Course Syllabus

INFM 605: Users and Use Context

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Office Hours: by appointment in person, via phone, or e-mail

Course Description:
Users are not a generic group, but rather are specific individuals with particular needs and preferences. To be successful, information professionals must be able to understand information users, the activities they perform with this information (e.g., decision making and problem solving), and the context in which activities are being performed. This course focuses on various user experience research methodologies for learning about users, use, and context. It prepares future information professionals on how to determine the most appropriate approach to gather and report data on the needs of users as part of a design process.

Learning Outcomes
Success in this course will be measured based on your ability to:

Describe the various proposes for providing information

Identify the strength and weaknesses of various methodologies typically used for gathering information from a diverse range of users with different needs and abilities

Determine which methodology is most suitable for specific types of data collection needs


All course readings must be completed prior to the course meeting for that week.

Letter Grades
A- 90-92  A 93-96  A+ 97-100
B- 80-82  B 83-86  B+ 87-89
C- 70-72  C 73-76  C+ 77-79
D- 60-62  D 63-66  D+ 67-69
F 0-59

Grade Components
10% Attendance, homework, and participation
30% Midterm
30% Final
30% Project

**Attendance**

Because the vast majority of the learning in this class will occur within the classroom, you are required to attend class regularly. Absences will only be excused in situations following university policy (illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities, and compelling absences beyond your control) with proper documentation and timely notification (prior to class for non-emergencies). Excessive tardiness may be considered as an unexcused absence.

**Class Participation**

Class participation is a critical element of this course. The effectiveness of the course will be significantly impacted by the quality of your participation. Class participation is not merely attendance, but rather factors in your overall contributions to the collaborative learning environment, based on both the quantity and quality of your interactions in all aspects of the course. Discussion of class participation with the instructor is encouraged in order to ensure that you are making the most of the classroom experience and the accompanying opportunities for learning. You are expected to participate in all aspects of class discussion, including small group and full class discussions. You should come to class prepared to discuss the required readings, as well as your perspectives on these readings. You should strive for balance in their contributions, and your participation will not be based on who speaks the loudest or the longest, but on consistent participation of significant quantity and, most importantly, quality.

**Academic Integrity**

Students are reminded that, as one of a small number of universities with a student-administered Code of Academic Integrity and an Honor Pledge, the University has absolute expectations for academic integrity from every student. The Code strictly prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. Instances of any suspected academic dishonesty will be reported and handled according to University policy and procedures. For a more detailed description of the University's definition of academic dishonesty, visit http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/integrity.html

The University of Maryland has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.shc.umd.edu.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**
The University is committed to providing appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. In order to ascertain what accommodations should be provided to facilitate your learning experience, please be sure to inform the instructor of your needs at the beginning of the semester. The instructor will then contact relevant parties such as the University’s Disability Support Services, who will make arrangements with you to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations. For more information on the University’s policies, see http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/disabilities.html.

**Emergency Preparedness**

Information about the status of the campus is available at http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/. If the campus is closed, please make sure to stay safe. Information about possible rescheduling of course activities will be provided via e-mail once the campus has reopened.

**CourseEvalUM**

Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility you hold as a student member of our academic community. Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University as well as to the tenure and promotion process. CourseEvalUM will be open for you to complete your evaluations for fall semester courses between Tuesday, November 30 and Sunday, December 12. Please go directly to the website (http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations starting November 30. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will be able to access online, at Testudo, the evaluation reports for the courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

**Syllabus Change Policy**

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

**Module 1:** Topic: Introduction/Psychology Basics

**Module 2:** Topic: Designing Information Systems & the User-Centered Design Process

**Module 3:** Topic: Organization Structures to Support a Good User Experience (Chapter 19)

**Module 4:** Topic: Statistics (p. 359-373, Chapter 15)

**Module 5:** Method: Surveys (Chapter 12)

**Module 6:** Method: User Diaries (Chapter 10)

**Module 7:** Method: Interviews (Chapter 6, Page 129 on)

**Module 8:** Method: Automated Data Collection (Chapter 16)

**Module 9:** Product: User Personas (p. 482-489)

**Module 10:** Method: Delphi-based Research

**Module 11:** Method: User or Advisory Panels (pp. 385-390)
Module 12: Method: Field Observation (Chapter 9)
Module 13: Method: Focus Groups (Chapter 7)
Module 14: Design Tool: Task Analyses (p. 205-220)
Module 15: Design Tool: Card Sorting (p. 201-209)
Module 16: Topic: Mockups and Simulations
Module 17: Method: Usability Testing (Chapter 11)

Module 18: Special Topics: Competitive Evaluations (Chapter 5), Co-Discovery, Accessibility, Testing with Special Populations, Cross Cultural Research (Chapter 13)

Midterm

The midterm will be an assessment of your understanding of the various methods and topics discussed in class.

Final

To evaluate the student's understanding of the different research methods and their use, students will be presented with a series of projects containing methodological flaws. Students will be required to identify the methodological flaws and propose alternative, more acceptable approaches.

Project

The project will be a practical application of some of the most important methodologies discussed in this class. To be discussed in class.