

Week 4 - (Feb. 6, 2014) - More Information Architecture Structures

Primary Readings

- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture Chapter 6-9
- Karp, T. [Art and Zen of Web Sites](#)

Activities & Deliverables

- Group Project: Initial Site Proposal & User Research Plan Discussion

Week 5 - (Feb. 13, 2014) - Research

Primary Readings

- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapters 10

Activities & Deliverables

- Presentations Begin
- Group Project: Initial Site Proposal & User Research Plan Due

Week 6 - (Feb. 20, 2014) – Strategy

Primary Readings

- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapters 11

Activities & Deliverables

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

Week 7 - (Feb. 27, 2014) - Design

Primary Readings

- Nielsen, J. [Top Ten Guidelines for Homepage Usability](#) .
- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapter 12,14

Activities & Deliverables

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

Week 8 - (Mar. 6, 2014)

Primary Readings

- Berners- Lee, T., et al. " [The Semantic Web](#) ". Scientific American, May 2001.

Activities & Deliverables

- Presentations continue
- Group Project: Strategy Document (Refer to Chapter 11)

Week 9 - (Mar. 13, 2014) – Spring Break - No Class Meeting

Week 10 - (Mar. 20, 2014)

Primary Readings

- Rosenfeld, Information Architecture: Chapters 17, 18, 20 & 21

Activities & Deliverables

- Presentations Continue
- Group Project: Design Document (Refer to Chapter 12)

Week 11 - (Mar. 27, 2014) – No Class Meeting

Week 12 - (Apr. 3, 2014)

Activities & Deliverables

- Presentations Continue
- Group Project: Implementation Progress Report I

Week 13 - (Apr. 10, 2014)

Activities & Deliverables

- Presentations Continue
- Group Project: Implementation Progress Report II

Week 14 - (Apr. 17, 2014)

Activities & Deliverables

- Group Project: User Testing & Implementation Progress Report III

Week 15 - (Apr. 24, 2014)

Activities & Deliverables

- Group Project: User Test & Implementation Report IV
- Group Project: Last Chance Site Review

Week 16 - (May. 1, 2014)

Activities & Deliverables

- Final Project Presentations
- Final Site Live
- Final Document Due