

CSE 440:

Introduction to HCI

"You are not your own worst critic.

Twitter is your worst critic."

-James Fogarty

03: Intro to Critique

April 2, 2024

Jesse J. Martinez | Avery Mack | Simona Liao

Course Reminders

Today – Critique on 1b Submissions

Thursday – 1b_rev (Revised Proposals) due @ 8pm

Revisions should primarily be based on critique received today

Friday – Crit on Revised Proposals

Goal: have all the feedback you need to select the right idea!

Monday – 1c (Finalized Proposal) due @ 3pm

Overview

Learn Crit

Why We Need Crit

How We Do Crit

Do Crit

Critique 1b Submissions

Group Work Time

Plan/Start Revisions for 1b_rev Submission

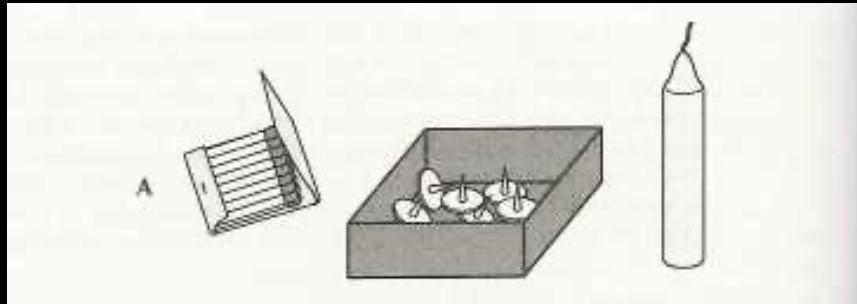
Objectives

Be able to:

Give & receive critique, and explain how & why we do it

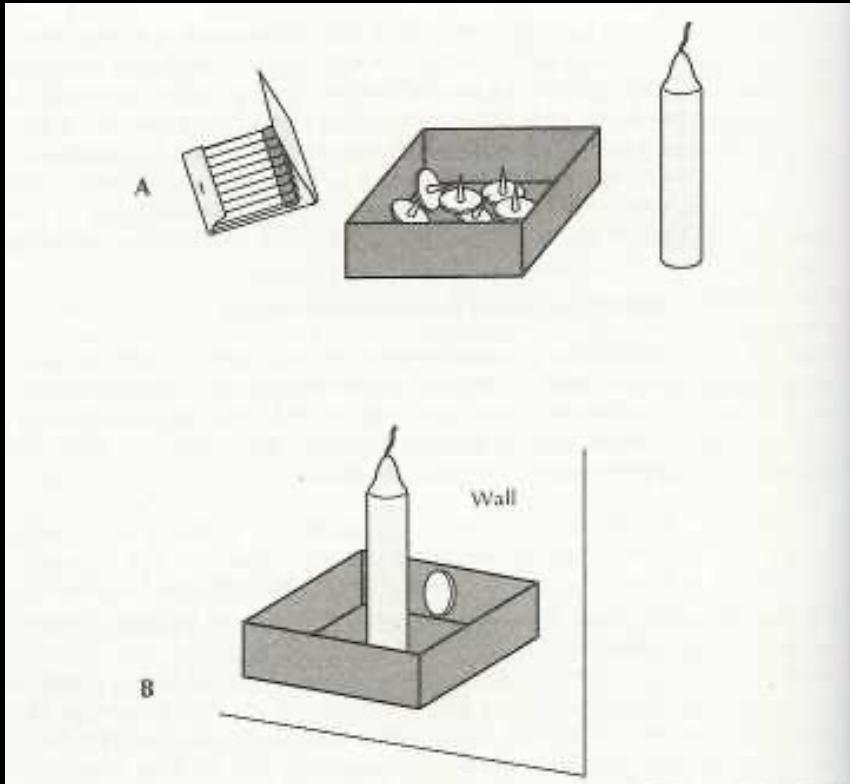
Why We Need Crit

Functional Fixedness



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Functional_fixedness

Functional Fixedness



Duncker's (1945) Candle Problem: The subjects are asked to attach a candle to the wall and are given a box of tacks, candles, and matches, as shown in panel A. The solution is shown in panel B.

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\$5 Challenge

Teams of students “funded” with \$5

Allowed several days to plan

After they open the envelope, allowed two hours

Make as much money as possible

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/creativityrulz/200908/the-5-challenge>

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Line waiting service, bicycle tire pressure check

Evolved with experience (e.g., pagers, donations)

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Winner made \$650...

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/creativityrulz/200908/the-5-challenge>

Why Critique?

