

## **HCDE 517: Usability Studies, Winter 2022**

Syllabus and course content by Daniella Kim, PhD, Kristin Dew, PhD, Rebecca Destello, and others

Tuesdays 2-5:50 PM PST

### **Contacts**

Sarah Coppola, ScD

[scoppola@uw.edu](mailto:scoppola@uw.edu)

Office hours: TBD and by appointment

Alainna Brennan Brown

[alainnab@uw.edu](mailto:alainnab@uw.edu)

**Readings can be found on the course Canvas site under modules or linked through the reading signup sheet.**

**Course Overview and Objectives:** HCDE 517 will introduce you to usability testing and to usability research as a user-centered design strategy. The course takes a process approach; you will learn how to define your audiences and issues, create investigative procedures that answer your questions, administer the procedures, analyze the results, and report your findings effectively.

Though we use primarily examples of computational systems in this course, many of the methods, strategies, and approaches apply to products in various media (software, hardware, or services). You are encouraged to bring a variety of examples into the class.

It is important that you keep up with the assignments and that you seek help, from the teaching team, your teammates, or your classmates — if you are struggling. The time to seek help is early in the quarter, not week 7, 8 or 9.

At the end of HCDE 517, you should be able to:

- Understand and explain to others what usability testing and usability research are and what they can contribute to a design effort
- Analyze the usability issues that a product has and prioritize those that merit investigation through a usability test; analyze the various audiences for the product and prioritize those that are most critical at the current moment
- Design a usability test that answers the questions you have for the audiences of interest
- Administer the test, analyze the results, and report the findings effectively
- Explain how usability issues or analysis might inform the design of new products or services

### **Work in this course – getting a grade**

Each assignment is designed to test your achievement against one or more of the learning objectives. Different assignments emphasize different learning objectives. \*Please note that some grading will be subjective in nature. If you are confused about a grade, please contact your instructors so we can review it.

There are four categories of assignments:

- Individual Assignments
- Class participation

- Group project
- Final self and team evaluation report, reflecting on your learning and participation across the quarter.
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**Quality of Communication in Assignments:** All written assignments for this class must be of high quality: thoroughly proofread, well organized, and stylistically appropriate for the context. If in doubt, err on the more formal, polished, professional side. Writing quality will be a graded component of every written assignment, presentation clarity and engagement will affect your grades on all presentation assignments. In the workplace, if your results or ideas are of high quality but your communication is not, no one will be able to benefit from the work you do.

**Course Outline:** In this course, we will cover usability studies, including their role in the design process, what questions they can answer, and some of the different evaluations and tests you might perform. We will discuss how to plan and conduct usability tests, and how to report results from usability studies. To practice these skills, we will use in-class workshops and an accompanying, quarter-long project.

**Success in the Course:** The most common pitfall is not starting on any portion of the project soon enough. You'll be working with subjects/participants and (possibly) real world clients, and with technology that may have issues. Recruiting almost always takes longer than you think, people may not show up, or there may be a chance snowstorm. The website you are studying might go down for maintenance. The app you are evaluating might auto-update to a new version, ruining the script for your evaluation. If you start early, you'll have time to manage these setbacks. If you don't, you won't.

Additionally, as relative newcomers to this material, you tend to need some time with your data (especially any qualitative data) to draw out a strong analysis and good discussion. Doing a study at the last minute and then rushing your write-up and analysis tends to have poor outcomes.

Second, you'll be working in teams and it is important to attend to team dynamics. Early in the quarter, you should have a discussion in your team in which you review and negotiate communication expectations and your goals for the course and project. As the quarter progresses, check in, see how things are going, and adjust as necessary.

## **Schedule**

A summary of the weekly course topics is listed below. This schedule is subject to change; details and updates will be found on the course website. It is your responsibility to attend class and keep up with any changes announced in person or on Canvas.

## **Week Date Topic**

Jan. 5 - Course overview

Jan. 12 - Planning and considerations for usability testing

Jan. 19 - Planning for a usability study, cont.

