Mobile News App Design

A cross-disciplinary course between the School of Journalism and the Computer Sciences department at the University of Texas at Austin
Spring 2015

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Class: T-TH 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. BMC 3.208

Course overview
What is the secret to Apple's success?
"It's in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough – it's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities that yields us the results that makes our heart sing." – Steve Jobs

Journalists have been traditionally afraid of technology. Those in the tech world have traditionally been afraid of liberal arts. Both have been weary of each other. That has to change.

In this course, you will work toward building an iPhone app in one semester, with the goal of having an app accepted in the Apple App Store.

Journalism students: You will dream big, research your ideas, test them, work with your peers, work with Austin's vibrant tech community, learn code, learn how to speak to coders, learn to communicate your ideas, learn design and find your place in the future of journalism and mobile development. After this course, you will be a developer.

Computer science students: You will be challenged on the programming. We will be looking for ambitious ideas that stretch your knowledge and abilities. You will also learn in a meaningful way how to communicate ideas, learn how to work in a team environment and learn about the journalism industry, its ethics and tenets.

Everyone in this class will learn what it takes to be a well-rounded developer, not just a communicator or a programmer.

The class is led by a longtime journalist who worked with developers at the Austin American-Statesman to create one of the first iPhone apps for a newspaper of its size. Robert Quigley has also worked closely with the newsroom to bring it into the

digital age as Internet editor and social media editor. Joining him is Jeff Linwood, an Austin mobile developer and entrepreneur.

The class will culminate with a demo day. Students will show off their creations to a panel of professionals, students and academics and to the general public.

Objectives

By the end of this course, you will:

* Be able to call yourself a developer who can work in a dynamic team environment
* Know how to pitch a great idea and understand on a deep level what resources it will take to execute on that idea
* Understand and work within the agile development method
* Understand the vital importance of user interface and user experience
* Understand what type of content works on mobile news platforms
* Know how to intelligently critique mobile content and platforms
* Be able to speak to a programmer and understand the limitations and possibilities of programming and design (for the journalism students)
* Be able to speak to a content producer and understand the limitations and possibilities of content (for the computer science students)
* Understand how to communicate complex tech challenges through various platforms
* Understand the various business models for mobile apps
* Gain the skills needed to execute all phases of building an iPhone app.

Teamwork

Early in the semester, students will be divided into teams. The teams will be a mixture of computer science and journalism students, and each team will be given freedom to pursue projects independently with guidance.

The teams will also publish regular blog posts that include photos, video and text stories about their products on utapps.com and run social media campaigns for their teams.

Structure of the class

* The student teams will brainstorm, research and pitch their idea to the instructors for approval.
* Students will then immediately begin researching and wireframing their apps.
* Following the agile development method, there will be four “sprints” through the semester. At the end of each sprint, the development team will have to show their work in front of the class.
* There will be blog posts, news stories, video stories and developers’-diary style posts that each team must produce throughout the semester.
* Each team will have a social media presence that the team will be responsible for maintaining
* There will be stand-up style demos at the end of each mini sprint. At the end of the

course, there will be a Demo Day on April 26 that all students will be required to attend. The students will show off their work to academics and professionals from the journalism and tech worlds. The public will also be invited to attend.
* We will use our class time to typically give short lectures (20 minutes or less) and spend the rest of the time working on your iPhone projects.

Required reading:
* Apple.com's developer guide (developer.apple.com/iphone)

Suggested reading:
For advanced students (mainly computer science majors):
* Cownway and Hillegass: "IOS Programming, the Big Nerd Ranch Guide" (3rd ed.)
* Isaacson, Walter: "Steve Jobs: A biography"
* AP Style Guide
* Shore: "The Art of Agile Development" Publisher: O'Reilly

Also required:

1. All students must participate in a Demo Day, tentatively scheduled for May 2.

2. Students will be expected to attend a hackathon on March 12 (event runs from noon to midnight) at the Austin American-Statesman. Your team will blog about the experience for a grade.

Assessment/how you're graded

25 percent: App grade. This is a team grade. Your team will be assessed on the usability, creativity and execution of your app. As part of this grade, your team will also be required to turn in plans for sprints, and an initial pitch assignment.

24 percent: Student review of work. Individual grade. Teamwork is central to this course and to developing an app outside of this course. You are expected to be a strong teammate, and you will be assessed on your contributions twice during the semester.

16 percent: End-of-sprint demos. Team grade. At the end of each sprint, you will stand in front of the class with your team and present your progress and product.

14 percent: Blogging. This is a team grade. Your team is expected to post on utapps.com at least 14 times during the semester about your product, the process, or anything related to the mobile development industry.

14 percent: Videos. This is a team grade. Throughout the course of the semester, you are required to post at least four videos and host them on utapps.com. The videos should be related to your process and product and will be used during Demo

Day.

7 percent: Social media. This is a team grade. Your product needs a social presence, and as a team you are expected to use social media to reach out to potential customers.

Grade scale:

Grade	Percentage
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69

Other important information

* Your grades and the submission of your evaluations will be handled through Blackboard. Quizzes will be administered through Blackboard as well.
* University Honor Code: All students are expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code, which reads: "The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community."

* Students with Disabilities Please notify your instructor of any modification/adaptation you may require to accommodate a disability-related need. You will be requested to provide documentation to the Dean of Student's Office in order that the most appropriate accommodations can be determined. Specialized services are available on campus through Services for Students with Disabilities. http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/

*Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading

information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University.

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php. For the University's official definition of scholastic dishonesty, see Section 11-802, Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities.

http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi08-09/app/gi08.appc03.html#sec-11-802-scholastic-dishonesty19

* Campus emergency information
http://www.utexas.edu/safety/terms/