

Depaul University

User Centered Evaluation
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Introduction:

During my Junoir year at Depaul University I enrolled in a course called User Centered Evaluation, geared towards User Experience Design majors. It specialized in modern user research practices including topics such as usability testing, heuristic evaluation and applied contextual inquiry. As a UX designer and software engineer I decided this course would be especially useful as it would give me the opportunity to become more familiar with industry standard approach and modern best practices. Up until taking this course, I spent most of my university studies understanding the design and development aspect of user experience, so I was excited to dive into the research side of things. At the beginning of the course students were broken up into small groups and given the overarching project guidelines. Each group chose an application (mobile or desktop) to evaluate throughout the term and would be tasked with determining usability pitfalls and eventually redesigning aspects of the app to be more effective. My group chose the app VSCO, a mobile photo editing tool for the avid social media user. VSCO has millions of users and a well-designed interface however, its features and overall usability could be improved. We broke up the project into weekly assignments or projects which were completed as follows:

- P1: [Herusitc Evaluation and Cognitive Walkthrough](#)
- P2: [User Research](#)
- P3: [Usability Testing Plan](#)
- P4: [Usability Report](#)
- P5: [Final Presentation](#)

Reflection:

Overall, this class was extremely helpful in allowing me to gain insight into the field of user research. I learned that usability best practices can only emerge from tried and true testing methods. I also determined that a good-looking user interface may hook a user's attention but if that same interface has poor usability, users will look elsewhere. The most valuable take away from this course has been the complete knowledge and skillset to setup, run and evaluate a usability test to better design software.