Critique helps evaluate early, often, and cheaply

Applicable to artifacts of many types

Compare to other expert inspection methods

You are not your own worst critic

We collectively know more than any one of us

It is hard to see past your own decisions

Design requires getting past our own infatuation

A design can feel like
our love, our baby...

Learning to Give and Receive Critique

You will learn to both give and receive critique

Each is important

Each is a skill developed through practice
(e.g., in Art and Design programs,
sometimes with a negative reputation)

Many activities will consist of group critiques

Each group will present an artifact

Other class members and staff will offer critique

Why Critique?

Critique is not just for design

It applies to many artifacts and domains

Examples?

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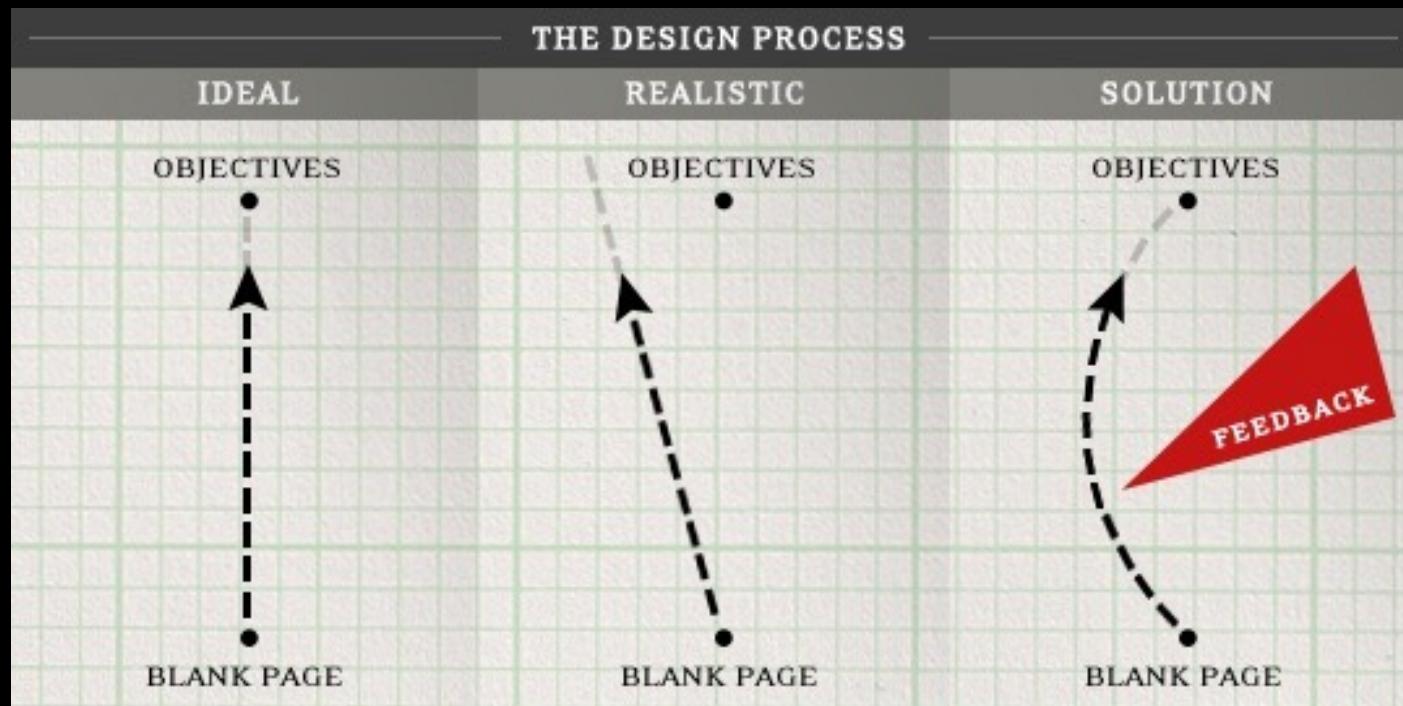
visual art, writing, code (i.e., code review)

Over time, you should gather people who can give you high-quality critique in everything you do

You may meet some of those people in this class

We do not insist on deploying flawed code...

Critique is About Improvement



<http://alistapart.com/article/design-criticism-creative-process>

How We Do Crit

What is Critique?

