PSY 325-004: User Experience in the Humanities (SP25)
Mon & Wed 8:30 AM – 9:50 AM | Central King Building (CKB) 206

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Office hours (both in-person and virtual) are by appointment. Please email me to set up a time in advance (for virtual meetings, I will send out a link after we set a time).

PART I: COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description:

This course is designed to explore major methodologies applied to better understand user experience (UX) across various platforms people utilize daily, including e-commerce platforms, social media, and smart/automated systems. UX has been studied extensively from a design standpoint by involving human perspectives in the design iteration process (i.e., human-centered design; HCD) to enhance the usability of products, services, and applications. Naturally, UX research emerged as a valuable part of such a design process to pinpoint user needs, preferences (as well as pain points), and behaviors. Evolvingly, UX research has been applying more intensive and advanced methods, such as in-depth interviews and observational techniques, borrowed from the fields of humanities and social sciences (including but not limited to anthropology, business, communications, psychology, and sociology). By learning those UX techniques and social scientific approaches, the educational value of this course responds to the increasing importance of UX research in the tech industry as well as academic fields of media psychology, communications, and human-computer interaction (HCI).

Course Objectives:

By the end of this semester, students will be able to:
- Understand concepts and methodologies applied to UX research stemming from various fields of humanities and social sciences;
- Compare use cases and application examples of various UX research methods in real-life settings;
- Conduct UX research by posing an original research question, selecting appropriate methods, and collecting as well as analyzing web and user data;
- Ideate, execute and present an original first-hand UX research project.

Required Readings & Optional Text:

There is NO required textbook for this course. Instead, lecture slides/notes will be uploaded before each class, which all students are required to review after class. Any additional reading(s) and/or details of assignments will be communicated no longer than 5 business days prior to the corresponding class/deadline.

While not required to gain access or purchase, relevant content from following textbooks (and other online sources) will be included in lecture slides/notes:
1. Pannafino, J., & McNeil, P. (2017). *UX methods: A quick guide to user experience research methods*. St. Charles, MO: CDUXP LLC.
2. Lazar, J., Feng, J. H., & Hochheiser, H. (2017). *Research methods in human-computer interaction* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Elsevier.
3. Kalbach, J. (2021). *Mapping experiences: A complete guide to customer alignment through journeys, blueprint, and diagrams* (2nd ed.). Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, Inc.

Software & Tools:

We will use Figma and FigJam for prototyping and whiteboarding, which are services offered without cost for educational purposes. Any additional software or sites needed to learn other UX techniques, such as usability testing, will be announced closer to discussing corresponding methods.

PART II: COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Course Evaluation Breakdown:

Individual Contributions (50%)	
1. Involvement (attendance 5%, individual participation 5%, peer evaluations from in-class exercises 5% and final project 5%)	20%
2. Midterm exam	30%
Group-based Contributions (50%)	
3. In-Class Exercise Presentations (5% X 5 out of 7 team or individual exercises administered in class)	25%
4. Final Project: Presentation 10% & Final Report 15%	25%
Total	**100 %**

Grading Scale:
- *Normal participation* ranked into three groups: A, B+, B
- *Any abnormal participation* (including, but not limited to, 5+ unexcused absences, less than 5 in-class exercises submitted, and significant lack of class/group participation in in-class discussion and final project) results in a lowering of a letter grade, or more based on the student's severity in lack of involvement: C+, C, D+, D
- *No participation*: F

1. Involvement (20%)

   a) Attendance (5%) is the first step toward participating in this class. Unless there is a justifiable official proof (ideally a letter from DOS, or a doctor's note) for your absence, attendance will not count. No participation points will be given for absent days. If you miss class, you are expected to get the notes from your classmates. Office hours will not be an opportunity to review the lecture or lecture slides/notes that you missed. You may request for absence verification at https://www.njit.edu/dos/student-absence-verification

   b) Your active participation in class meetings (5%), as indicated by your responses to lectures, discussion, and peer presentations in class, will be rewarded. Not only the amount of participation, but also the quality of your responses will be taken into account.

   c) In addition to grades given by the lecturer, major in-class group-based or individual exercises (5%) and final group project (5%) will be complemented by peer review and evaluation grades from other classmates. This is to promote multi-faceted evaluations of student work, as well as eliminate any concerns over freeloaders.

2. Midterm Exam (30%)

There will be one in-class midterm exam, which will cover lecture content, slides, and any assigned readings from prior classes. The format will be a combination of multiple-choice questions, short answers, and a brief essay based on a case study.

3. In-Class Exercise Presentations (25%)

About half of the classes (usually Fridays) during the ten weeks in the earlier parts of the course, you will be given in-class assignments, which will result in presentations toward the end of classes. These assignments serve to help practice core UX methods that are taught in class. Normally, in-class exercises will be based on group performance (with new groups formed each class day) but may be based on individual performance contingent upon the characteristics of the exercise. Each in-class exercise will be given 5 points or less (depending on you or your team's performance), and I will only count the highest 5 scores out of 7 in-class exercises administered in class. If you have less than 5 in-class exercises completed for the semester, there will be NO alternative make-up assignments offered, so please review the class schedule and manage your time wisely. Details for each assignment will be shared after the explanations and/or demonstration of UX methods taught by the lecturer the respective class day.

