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

General Information:

Instructor: A. Fleming Seay, PhD  
Email: Fleming_Seay@Dell.com  
Phone: (412) 334-1682  
Office Hours: by appointment

Class Meeting Time: Thursday 6:30-9:30pm  
Classroom: UTA 1.210A  
TA: Ran Xu  
Email: xuran0990@gmail.com

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:


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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Presentation Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taxonomies &amp; Classification for Organizing Content</td>
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<td>Navigation &amp; Menus</td>
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<td>Web pages as User Interface: Forms &amp; Web applications</td>
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<td>Metadata and Meta Tags</td>
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<td>Search Pages and Results</td>
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<td>Search Engine Optimization</td>
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<td>Content Management Systems</td>
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<td>Dynamic Web Pages (Javasctipt, Flash, etc.)</td>
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<td>Usability and Information Architecture</td>
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<td>Architecting &amp; Designing for Accessibility</td>
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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:

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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

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
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<td>• Presentations Continue</td>
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<td>• Group Project: Implementation Progress Report II</td>
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<td><strong>Activities &amp; Deliverables</strong></td>
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<td>• Group Project: User Testing &amp; Implementation Progress Report III</td>
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<td><strong>Activities &amp; Deliverables</strong></td>
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<td>• Group Project: User Test &amp; Implementation Report IV</td>
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<td>• Group Project: Last Chance Site Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Final Project Presentations</td>
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<td>• Final Site Live</td>
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<td>• Final Document Due</td>
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