USABILITY & MULTIMEDIA DESIGN

Introduction Fall 2019

When creating an app, website, game, or another digital product, you need excellent, usable and understandable design to be successful. Usability and Multimedia Design combines the basics of visual layout with several strategies for building and testing interfaces.

This course is about being a knowledgeable journalist, a media artist, an informed designer and an innovator. Passion for ethical communication and creativity are essential to your success. Understanding users and their behaviors will lead you to becoming an effective creator of digital products.

The goals of this class are:

- to familiarize you with usability, UI and UX design concepts
- to encourage you to experiment, create and explore.

The essentials

- **Instructor:** Professor Melissa Eggleston, mjmoser@email.unc.edu, 704-280-9080 (mobile)
- **Office hours:**   Mondays 3:30pm - 4:45pm, and by appointment as needed. For office hours, I will be in my virtual office (https://appear.in/melissaeggleston).
- **Instructor availability:** If you have questions or need clarification, email is the best way to reach me. I will respond to your email within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours on weekends.

Required supplies
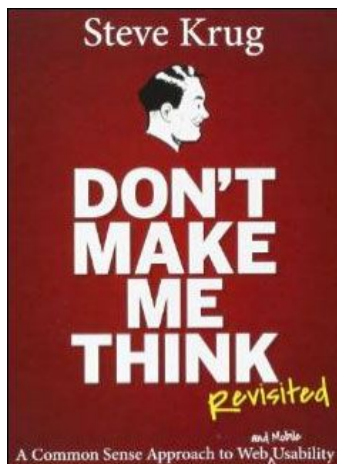
Book: Don't Make Me Think Revisited: A Common Sense Approach to Web and Mobile Usability (copyright 2014) by Steve Krug.

Software: Access to Adobe Creative Cloud is available to all UNC students with an onyen. http://software.sites.unc.edu/adobe/

Recommended items

USB memory stick (1G minimum) or portable hard drive to save and backup your work. Please be aware that you are responsible for backing up your own work.

Sketchbook for tracking ideas, storyboarding class projects and brainstorming design ideas

Other materials: You also will want access to **Lynda.com training library** for the semester, which you can access free as a UNC student by going to http://software.sites.unc.edu/lynda/.

Much of the material for this class is through online links and videos. **Here is the Course Materials & Schedule document.** I suggest you bookmark both this Syllabus and the Course Materials & Schedule.

Description

The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:
http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML - vals&comps

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies, but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on the last six bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above. This course will introduce you to the basics of design and help you develop expertise in their application. They are:

- Usability
- Innovation
- Audience analysis
- Information editing
- Information architecture
- Aesthetic presentation

By reading, viewing and discussing the writings and works of UX professionals, journalists, artists, web developers, photographers, usability experts, graphic designers, educators and researchers you will deepen your appreciation for each distinct media form. By examining the latest eye-tracking research and conducting a usability test, you will assess the practical application of concepts. Through original creations and exercises, you will work to expertly integrate all this knowledge into well-designed packages.

Important policies

Simply put, deadlines are absolute. All assignments are due as stated on the course materials and schedule. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Discussion board participation

This semester, there will be **four required discussion** boards. Discussion boards will consist of providing thoughtful, meaningful feedback about your classmates' assignments. You should base the content of your critiques on your understanding of the readings related to each assignment and on thoughts you had when completing the assignment yourself.

You will be required to provide feedback for **three other classmates** in your critique group (below). For your fourth discussion board (about the usability test assignment), your group will provide one consolidated feedback post to the group you are matched with. **Only one post per group will be required for this discussion board.**

At the start of each discussion session, every class member must start a thread on the discussion board posting their final work for that week's assignment. In the case of the usability test assignment, one group member should post the final report for their group and one group member should post the feedback for their partner group.

In general, you can always provide extra feedback about other classmates' work, but just be sure you meet the minimum discussion requirements.

Friday discussions

There also will be a wrap-up discussion prompt about the assignment that week posted on the **Friday morning** of each discussion week. You will want to offer at least one comment to this prompt.

However, **if you attend the synchronous session that corresponds with that week's assignmen**t, you will be exempt from the Friday discussion board that week. Those who cannot attend the sessions will have access to (and must watch) the recording of the session. As stated above, they also must reply to the prompt posted that Friday morning.

Synchronous sessions

There will be **six synchronous sessions** this semester. They will take place on **Thursdays from 8:15–9:00 p.m. You are not required to attend these sessions,** and attendance will not affect your final grade. However, if you DO attend, you will be exempt from the Friday discussion board that takes place after **four** of the synchronous sessions.