4. Final Project (25%)

During the last part of course, groups of three to four members will be formed, and will ideate, propose, execute, write, and present their UX research project. Major grading events include a) final presentations (10%), and b) final report (15%). Details regarding the conduct of group project will be spelled out as the semester progresses.

CLASS SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

See below for <u>tentative</u> course outline. Any changes will be announced in class and Canvas, and I will assume that you are aware of such changes announced.

WK	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	1/22 (W)	Introduction to course	Review syllabus
2	1/27 (M)	Overview of UX research methods: quantitative discoveries to qualitative explanations	
	1/29 (W)	In-class exercise: how would you study users?	
3	2/03 (M)	Competitor analysis & competitive audit	Review slides #1
	2/05 (W)	**In-class competitive audit**	Exercise #1
4	2/10 (M)	Customer journey mapping	Review slides #2
	2/12 (W)	**In-class customer journey mapping**	Exercise #2
5	2/17 (M)	User personas and user profiles	Review slides #3
	2/19 (W)	**In-class user personas development**	Exercise #3
6	2/24 (M)	Storyboarding & Prototyping	Review slides #4
	2/26 (W)	Storyboarding exercise	
7	3/03 (M)	Prototyping exercise	
	3/05 (W)	**In-class group prototyping**	Exercise #4
8	3/10 (M)	Heuristic evaluation & cognitive walkthrough	
	3/12 (W)	**In-class heuristic evaluation**	
9	3/17 (M)	No Class (Spring Break)	Review slides #5
	3/19 (W)	No Class (Spring Break)	Exercise #5
10	3/24 (M)	Usability testing & contextual inquiry	Review slides #6
	3/26 (W)	**In-class thematic analyses**	Exercise #6
11	3/31 (M)	In-depth (1:1) interviews and focus groups	Review slides #7
	4/02 (W)	**In-class final group project ideation**	Exercise #7
12	4/07 (M)	Midterm Preview	Attendance optional
	4/09 (W)	**Midterm Exam**	Covers slides #1-7
13	4/14 (M)	Final project prep: Competitive audit planning	
	4/16 (W)	Final project prep: Interview or user testing prep	
14	4/21 (M)	Final project prep: Personas & Journey structuring	
	4/23 (W)	Final project prep: Thematic analysis practice	
15	4/28 (M)	Group project consultation (by request per team)	Attendance optional
	4/30 (W)	**Final Presentations**	
16	5/05 (M)	Final Review (Last Class)	Grade due: 5/18

PART IV: GENERAL POLICIES

Late & Make-up Policy

<u>Late work is accepted with prior permission only, based on justifiable reasons with official documentation</u>. No credit will be given for unexcused late work. "Permitted" means that a student has successfully contacted me and received a response confirming the granting of an extension or a make-up. Participation points cannot be made up regardless of the reasoning behind missing the class period.

General Class Conduct

I expect students to arrive in class on time and to stay for the entire class. Random arrivals and exits only serve to distract other students and the instructor. Making conversations irrelevant to class also disrupts other classmates and impedes their learning experience. Those engaging in distracting behavior may be asked to leave the classroom.

Mobile phones, computers, and other technological distractions: All students are expected to put their mobile phones and other interactive devices on silent mode at the beginning of class. It is inconsiderate to classmates to allow a mobile device to ring during lecture. While students can make notes using electronic devices such as laptops during class, personal use of any electronic devices (e.g., watching Netflix) are not permitted. Those distracting others by doing so will be asked to leave the classroom.

Diversity, equality, inclusion, belonging, and general respect: In this class, I will work to promote an anti-discriminatory environment where everyone feels safe and welcome. I recognize that discrimination can be direct or indirect and take place at both institutional and personal levels. I am committed to providing equality of opportunity for all by eliminating any and all discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimization. Success of this policy relies on the support, understanding, and respect of everyone in class.

CANVAS will be used in the administration of this course. Any changes to the course schedule, in addition to other announcements, will be posted on CANVAS, so students are encouraged to check in often. I routinely communicate with the class through CANVAS' mail function – please make sure your CANVAS mail account is forwarded to your preferred email account if you do not check CANVAS often.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](https://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/NJIT-University-Policy-on-Academic-Integrity.pdf): https://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/NJIT-University-Policy-on-Academic-Integrity.pdf

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, <u>cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students</u>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office (dos@njit.edu).

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

Students with learning disabilities who may require accommodations should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (https://www.njit.edu/accessibility/). As another resource, students in distress or experiencing challenging life circumstances may contact the NJIT CARE Team (https://www.njit.edu/care/). Accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis according to each student's individual needs and documentation. Please come speak with me if you have any accommodations or leniency that you require so we can work out a plan together.

Email Etiquette

When you are initiating or responding to communication with your instructor, please follow some common courtesies:

1. Our NJIT accounts should be used for any email correspondence. If you send email from a non-NJIT account, it will likely go to the junk mail folder.
2. Include the subject of your message, and in the body of your message, clearly state your question using complete sentences and proper grammar.
3. Please allow 48 hours for a response. If you have not received a response in this time period, please email again.