

Discussion Questions

Week 1: What is UX? What are UX Research and Design?

Question

Discuss 1 example of a good user interface design and 1 example of a bad user interface design that you had a positive or negative experience with recently. Please be as specific as possible on a particular feature, page, or aspect of the user interface and explain why you think it is good or bad.

Specifically, try to explain:

- 1. What was your goal of using the interface?*
- 2. What action did you intend to perform?*
- 3. What features of the interface made it easy or difficult to perform the action?*
- 4. How would you make it better if it was a bad design?*

You can choose any kind of user interface, from computer software, mobile phone apps, a physical control panel, or a remote control. Please illustrate with images (e.g. screenshots, photographs).

Answer

Good UX: Peloton App

With the COVID-19 global pandemic keeping me at home, like many, I was looking for a way to stay in shape while staying at home. I heard that Peloton Digital, an app that usually requires a premium membership of around \$10/month to provide live, at-home workouts to people was now free for 90 days. I tried it out.

1. My goal was to access the platform and find a workout that fit my needs.
2. I intended to select a strength or HIIT workout and get going as soon as possible.
3. The first thing you see after downloading the app is a message confirming the service is free for 90 days without having to enter your credit card which was great as it reduced a barrier to entry and made it faster for me to achieve my goal of working out. Then you are asked to create an account and once again they went straight to the point by only asking for three fields: my email, a username and a password. Many apps and websites ask you a ton of personal information when you sign up making the process long but not Peloton. After that, I was all set to go! The classes are well organized and filters are available to narrow it down to exactly what you want. A brief description is offered as well as the type of music you will be listening to. Finally, you have the option to preload the class, making it inclusive and improving the experience of people who have limited bandwidth. Overall, what made the UX so good was that everything was fast and they limited the information displayed to only what you need, making it easy to achieve your goal of being active. The good design and enthusiastic instructors also leave you feeling satisfied after a class.

Bad UX: Canada Revenue Agency portal

With Tax season recently over, I was looking at getting more information regarding my tax return and contribution limits for 2020 in order to inform my investment decisions. So I logged on to my account on the CRA portal to get the information I needed.

1. My goal was to find out what my 2019 tax return would be and to see how much room I had left to invest in my TFSA and RRSP in 2020.
2. I intended to simply view the 3 pieces of information stated above and leave the platform quickly.
3. Once you log in, the website is well organized and labelled making it easy to know where to go to get the information you are looking for. However, once you get to that section, interpreting the information is a nightmare. I am a business student who has taken accounting courses and my mom is a CRA employee and it still took me 15 minutes to get the simple information I needed because they use jargon that only experts would understand. There is no use of tooltips or definitions for users like me who are not experts in the matter. The data is also repeated in more than 1 section which makes it hard to identify one single source of truth.
4. An easy fix to these problems would be to include tooltips next to specific accounting terms to translate them for the public. That way, they are not in the way for people who know the meaning of everything but are there to simplify the experience of people like me who don't. It would also be useful to remove any kind of duplicate information because the more information there is on a website, the more overwhelmed a user gets. CRA should try to minimize the information displayed in the portal and include definitions of complicated terms.

Week 2: UX Design Overview

Question

One of the goals of the "10 sketches" exercise is to ask you to push past the first few ideas that come easily and have to find other ways to come up with creative ideas. Ideation techniques like the "Worst Idea" are one way to do this, but there are others, including ones that you might come up with yourself.

In the discussion, reflect on your experience of coming up with 10 ideas. Was it easy? Was it hard? Did you find any "tricks" or techniques that helped you when the easy ideas ran out (including the "Worst Idea" but also others)?

Answer

Coming up with 10 ideas was extremely difficult. I found that my first instinct was to think of systems I've seen or used in the past which were the least original ideas. Then, I tried to be more creative and thought of 2 or 3 new ideas and then I was completely blocked. I thought of the worst idea possible and drew it. That helped me find a couple more ideas. Finally, a trick I used was to look at my environment to find inspiration. For example, I saw my laptop keyboard and I thought of sketching an idea that used a keyboard and my headphones made me think of a voice system. ([click here to see my sketches](#))

Question

Post the sketch of your favorite design idea (that you came up with) for the 10,000 floor elevator task. This could come from either the first or second phase of the assignment. Why is it your favorite?