Critique is a method for feedback

It is not just a list of complaints

1. Presenters sit down with critics
2. Quickly explain their artifacts
(e.g., less than 2 minutes)
3. Critics give feedback, ask questions
4. Presenters respond,
take notes on what is discussed

Critique is Neither Criticism nor Design

Seriously, not just a list of complaints

Critics offer honest feedback

Both positive and negative

Presenters should be able to learn

what works well

and what is problematic about their artifact

It is then presenter's responsibility to sort through feedback, decide what is important, how to act

Take notes for later reminder and review

Feedback will be divergent, even from course staff

Tips for Presenters

Critique can be hard,
especially at first

Try to avoid being defensive

You are not your work, separate yourself

Remember the expertise you bring

Even if “the room” knows more about design,
you know more about your problem / artifact
and your rationale for the current design

Tips for Presenters

Taking advice is not giving up authorship

- You still make the final decisions

- A half-baked suggestion does not contain all the details of a finished solution

Design your critique

- What you show invites different forms of feedback

- Verbally indicate what kind of feedback you want, but also provide an artifact of appropriate form

This course will guide you in a variety of forms

Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

1) establish clear roles

Presenter: presenting, not convincing

Audience: understand problem and context,
ask lots of questions

Facilitator: watch schedule, stay on agenda,
take notes to help presenter,
ask key steps for moving forward

<https://medium.com/facebook-design/critique-is-an-important-part-of-any-design-process-whether-you-work-as-part-of-a-team-or-solo-ef3dcb299ce3>

Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

2) ensure agreement on the problem

State the problem and context for feedback

I am showing [early/mid/late] work

Around [the problem]

Because [why it's a problem]

And am looking for feedback around [specific focus for feedback]

State what is not the current focus

Ensure understanding and check for clarity

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Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

3) focus on feedback, not criticism

Criticism

passes judgement

finds fault

is personal

is vague

tears down

is ego-centric

is adversarial

belittles the designer

Critique

poses questions

uncovers opportunity

is objective

is concrete

builds up

is altruistic

is cooperative

improves the design

Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

4) keep laptops and phones put away

Exception for the presenter,
but prefer paper whenever possible

Exception for the facilitator / note taker

<https://medium.com/facebook-design/critique-is-an-important-part-of-any-design-process-whether-you-work-as-part-of-a-team-or-solo-ef3dcb299ce3>

Tips for Presenters

Keep an eye out for design rationale

You probably made some decisions without thinking through good reasons at the time

Critique can help give a rationalization for past decisions as you explain the artifact to others

Exploit failure

A “failed” artifact should teach you about the design space, what won’t work, and why

The goal is to improve, this requires failure

Tips for Critics

There are many strategies for giving critique

Hamburger method

I like, I wish, what if

Socratic method

These provide ways to give critique that can help the conversation go smoothly

Can give you a question to ask when you do not have one

Can provide a way to ask that is productive

Can be less likely to create defensive reaction

Tips for Critics: Hamburger Method

“Bun, meat, bun”

Bun:

Something fluffy and nice

Meat:

How to improve

Bun:

Something fluffy and nice

Usually a note on where you see
things evolving / succeeding

Not a “shit sandwich”

Positives need to be
genuine, enable
learning from both
positive and negative
aspects of the artifact

Tips for Critics: I Like, I Wish, What If

I Like:

Lead with something that works well

I Wish:

Often leading from what you like

What If:

An idea to spark further conversation, better than:

“I think you should have...” or “Why didn’t you ...”

Gives the presenter benefit of the doubt—

if they did already think of your idea, can present rationale

Tips for Critics: Socratic Method

Identify an aspect of the design and ask “Why?”

Can be good if unsure what else to say

Forces presenter to give, or develop, explanations
for design decisions, which can help build up the design rationale

Not fundamentally negative, hard to get defensive

Tips for Critics

Limit your use of personal pronouns (e.g., “you”)

Critique is about the artifact, not the designer

A designer deserves honest feedback

Both positive and negative

Including clarity and rationale

Help with actionable suggestions

But it is not your design

Perhaps several possible ways of thinking

Summary

Fall out of love with the things you build

Let others help you see past the infatuation

Get feedback early, often, and cheaply

Focus on improvement

In brainstorming, we were not *criticizing*

In critique, we are not *defending*

If you are having difficulty, please come talk to us

Research Proposals Critique

Is a problem concrete enough to explore?

Can you imagine defining a focus for design research?

Is a problem open enough to explore?

Can you imagine learning from that design research,
or is the problem defined too narrowly to be explored?

Does a problem leave room to be exciting?

Will people be excited to see where it goes?

Is there room to differentiate from existing solutions?

Some “problems”
are entire areas

Careful about
splitting and/or
ownership

Is a problem actionable in the constraints of this course?

Can you imagine accessing participants?

Research Proposals Critique

Pair with another group not from your section

Remainder of class

15 minutes for each group

Remaining time for group work

One possible structure of prompts for feedback

Present your set of proposals

Then, for each idea:

What seems most exciting about this idea?

What do we need to improve if we want to pick this idea?

Then, what else do you notice we should be thinking about?

Be sure you are taking notes

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