As stated above, those who cannot attend the sessions will have access to (and must watch) the recording and also must reply to a prompt on the discussion board on the Friday after the synchronous session. **This semester's synchronous sessions are on these Thursdays at 8:15pm - Aug 22, Sept. 5, Sept. 12, Sept 26, Oct. 10, Oct. 24.**

Weekly UI challenges

One important way to improve as a designer is to problem solve and create solutions to visual challenges. **On eight Mondays** in September and October you will be presented with UI challenges to solve. These challenges may be as simple as re-designing an airline boarding pass or a screen-saver clock. But, implicit in these challenges is understanding your users and their behaviors. As the semester progresses, you will get better and better at solving and designing solutions for these challenges. **You will receive this challenge in the form of a class announcement on Sakai and via email.** The challenges also will be listed with the class materials.

You will use **web.unc.edu** to create a Wordpress site to house your solutions to these challenges. By the end of the semester, you will have a collection of UI challenges that demonstrate your understanding of user behavior, problems and solutions.

More details on [how to setup your site here.](#)

Grading

You are graded according to the highest professional standards. Your assignments will be evaluated according to the rubrics distributed along with assignments. Grades will be given as follows:

- H = truly outstanding work, and is given rarely.
- P = quality work that a student should be proud of.
- L = sub-standard work and cause of concern.

Grading components

- **Weekly UI challenges:** 10% of final grade
- **Discussion board:** 10% of final grade
- **Usability test assignment:** 10% of final grade
- **Persona assignment:** 10% of final grade
- **Structure assignment:** 10% of final grade
- **Storyboard assignment:** 20% of final grade
- **Final project:** 30% of final grade

Grading criteria

There are basic expectations that any supervisor or project manager would have for a project undertaken by a UI or UX designer or usability specialist. All of your assignments must meet the following minimum basic standards:

- completed according to the assignment specifications.
- completed on time.
- free of typographical, grammatical and mechanical errors.
- completed so as to evidence a clear grasp of multimedia production and usability standards and design concepts.

Your assignments also will be evaluated for:

- audience analysis and personas.
- news value.
- presentation editing decisions.
- architecture of information presentation.
- aesthetic design choices.
- creativity and innovation.
- usability.

- written justifications and explanations of design decisions.

Your usability test (partner/group assignment) also will be evaluated for:

- quality of the user test script and testing materials.
- interpretation of test results.
- clarity and focus of written usability report.

Honor code

It is expected that each student in this class will conduct him/herself within the guidelines of the Honor System (http://honor.unc.edu). All academic work should be done with the high level of honesty and integrity that this university demands. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please feel able to see the course instructor, speak with the senior associate dean of graduate studies in this school, and/or speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Seeking help

If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem, whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability or an illness. Please feel able to contact the course instructor as soon as you perceive any warning signs of things that might adversely affect your class performance or final grade.

Diversity

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2017-2018 UNC Bulletin at http://catalog.unc.edu/about/introduction//. In addition, the School of Media and Journalism also has its own policy that can be found here: http://www.mj.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

 In this course, you are encouraged to represent diverse populations, diverse viewpoints, and diversity of perspective in your own work. You are also asked to be sensitive to the various backgrounds, perspectives, origins, and situations represented by the students in the course, the students, faculty, and staff at this university, and the residents of this state.

Special needs

The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) Office. In the first instance please visit their website at http://accessibility.unc.edu, call the office at 919-962-8300, or email accessibility@unc.edu. A student is welcome to initiate the registration process at any time. However, the process can take time. ARS is particularly busy in the run-up to finals and during finals. Students submitting self-ID forms at that time are unlikely to have accommodations set until the following semester.

Please contact ARS as early in the semester as possible.

Semester topics

Links to online readings, viewings, presentations, assignments and rubrics are on this materials page.

August 20 - September 9
- Welcome, understanding course requirements, set up Weekly UI website.
- Thinking about final project ideas - it's never too early! Developing design thinking questions.
- **UNIT 1:** Usability testing, problem solving, understanding user challenges.

September 9 through September 23
- **UNIT 2:** Researching and knowing your audience. Building personas, audience analysis.

September 23 through October 7
- **UNIT 3:** Structuring your ideas. Creating user journeys, flowcharts.

October 7 through October 21
- **UNIT 4:** Designing storyboards. Creating UI elements. Applying color and fonts effectively.

Oct 21 through December 7
- **FINAL PROJECT:** Building an effective pitch. Packaging your materials. Selling your story. How to talk about design. Speaking with confidence.
- **December 6-13:** One-on-one final project grading consults.