- Due: Preliminary Proposal due

Jan. 26 - Forming an initial test plan

Feb. 2- Preparing a test with measurable results

- Due: Usability Study Plan due

Feb. 9 - Conducting a usability study

- Due: Draft of Usability Study Kit due in class

Feb. 16 - Data analysis and reporting

Feb. 23 - Presenting your findings

Mar. 2 - Usability in the field, and moving forward

## Mar. 9 - Presentations

- Due:
  - Presentation due the day of class at @ 6pm
  - Study results report

## See Canvas for assignments in detail.

**Grading** For graduate students, 2.7 is the minimum passing grade\*. Grades between that and 4.0 are scaled linearly. I generally use this type of measure for grading, although it can change from quarter to quarter:

**3.9-4.0** : Knock my socks off and demonstrate superior knowledge, application and understanding of the course materials, in addition to being generally creative, excellent execution and timely. This is usually between 97.5-100% of the total number of points. Although not impossible, few receive this grade.

**3.5-3.8** : You completed all the projects successfully, you were timely and professional. You did the work, you are proud of it, and would feel comfortable submitting to a manager in an industry environment. This is going above the minimal requirements. This is usually 90-97.4% of the total points. I would expect that most of you will fall somewhere within this range.

**3.1-3.4**: You probably completed most of the points and met the minimum requirements. Some projects might have been late. Some might have been rushed and had errors. You might feel that you could have done better in getting the deliverables in on time and in a professional manner. You definitely feel that your work could have gone through a few revisions to improve the final product. This is usually between 80- 89% of the total points.

**3.0 and below**: You did not complete the minimum requirements. Your work was sloppy and hurried or non-existent. You are likely aware of your performance. This is usually between 70-78.8% of the total points.

\*The above is subject to change. If you google a UW grading scale, please remember that grading can vary wildly throughout the University, within the department, and even between instructors. Please see the [HCDE general grading policies](#) for further explanation.

## Group project

The assignments for the group project will be assessed and graded based on the team's work. Each member of the project team will receive the same grade for those assignments. However, in the event of continuing evidence of a team member not fully contributing to the team effort, or being a disruptive influence on group dynamics, or otherwise negatively affecting team efforts, I reserve the right to selectively lower that team member's grade on group assignments. Weekly status reports will help us understand each of your contributions.

## Late assignments

*\*Note due to the multiple pandemics in 2020-2021, these late policies are not in effect. The project assignments build on each other, so please try to stay on schedule as much as possible, but the listed deadlines are more guidelines than hard deadlines. All work turned in by the end of the quarter will be accepted.*

In general, submitting late work is penalized 10% of its total grade per calendar day. This is to encourage you to keep up with the work and to be fair to all students. If there are legitimate extenuating circumstances for why you will be late submitting an assignment, at my discretion we will try to accommodate your needs.

*No credit will be given for Weekly Status Reports that are submitted late, as they are only meaningful if delivered in a timely fashion.*

## **Policies**

The following general policies apply to this course:

### *Respect*

If there were only one policy allowed in a course syllabus, I would choose the word respect to represent our goals for a healthy and engaging educational environment. Treating each other respectfully, in the broadest sense and in all ways, is a necessary and probably sufficient condition for a successful experience together. But because I am not limited to one policy, others are also stated.

### *Communication*

Professional and courteous communication is expected in this course. Grades cannot be discussed through email or slack.

Please expect 24 business hours for responses to electronic communication and please be advised that the teaching staff only checks email twice a day.

Use the general slack channel for all questions unless they are personal in nature.

### *Attendance*

You are expected to attend class regularly. You are also expected to be on time and prepared for all sessions. Although attendance is not specifically graded, missing a significant number of classes (say, more than 2 sessions) will likely have a negative impact on your grade, as you will have fewer opportunities to participate in discussion and in-class activities. If you must miss a class due to extenuating circumstance, please let me know as soon as possible to catch up on in-class activities.

### *Participation*

Active participation in class activities is one of the requirements of the course. You are expected to engage in group activities, class discussions, interactions with your peers, and constructive critiques as part of the course work. This will help you hone your communication and other professional skills.