Answer

My favourite sketch was actually the only one that was not a drawing. It was the idea of not having a control panel at all. Instead, the user would use an app on their phone to see the status of the elevator and choose the floor they wish to go to. The reason this is my favourite design is that it fits well with my four criteria. First, it is fast. You don't have to wait to enter your destination and you can even enter it before getting to the elevator; no more waiting! Second, it is durable. The building owner no longer needs to maintain a control panel, there are no pieces that can break as it is all digital. Third, it is accessible since there are already numerous accessibility options on smartphones nowadays. Finally, it is simple. People are all

experts at using smartphones nowadays and by having the controls on your smartphone, you can customize the experience to make it the best for yourself.

Week 3: How Do People Perceive Information?

Question

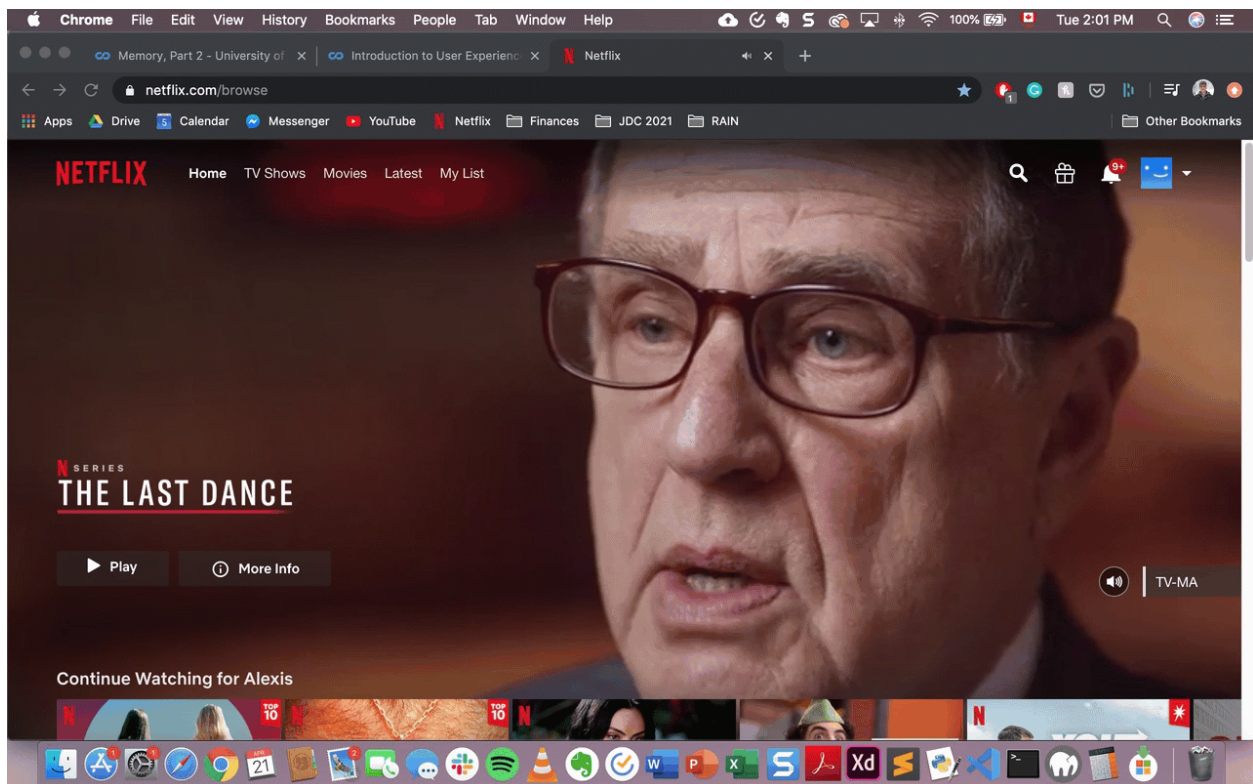
In this lesson, we discussed a number of concepts related to human visual processing and memory, such as:

- *primitive visual features (color, contrast, angle, length, and slope of lines, texture, motion)*
- *gestalt principles for pattern-forming (proximity, closure and continuation, symmetry, similarity, common fate, common area)*
- *characteristics of short-term memory (size and duration)*
- *characteristics of long-term memory (association, schema, recall, elaborative rehearsal)*

Choose one or two of these concepts and find examples of systems that do or do not employ these concepts well to deliver a good user experience. Find at least one positive example and one negative one. If possible, include a screen shot or a link to short video in your discussion post to illustrate your points.

