

2025wi Accessibility Capstone



Syllabus/FAQ

Accessibility is quickly emerging as a leading consideration for product design and engineering. Disability is part of the human condition – almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life. In this class, you will learn through project-based design. Working with design mentors, and clients, we will use human centered methods to explore how computing can enable new solutions to accessibility.

This course specifically emphasizes intersectionality. In the words of Kimberle Crenshaw, who first coined the term,

“ *Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.*

What are the Prerequisites and Expectations?

- We are expecting there to be a significant implementation component. Students who have built a significant full stack system will be best suited to this aspect of this class – i.e. a website that goes beyond simple static information; a mobile app, or something similar. The CSE course that best meets this requirement is CSE 340.
- We are expecting there to be good programming skills. Something like 331 (software concepts and tools) would be the ideal prerequisite for this

In addition to these requirements, we are hoping for some familiarity with human centered design. The two classes that best meet this prerequisite are 440 or 493e (the new Accessibility course). This is a “softer” requirement than the other two, since we will be going over methods for user engagement in the class; and revisiting some of the material in 493e around accessibility audits, and disability design principals.

In addition to these expectations, please note that the class will have a strong emphasis on inclusive design – we will be covering intersectionality, and all of the projects will engage in some way with multilingualism, multiculturalism, or other identities in addition to disability.

In person, remote and recorded

This is an in person class. As much as possible, we ask that you attend in person. That said, we know that many individual concerns may make this a barrier. We will do our best to support remote participation when there is a need for this due to a family obligation, disability, or other concern.

Occasional remote participation is permitted if there is a safety concern (e.g. you might get others in the class sick) or access concern (e.g. you have fatigue). When you are remote, unless you are unwell, you will still participate

synchronously. To participate synchronously, you need to do the following:

1. Make sure one of your project group members is available to be your “zoom buddy” (they should log into zoom and be in class in person)
2. Attend via zoom and participate in discussions with the help of your zoom buddy
3. Report your reason for being remote and who your zoom buddy was, and how you participated, in your weekly survey

We understand that sometimes you will miss a class. Examples of reasons include religious holidays that overlap class times, or major illness. In these case, please reach out to the instructors. To help,

- Lectures: Course content will be posted as a set of readings/videos that can be watch asynchronously. Recordings of the live class posted online
- Office Hours: We will host remote office hours on request. Please contact the course staff if none of the times/locations work for you.

Course Communication

We’re using Ed Discussion for class Q&A. This is the best place to ask questions about the course, whether curricular or administrative. You will get faster answers here from staff and peers. If you must send an email, please use [✉ uaccess@cs.washington.edu](mailto:uaccess@cs.washington.edu) (which reaches all the staff).

Standards

Because this is an ABET-acredited Capstone course, we are expected to teach you how to meet standards topical to the course. In this course, we are using a mix of technology standards (drawn from the IEEE standards database) and other standards (where IEEE does not yet have material). For example, IEEE has a working group but no standards on building accessible applications and ethics of autonomous and intelligent systems. In addition, although the Web Content Accessiblity Guidelines are excellent, they would take most of the term to teach. Those of you who have taken the fall accessibility course that I teach have experienced this. The standards we will use in this course are selected for feasibility and relevance to the materials and include:

1. Design Justice list of principles
2. Voluntary Product Accessibility Template, specifically VPAT 2.5
3. IEEE Standard for Information Technology–Systems Design–Software Design Descriptions

Course accessibility and inclusion

We hope you will find the class accessible and inclusive! The class is a shared learning environment and it is important to us to make it a welcoming environment for everyone, from all backgrounds. We strive to treat everyone in the class with respect and understanding. We ask the same of you – please make every effort to ensure your assignments and communications are accessible to your teaching staff.

If you have any concerns, please feel free to give us feedback directly, or through the CSE anonymous feedback form, which allows you to provide constructive feedback and report problems anonymously. Anyone in a CSE

course can provide feedback about a specific course.

