I3: Individual Assignment #3: UI Critique
Erica Yee
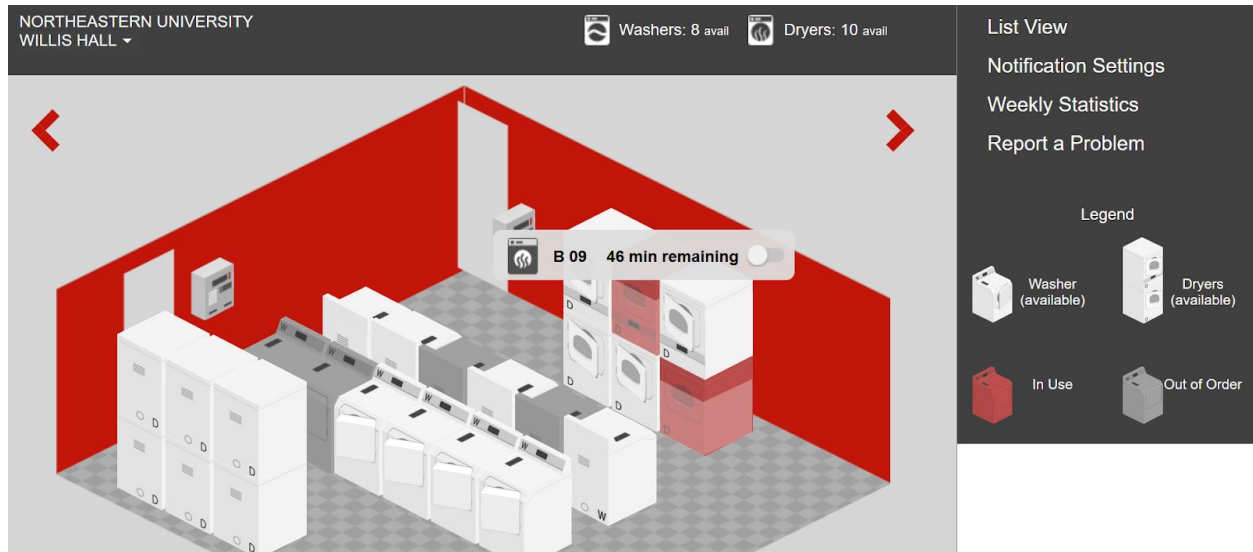IS 4300
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https://ericayee.com/hci/

LaundryView.com **(good)**
The purpose of this website is to show the state of laundry rooms in campus dorms with an exact depiction of how many washer and dryer machines are in use or available.

- This interface speaks the user's language by using a logical color scheme: white for available, red for in use, and gray for out of order. Green would also be a logical color for the available state because it draws from the widespread stoplight metaphor. However, in this case, pairing so many instances of red and green together would probably be visually overwhelming for the user, violating the principle of simple design. White makes the most sense because the machines are that color in real life.
- Another way the interface speaks the user language within a consistent design is by mapping the virtual room to exactly how the real room is laid out. The graphical portrayal uses almost the minimum number of lines and shading so that the machines are recognizable in a 3D mental model.
- The legend explaining the color scheme minimizes user load by showing the needed information adjacent to where the information is used.
- When a user clicks on any machine, a popup with the name and time remaining (if applicable) appears. The interface prevents errors and by allowing any next click outside that popup to close it and/or open another popup. Thus the user does not have to think much about how to get rid of the information once they are done with it.
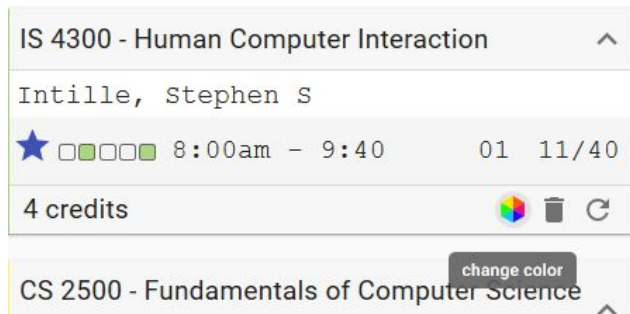
[courseoff](#) **(good)**

Courseoff pulls data from Northeastern's class listings for the current or upcoming semester to allow students to search for classes and build potential schedules in a calendar view.

- The main platform-agnostic challenge with figuring out class schedules is not finding classes that don't overlap in times. When the user looks at sections for a new class, courseoff grays out any sections that occur at the same time as any class the user has already added to the schedule. This is a good way to prevent errors because by graying out only the conflicting section time listing, the user can immediately understand that the time does not work for them, rather than the entire class.

- The interface also provides immediate feedback when the user is searching course subjects. As the user inputs each letter, the list of subjects automatically filter out any subjects that do not contain the exact search string. For example, there are fewer results for the string "ar" than "a".

IS 4300 - Human Computer Interaction   ⌃

Intille, Stephen S

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4 credits   🌈 🗑 ⟳

                    change color
CS 2500 - Fundamentals of Computer Science   ⌃

- Another good attribute is the interface embeds help and documentation using tooltips that appear on hover for the "change color" and "remove" buttons.

[Northeastern University Course Catalog](#) **(bad)**

The course catalog lists descriptions of all the courses potentially offered at Northeastern for the given year.