Answer

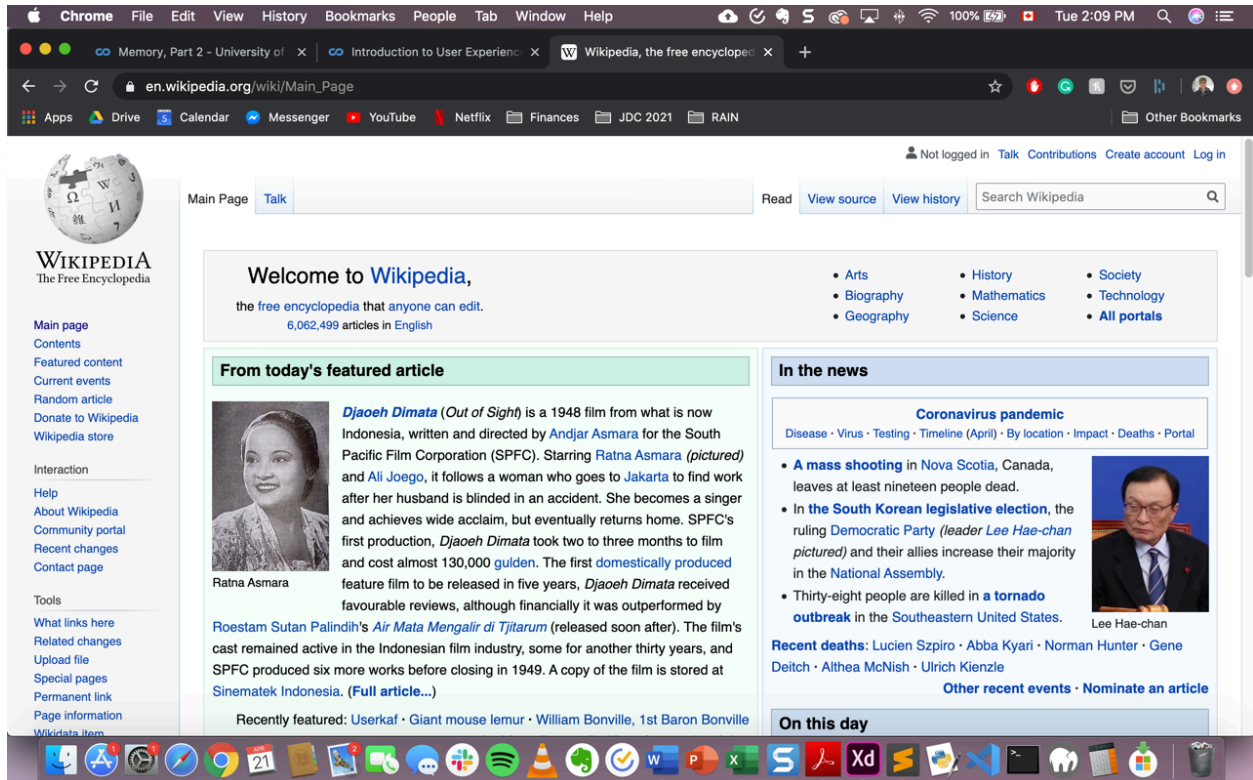
Good example: Netflix



- Great use of motion and size to direct the attention of the user towards the movie or show they are promoting.
- Size of the lists is of 5 items (can be extended if the user wishes) and they are sorted by relevance to the user. This respects the guidelines for short term memory.

- Use association with labels like "Top 10", "New episode" and "Netflix original" so the user can associate it with something they've watched in the past.

Bad example: Wikipedia



- Poor use of primitive visual features to attract the user's attention; don't know where to look when you open the page, because there is a lot of information and it all blends in together.