If you have a temporary health condition or permanent disability (either mental health, learning, or physical health related) that impacts your academic experience, please let us know how we can accommodate you. You are NOT obligated to disclose any of these issues with the instructor, only specify if there's any accommodations required. For more on accessibility in this class and how we accommodate you (and each other), please see our [Accessibility Policy](#)

It is very important to us that you take care of your physical and mental health throughout the course. We have built flexibility into course assessments where possible, with the goal of reducing stress. However we know that sometimes that is not enough. Everyone on the course staff is available to chat, and you can always attend office hours for a non-academic conversation if necessary. Beyond the course staff, the University of Washington provides the following resources for mental health concerns. Your anonymity and privacy are protected. - Please reach out to the [UW Counseling Center](#) for any help and concerns related to mental health (including increased stress), available to all UW students at no cost. - If you are ever feeling uncomfortable and need to talk or are worried about someone close to you, it is highly recommended to visit the [UW Health and Wellness](#) programs. They offer resources to students that can help. - If you're concerned for yourself or a friend, please call SafeCampus at (206) 685-7233. - Here is a UW page with [resources about sexual assault on and off campus](#)

COVID safety

Masking is currently optional, however people in the room include those who are high risk with respect to COVID and people who live with vulnerable family members. Masks offer another layer of protection to further reduce the risk of transmission for all of us, and help to support these individuals. Please attend class remotely if you are sick or have potentially been exposed to COVID-19.

If Jen or a TA gets sick, we will move any in-person activities we are hosting to be purely online or have someone else on the course staff fill in for us while we are potentially contagious.

What should I do if something happens that makes me feel excluded or unsafe?

If something about the course materials makes you feel excluded, please let us know. We also review them ourselves with inclusion in mind each time we prepare to teach.

We have tried to make the course inclusive of people who have work, childcare or appointments that have to be prioritized at specific times. However if we can do something to improve this further, or you have needs we haven't thought of, please tell us.

If something has made you feel uncomfortable in any way, you have been subject to sexual harassment, you feel you have been discriminated against, please tell us. If possible, we will address issues through systematic and structural change as well as individual support.

In addition to reaching out to anyone among the course staff you feel comfortable approaching, you have the following options for action: - You may report using one of the UW CSE [Community Feedback Mechanisms](#) and

Resources including the Anonymous Feedback form, but understand we can not respond to you directly if you use the latter. - You can also file a complaint with the UW Ombudsman's Office for Sexual Harassment. Their office is located at 339 HUB, (206)543-6028. There is a second office, the University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office, who also investigate complaints. The UCIRO is located at 22 Gerberding Hall.

Expectations and Grading

This course uses forms of feedback and assessment you may not be familiar with: critiques, and competency based grading. critique based – there will be regular presentations in class for group projects, which will receive feedback from the instructors. Everyone in the group is expected to be present for the entire critique (including other group critiques), and as much as possible these should be in person.

While grading is a necessary part of what we do at UW, I want to focus this class on learning; and to ensure that my approach to assessment is inclusive and focuses on a justice based approach. There has been a lot of innovation in assessment in recent years, driven partly by COVID-19. We have tried to learn from this in our grading.

There will not be quizzes, or a midterm or final exam. Instead, your knowledge will be assessed Competency based grading in alignment with the disability justice focus in this course. A portion of your grade will also be based on participation and effort.

What is “Competency Based Grading”?

Competency based grading separates out *how* you learn a skill from *whether you know it*. Many of these competencies are assessed repeatedly. *I don't care if you get them wrong at first*, as long as you eventually learn them. If you learn them all, and participate fully in the class, you will get an A.

When you we assess a competency, we rate your skill as “no evidence” “non competent” “competent” or “excellent”. Various combinations of “competent” “excellent” and “non competent” result in various final grades in the class. You need to be excellent on all competencies to receive a 4.0 in the class.

What else will I be graded on?

80%: Competencies

Competencies are 80% of your grade in the class. Since there are five, you can think of each one as being 16% of your grade.

20%: Assignment Completion, Participation and Effort, and Teamwork

This is a bucket that includes several things:

- Your completion of assignments, and their demonstration of your learnings about class competencies
- Your participation and effort across multiple dimensions such as whether you answered reading questions; and participated in discussions and exercises in class

- Your teamwork will be a reflection of your contribution to your team and overall team performance

Academic Conduct

If you attempt to subvert the intents of the grading system (such as doing none of the assignments until the last week of the term), we consider this a breach of academic conduct and may adjust your grade outside of the parameters of the grading scheme above.

Also, please familiarize yourself with the course [academic conduct](#) policy. We will grade on the assumption that you have read and understood it, and there will be penalties if you do not follow these policies. These will be determined on a case by case basis, but at a minimum: - If you plagiarize you will receive a 0 on participation for that assignment - If you plagiarize on any assignment, you will receive a non-competent on your disability justice competency

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