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CS 188 First Homework Part c)

FIND A CLASS AND ENROLL

To search for classes offered, select a term and search criterion from the drop-down menus, then click GO.

Figure 1 :

Figure 2 :
Website : https://sa.ucla.edu/ro/classsearch/

I have chosen the advanced class search website that is designed for students to enroll in classes. The intended users of the site are any enrolled UCLA students including both the undergraduate and graduate students. At the website, students want to look up any available or interested classes that they want to enroll for the current quarter. The site is being used most frequently during the first two weeks of each quarter because students need to switch in or out of classes according to their tentative schedules. According to Figure 1, there are two boxes that both show up as the searching area for the corresponding subject. Even though both search boxes serve the same purpose, one displays as a drop down list while the the other functions as a search bar. As being one of the users, I sometimes get confused about which one to use when I need to look up information with respect to a class I need. Therefore, the website fails to the fulfill the consistency and standard requirement by causing confusion for the users. The web developer should get rid of the drop down search list and keep the search bar which allows for flexibility during each single search.

In respect to Figure 1, the search bar would only recognize a set of defined keywords for each search subject. For example, "COM SCI" stands for computer science, "EC ENGR" stands for electrical and computing engineering… However, most engineering students abbreviated the term "computer science" to be "cs". When users try to input the keyword "cs" in the search bar, the website does not recognize the search and direct to other subject areas instead. Users are required to type in the full name of the subject for each search since they do not remember the defined keywords. Therefore, the website fails the requirement of matching between system and the real world by refusing to accept the common shorthand keyword search. The improvement of the design would be using the first letter of each word of the subject name as the abbreviation. Since the users are students, this means that he or she has had a certain depth of knowledge about the keyword they want to search for.

According to Figure 2, the website includes a section which indicates the location of the class and the status of class to filter each search. Most of the time, students do not care about the location of a class or the walking distances between their classes since there are required classes that student need to take each quarter in order to graduate. So, the information about the location of a class is useless. For the status of a class, the website also includes the option of choosing a cancelled class during a search. However, the search option does not make sense and even conflict with the main purpose of the website which is finding available classes that correspond to each subject area. According to the above two viewpoints, the design has also failed the aesthetic and minimalist design requirement by including irrelevant information that arises a lot of confusion to the users.

In the middle area of Figure 2, there is a search box that displays the units of a class. After users click on the box, it drops down a list of numbers as the unit options. However, there are two words which display next to the unit number. Those two word are "variable" and "alternate". Students might not understand the meaning of the two keywords in order to utilize this special option for their searches. The webpage does not take into account of the help and documentation requirement since there are no specifications to clarify the meaning of the keywords. One of the significant improvement to the design would be adding several instructions or explanations about the usage of the units search box. For example, the designer could add a message like "The variable keyword refers to workload variations of the class".

Throughout the entire webpage, there isn't a place reserved for a record of search history. Student might need to search again or try to recall whenever they forget the details that they have looked up previously for a specific class. As a result, students might duplicate their searches that end up wasting a lot of time during the allowed enrollment period. The designer fails to meet the recognition and recall requirement by not displaying useful and accessible information to the users. The main improvement of the design is creating a information box on the right side panel which displays the name of all the previously searched classes. For each of the classes, there should be a attached link which then directs into the page that shows the details of the class such as the class meeting time, class location and final exam dates.