Week 4: How Do People Act in the World

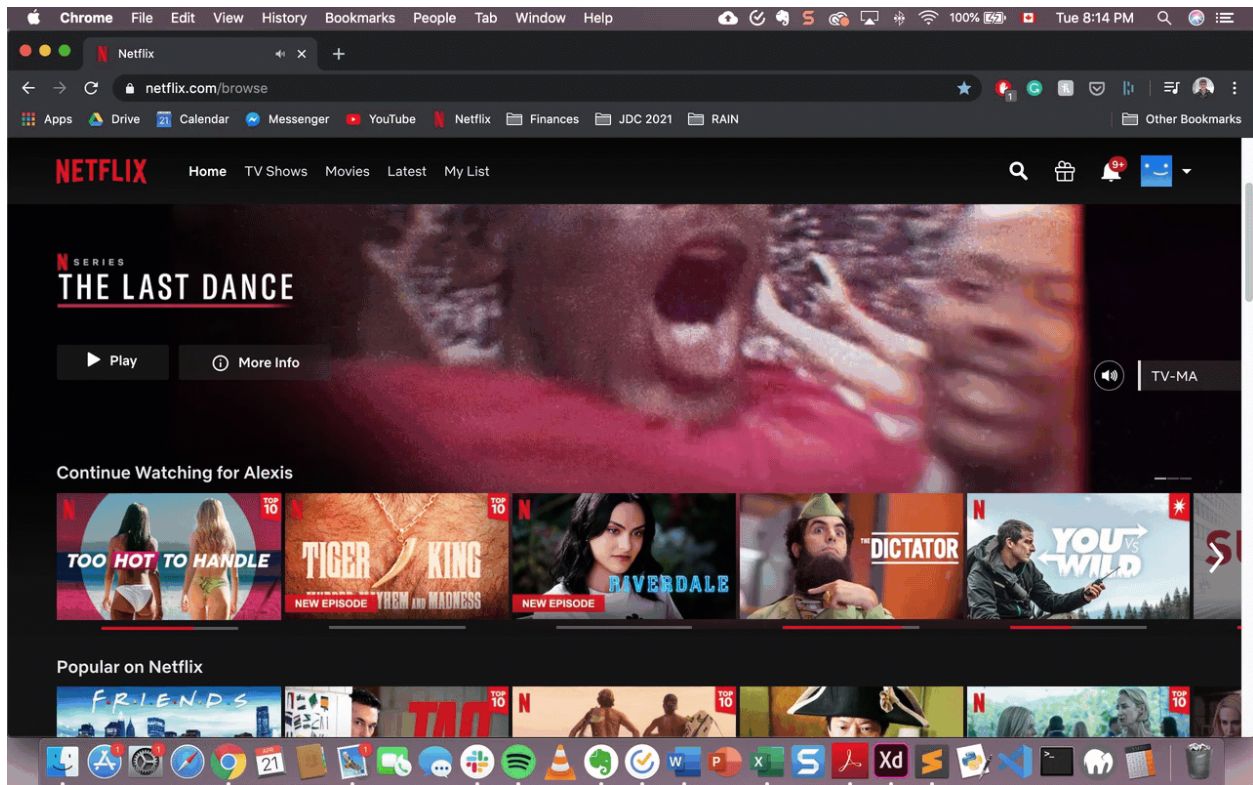
Question

Find an example of a user interface that does a good job of applying the principles of affordances, signifiers, feedback and constraints, and another interface that does not do a good job. Describe why each does or does not apply the principle well, and explain how each system helps or hinders a user's ability to cross the Gulfs of Execution and/or Evaluation. Also, does the system's application of the principles help or hinder the formation of effective conceptual models?

It's OK to use an example you've used in a previous discussion posting, but your explanation should obviously be different. Also, if possible include a screenshot or brief interaction video in your discussion post.

Answer

Good example: Netflix



- **Affordances:** Users know that the tile for a show or movie usually means you can click on it to start it.
- **Signifiers:** When you over a tile, it pops up, a play sign appears and a small clip plays indicating that the video will start when the user clicks.
- **Feedback:** When the user clicks play, there is a loading screen indicating the action worked and the video will play shortly.
- **Constraints:** Only a small list of tv shows and movies are shown and these are personalized to show only what the user wants to watch.

Bad example: Coursera

How Do People Act in the World?

- Video: Seven Stages of Action (6 min)
- Video: Gulfs of Execution and Evaluation (5 min)
- Video: Design Principles (16 min)
- Discussion Prompt: More Good/Bad Design Examples (5 min)**
- Quiz: Module 4 (8 questions)

Bad example: Coursera

- Feedback:** When trying to upload the gif, nothing happens to let the user know that the file is too large.
- Constraints:** No constraints tell the user there is a maximum size for an image.