### *Collaboration*

Working in groups or on teams is an essential part of all design and engineering disciplines. In most assignments and projects in this course, you will be expected to work with others and your success in those situations will be a part of your grade. (Some assignments will be individual, however.)

### *Academic Integrity*

The essence of academic life revolves around respect not only for the ideas of others, but also their rights to those ideas and their dissemination. It is therefore essential that all of us take the utmost care that the ideas and expressions of ideas of other people always be appropriately handled, and, where necessary, cited.

Simply stated, academic integrity means that you are to do your own work in all of your classes, unless collaboration is part of an assignment as defined in the course. In any case, you must be responsible for citing and acknowledging outside sources of ideas in work you submit. Please be aware of the UW policies on this, as described in the

Student Conduct Code: [uw.edu/cssc/for-students/academic-misconduct/](http://uw.edu/cssc/for-students/academic-misconduct/). These will be strictly enforced.

For writing assignments, when ideas or materials of others are used, they must be cited. The format is not that important as long as it is consistent, the source material can be located, and the citation can be verified. In any situation, if you have a question, please feel free to ask the instructor or teaching assistant. Such attention to ideas and acknowledgment of their sources is central not only to academic life, but life in general. Violations of academic misconduct policies, as established by the College of Engineering, and described here: [enr.uw.edu/mycoe/am](http://enr.uw.edu/mycoe/am), will be strictly enforced. You can also review UW's resources on academic integrity here: [depts.washington.edu/grading/conduct/index.html](http://depts.washington.edu/grading/conduct/index.html) (Links to an external site.)

### *Access and Accommodations*

Your experience in this class is important to us. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to us at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or [uwdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu) or [disability.uw.edu](http://disability.uw.edu). DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

### *Covid 19 and Other Illness Policy*

We will follow all UW public health measures for masking, distancing, and cleaning. Please do not come to class if you are sick or need to obtain medical care. If you miss class, please let us know and communicate with your project group to make up any missed work. It is possible that we might need to pivot to fully remote 518 as the public health situation evolves.

### *Religious Accommodations*

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities.

The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy](http://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy) (Links to an external site.). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request](http://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request) (Links to an external site.) form.

### *Assignment Quality*

You are expected to produce work in all of the assignments that reflects the highest standards of professionalism. For written documents, this means proper spelling, grammar, and formatting. Adherence to these good practices will be considered in your grades. For visually-oriented material, I recognize that not everyone is an accomplished graphic designer, but you should strive for neat and clear visual communications in your work.

### *Conduct*

The University of Washington Student Conduct Code (WAC 478-121) defines prohibited academic and behavioral conduct and describes how the University holds students accountable as they pursue their academic goals. Allegations of misconduct by students may be referred to the appropriate campus office for investigation and resolution. More information can be found online at <https://www.washington.edu/studentconduct/>

### *Diversity and Inclusion*

The University of Washington and the Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering are committed to creating and sustaining an inclusive culture that values diversity and works for equity in opportunity and outcomes. Diversity, equity, and inclusion feature prominently in the HCDE department's current strategic planning documents. Attention to DEI shows in the department's articulated values and work on DEI represents one of the goals. In this group, we will strive to bring these goals and commitments in line with our work. We will respect each others' identities and strive to create a learning environment where we all are included. We will work together to foster a welcoming and open environment, treating each other with respect, and collaborating toward equity.

[hcde.uw.edu/diversity](https://hcde.uw.edu/diversity)

### *Acknowledgment*

Thank you to all the previous instructors who have taught this course, whom I have borrowed extensively from: Daniella Kim, Rebecca Destello, Sean Munson, Andy Davidson and all others who have taught this class.

### *Permissions*

Unless notified by you otherwise, I can use samples from your work in this course in future instructional settings (e.g., excerpts or examples in presentations).

### *Disclaimer*

This syllabus, and all associated assignments, requirements, deadlines, and procedures are subject to change. It is your responsibility to attend class and enable Canvas notifications to keep up with any changes.