- I came across the university's course catalog when searching for a list of all possible classes offered. However, at first I didn't understand at first that this page lists all courses that could be offered in a given year because they were offered in the past — which means listed courses may not actually be offered in the year. The difference between these so-called "course offerings" and the similarly named "class offerings," which show the classes available for registration, is explained on a [separate documentation page](#) that is not linked to directly from the catalog page. Thus the purpose of the catalog is not clear on the catalog page itself.
- When a user clicks the red text (as shown in the picture) to use FocusSearch, whose purpose is not explained, the user currently is directed to a page with a default 404 error message that reads: "Not Found: The requested URL /class-search/ was not found on this server." A non-technical user would probably not understand this technical message, except that they can't get to what they're trying to do. There is also no action, let alone a reasonable one, for the user to take beside clicking the browser back button.

- There is a lack of consistency in the course descriptions that popup when an inline course name is clicked. Though both the main text and the popup text are sans serif font families, the difference in font (Open Sans vs. Verdana) and line spacing are evident and could confuse a user visually.

Windows 10 — uninstalling programs (bad)

A specific issue I run into often while using Windows 10 in my daily life as a student is the best way to uninstall programs. Depending on how a user searches and navigates, there are two possible applications that allow you to uninstall programs.
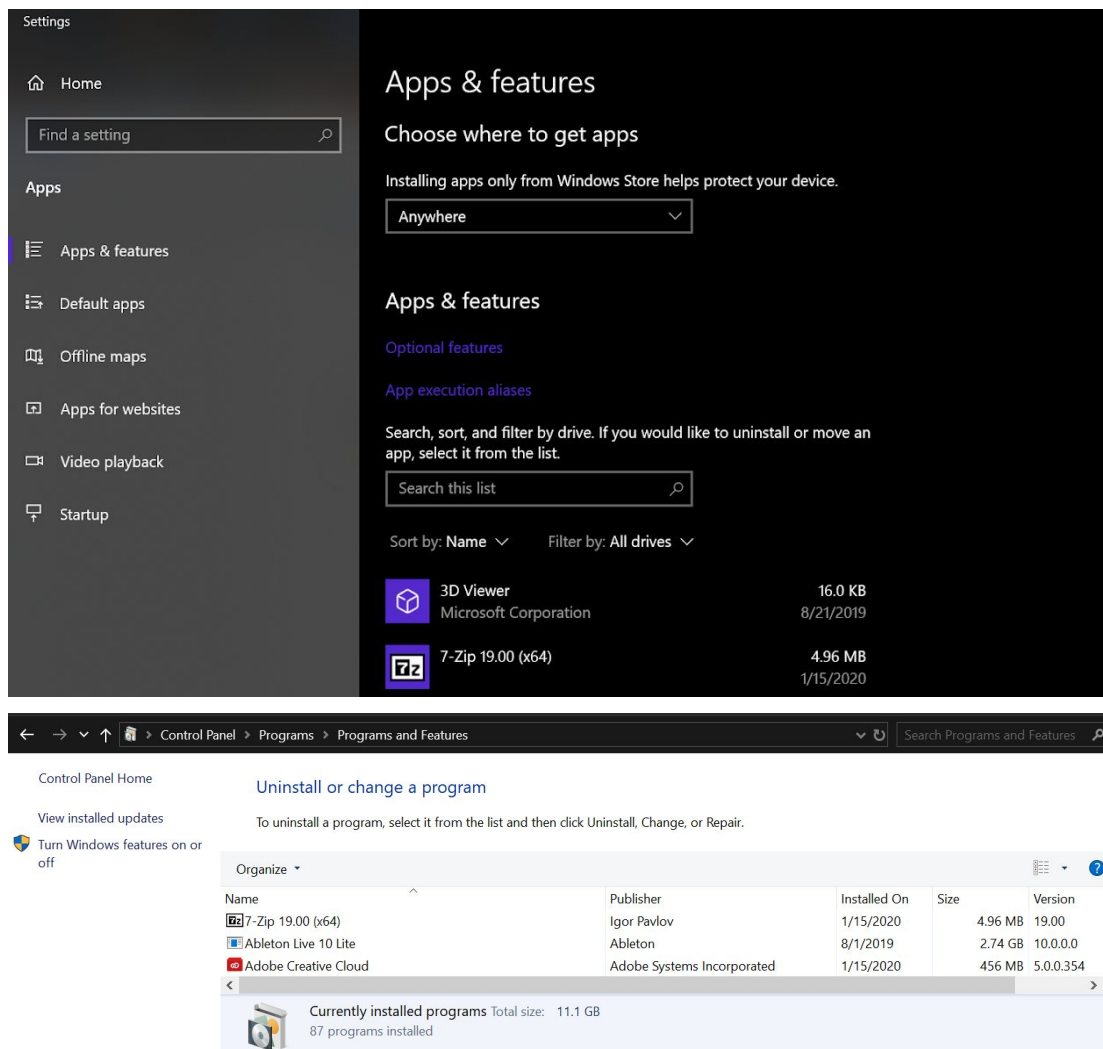
- The main glaring problem is lack of consistency between the two windows, which manifests in several ways. I have my display settings set to dark mode, which the first window follows but the second only partially does. The two lists of programs have different results even though they are both drawing from the same drives.
- The feedback from user input also varies between the two settings windows. If I double-click the name of a program in the first window, it merely expands the name listing. If I double-click on a name in the second window, the uninstallation process starts immediately for some programs.
- Furthermore, "uninstall" might still be considered a technical jargon although the ubiquity of technology means most users probably understand at least the gist by now. Even for a regular computer user, though, the word does not convey whether uninstalling a program includes removing all its associated data.