17 learners have submitted a response.

- **Feedback:** When trying to upload the gif, nothing happens to let the user know that the file is too large.
- **Constraints:** No constraints tell the user there is a maximum size for an image.

Week 5: Design Heuristics

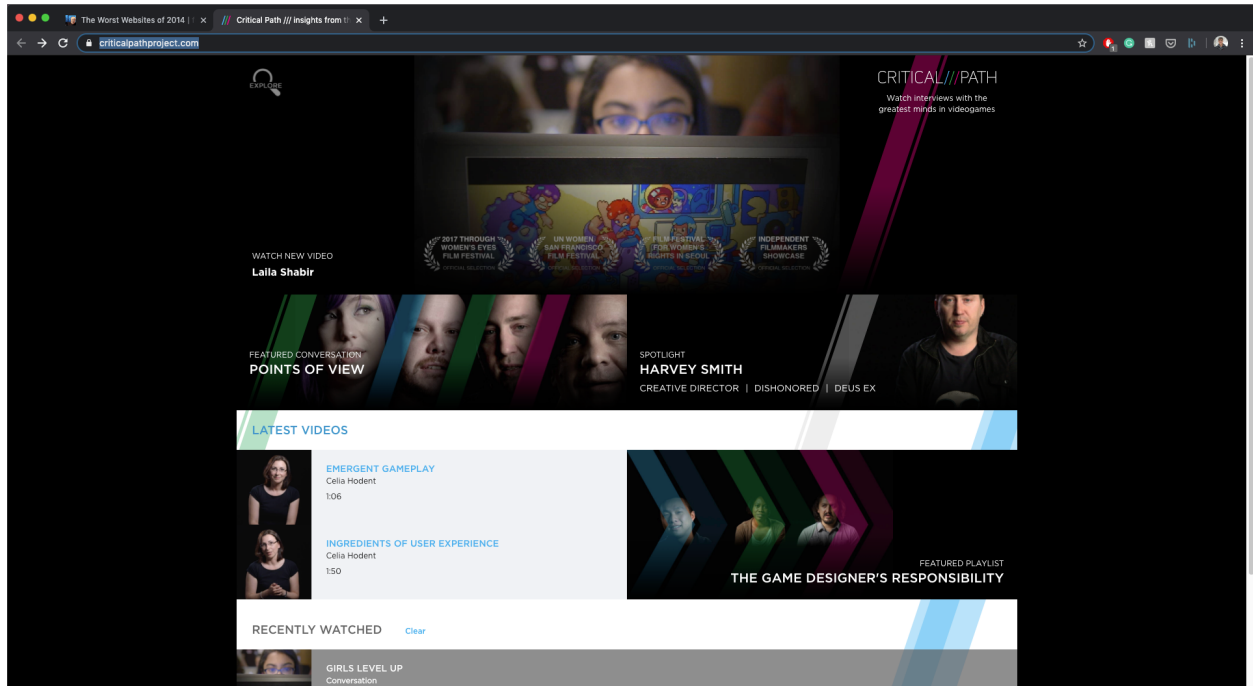
Question

Check out <http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/> and browse around a bit. Find a web page that sucks (in your opinion) and add a discussion post that explains why it sucks using at least two of Nielsen's heuristics.

Note: sometimes a site that has been profiled on webpagesthatsuck will have updated its design so that when you click through to see it, it no longer sucks as much (which is no fun at all). This is especially true because webpagesthatsuck hasn't been updated in a few years. That's OK, just go back and click on another one! You'll be sure to find a still-sucky site before too long!

Answer

Website: <https://www.criticalpathproject.com/>



1. **Visibility of System Status:** This website seems to be missing any form of a navigation menu. When you visit the page, there are no links to go to different pages. The only thing it shows is some videos poorly organized. When you hover over a video, there is no indication that a video is going to open when you click on it other than the cursor becoming the link symbol.
2. **Aesthetic and Minimalist Design:** While the aesthetics are subjective and one person may like the design, the minimalism is objectively lacking. Even though there is not a lot of content on the page, there is a ton of different pictures and graphics that make it overwhelming to look at. The users have no way of knowing where they should direct their attention.