Human Computer Interaction (CS 314) Journals

1. Overview
For this assignment you are required to keep a journal analysing successful and unsuccessful interactions between people and technology.

The purposes of this assignment are:
* To develop your sensitivities and perceptions about how people use technology in their everyday activities, the cognitive functions at work and how well the technology suits its use; and

* To develop your skills in articulating the various issues around the design and use of technology from the perspective of its usability and usefulness.

Objectives: Assesses Objectives 2 and 5 as per the Course Outline

2. Deliverables
3 Journal entries to be submitted at the beginning of class.
* The journal entries should analyse successful and unsuccessful interactions between people and technology
* Up to 7 points will be given for each entry
* Your entries should be max 3 pages

Journal Entry Sample
A sample list of categories for what to record in the journal entries are included below. These headings are provided to help you structure your analysis. They are not mandatory, but recommended.
* **Your Name, Your student no, Week (1, 2… etc out of the 3 weeks)**
* **When is the interaction taking place? For how long (if relevant)?**
    * Day of week, date and time. How long did it take, approximately? (If appropriate)
* **Where is the interaction taking place?**
    * Identify the situation of use, i.e. where is this happening?
    For example, at home, in a tro-tro, at someone else's home, at work, in the library, at the cafeteria etc.
* **What is the situation of use? What technology was being used?**
    * Provide a brief description of the situation of use and the technology. Identify the situation of use and describe the setting in sufficient detail for your purpose, e.g. rather than just saying 'in the supermarket you might say something like 'In the supermarket. The attendant is behind a desk, facing the entrance to the shop and directly into the afternoon sun. The computer is on the desk on her right, close to the wall'. The description of the technology should not be detailed technical specs of models etc., but provide enough information to explain the situation. You need to describe features of the technology used in the

interaction though, e.g. PCs, phones, networks, bar code scanners etc. Relevant illustrations of technology, flow of interaction and setting should be included here.

- **What activity was the user involved in?**
  - This section needs to provide enough detail to give a sense of how the technology use fits into the activity that was taking place at the time of use. Why was the interaction happening? For example, cooking dinner, buying a bus ticket, making/receiving a phone call, text message, email etc. Describe what the technology was used for and how it was useful (or not).
    Record details such as: how was the use initiated, if so, what for. Or were you interrupted by your device, and if so, what activity was interrupted? For example, I was talking to a friend in my lunch break and my phone rang, interrupting our conversation. I asked her to hold on, and answered the phone.
- **Your involvement**
  - Were you observing from a distance? Asking questions? Do you know the person in the interaction etc? Include here relevant information such as the other people's relationship to you etc, parent, friend, work colleague, customer, stranger etc - if applicable.
- **Design Strengths and Weaknesses**
  - Identify these and justify your reasons. Remember that your own assertions are not enough to justify claims about strengths and weaknesses. Your claims need to be framed in terms of Interaction Design and Usability principles. See the textbook and other HCI resources. It is expected that this section will be used to *discuss your examples in terms of usability issues and principles*.
- **Final verdict**
  - On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the user experience of the interaction that you've observed, *taking into the consideration the specific user and context*. Remember that the technology that you are analyzing may not necessarily have been designed for what it is actually being used for. In other words, how well does this specific technology meet the specific user's needs, in his or her specific context? Justify your score, and explain how a higher score might have been achieved, or alternatively, why a higher score could not have been achieved.
- **Other Comments**
  - This can be anything that is relevant that does not fit in anywhere else. It can include reminders to yourself about something the situation reminded you of, or other information that is important in understanding the context.

NOTE: You might find that these headings do not suit how you want to record your entry. It is OK to make changes as you go if you need to. Do include your reasoning and justification for changes as part of your journal though. Please feel free to keep other information in the journal as well. For example you might want to have sheets to record your 'thinking in progress', or to collect and compare related examples (perhaps examples that other people are involved in), or whatever you think is useful to you.

How to *choose* examples for your journal entries
You are free to choose examples of technology interaction, though try to cover the following: Bad experience, good experience, your own experience, others experience, use of a mobile device, use of a household item, use of money/ payment technology, use of health related technology, use of technology for collaboration. Other areas most definitely allowed though!

In at least 1 out of the 3 journals you must observe/interact with someone else using technology.

What to *observe* and what to *record*
Some situations to consider, though by no means the only options, are the work of people you know, the computer system at a supermarket, devices in your home/dorm, internet cafes, video stores, observations on the street, observation in the computer lab, anything on the web etc. I suggest that you choose several different devices and different types of interactions, this way you will have a range of examples to draw on in your essay (if you choose this option).

You are encouraged to try out various illustrations to accompany your analysis, e.g. sketches, flowcharts, cartoons, outlines, stories, tables, pictures etc.
When you observe, try to enter situations with an open mind, though be aware of the assumptions you bring with you. Think about how you watch, how you make assumptions about what you see, also think about the reasons why you choose the interactions you choose**.**

3. Assessment Criteria

Thoroughness of the description of use, including representativeness of illustration	*2*
Depth and quality of the critique	*5*
Total Points per Journal entry	*7*
Total (7 points per entry x 3 entries)	***21***