IU Bloomington

School of Informatics and Computing

Z604: Information Architecure in Practice Syllabus

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Office hours by appointment

Introduction

This course addresses a need in MIS and MLS programs to provide students with the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge about the contemporary approaches to information architecture. The goal of the course is to help students put theory and principles of information architecture into practice. The course explores the contemporary information architecture practice, emphasizing content strategy approaches, problem solving, and making evidence-based decisions. Students will have the opportunity to develop their communication, presentation, and project management skills, working on information architecture projects individually and in groups over the course of the semester.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. However, students are strongly encouraged to take Z515 before taking this course.

Course Objectives

The objective of the course is to give students a solid understanding of the principles, issues, and problems in information architecture.

More specifically, by the end of the course, students will:

1. Learn how to communicate and present their ideas to clients.

2. Be able to identify and implement the most appropriate research techniques to solve information architecture problems.

3. Be able to apply content-first and content strategy approaches to solve information architecture problems.

4. Be able to make evidence-based decisions to solve information architecture problems.

These learning objectives will be assessed through a series of in-class exercises and group projects.

Readings

Required readings have been selected to encourage participation in class discussions and in-class group activities. The Course Outline lists session

topics and required readings. Assigned readings are subject to amendment by the instructor. Required readings will be available on the Canvas site for Z604.

Assignments

IA Toolbox. Choose a tool that information architects use in their work. Find an article about your chosen tool, and create a web page or tear sheet informing people of the uses and benefits of the tool.

Due: session 2

Heuristic evaluation. You'll be assigned a website to evaluate, and you need to come up with a list of recommendations for improvement based on the fact that the client has a very small budget. Focus on a short list of things the site can change that will have the biggest impact for improvement.

Due: session 3

Proposal Writing. For the website of your choice, determine what the needs of a website redesign might entail. Write and present a proposal for that project.

Group project. Groups are assigned in Canvas under the "People" section.

Due: session 4

Complex Concepts. You'll be assigned a concept that needs to be communicated in a simplified way. Present the concept in no more than five minutes to the class.

Due: session 6

Research Techniques. You'll choose from a list of research techniques to present on. In a short presentation, cover the way the particular technique can be used and the benefits of its use in web projects using no more than five slides.

Due: session 7

Client Problems. You'll be given scenarios of client problems. Write a proposal outlining the techniques you would use to solve the problem.

Group project. Groups are assigned in Canvas under the "People" section.

Due: session 8

Content Strategy. You'll be assigned a piece of a content strategy to develop for a website in a group. Each group in the class will create a piece for the same site, and all the components will have to work together to create a complete content strategy for the site.

Group project; groups will be assigned.

Due: session 9

Chunking and Structuring. You'll be given two web pages. One will need its content chunked to be easier to read, the other will need to be structured content. In class you'll decide how to best organize the content. Deliverable will include the restructured web pages in a Word doc.

Group project. Groups are assigned in Canvas under the "People" section.

Due: session 11

Break Points. Wireframe the home page of a website of your choice at three different content break points. You can decide what the break points are, but they must represent multiple types of devices.

Due: session 12

Website Interactions. Bring in three examples of website interactions you enjoy, and describe the problems those interactions solve.

Due: session 13

Pitch Presentation. You have all the money in the world. What kind of website would you propose (redesign or something brand new)? Write a project proposal and prepare a pitch presentation.

Due: session 14

Project Deliverables. Present your IA deliverables. From the proposal you presented in session 14, choose two deliverables to present. One of them has to be a prototype (low or high fidelity wireframe, paper prototype, etc.)

Due: session 15

Grading

Definitions of letter grades

Letter grades have been defined as follows by student and faculty members of the Curriculum Steering Committee and have been approved by the faculty as an aid in evaluation of academic performance and to assist students by giving them an understanding of the grading standards of the Department of Information and Library Science.

Grade	Numerical Equivalent	Definition
A	4.0	Outstanding achievement. Student performance demonstrates full command of the course materials and evinces a high level of originality and/or creativity that far surpasses course expectations.
A-	3.7	Excellent achievement. Student performance demonstrates thorough knowledge of the course materials and exceeds course expectations by completing all requirements in a superior manner.
B+	3.3	Very good work. Student performance demonstrates above-average comprehension of the course materials and exceeds course expectations on all tasks as defined in the course syllabus.
B	3.0	Good work. Student performance meets designated course expectations, demonstrates understanding of the course materials and is at an acceptable level.
B-	2.7	Marginal work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete understanding of course materials.
C+ C	2.3 2.0	Unsatisfactory work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete and inadequate understanding of course materials. Coursework performed at this level or below will not count toward the MLS or MIS degree. For the course to count towards the degree, the student must repeat the course with a passing grade.
C- D+ D D-	1.7 1.3 1.0 .7	Unacceptable work. Coursework performed at this level will not count toward the MLS or MIS degree. For the course to count toward the degree, the student must repeat the course with a passing grade.

Grade	Numerical Equivalent	Definition
F	0.0	Failing. Student may continue in program only with permission of the Dean.

Grades are assigned by individual instructors based on a combination of student performance measures developed for each course. Student achievement of course objectives is usually assessed through the use of multiple performance measures. For example, a combination of several of the following assessment methods is common: examinations, class participation, written assignments and exercises, research papers, or term projects. Other methods, depending on course content and objectives, may include in-class small-group exercises, oral presentations, field-based projects and field experiences, or case study presentations.

No course in which a student receives a grade lower than C (2.0) will be counted toward requirement for any ILS degree. **Any required course on which a grade lower than B- is received must be repeated**; an elective course in which an unacceptable grade is earned need not be repeated, but it may be repeated or another course must be taken in its place. Repeating a course in which the student received an unacceptable grade or taking another in its place does not remove the credit points for that course from a student's cumulative grade point average. All grades achieved in ILS courses will be counted in the ILS and IU GPA. Because a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B) is required for graduation, any grade below B must be balanced by another sufficiently above B to keep the GPA at the 3.0 level.

Late Submissions

In fairness to students who turn in assignments on time, late papers will not be accepted unless arrangements have been made with the instructor prior to the submission date.

Incompletes

Each student is expected to complete all coursework by the end of the term. A grade of incomplete [I] will be assigned **only when exceptional circumstances warrant**. In such cases timely notification is critical.

Academic Integrity

There is extensive documentation and discussion of the issue of academic dishonesty in the Indiana University "Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct". Of particular relevance is the section on plagiarism:

3. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else's work, including the work of other students, as one's own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged, unless the information is common knowledge. What is considered "common knowledge" may differ from course to course.

a. A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, opinions, theories, formulas, graphics, or pictures of another person without acknowledgment.

b. A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge indebtedness whenever:

    1. Directly quoting another person's actual words, whether oral or written;

    2. Using another person's ideas, opinions, or theories;

    3. Paraphrasing the words, ideas, opinions, or theories of others, whether oral or written;

    4. Borrowing facts, statistics, or illustrative material; or

    5. Offering materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment.

From: Part II: Student Responsibilities - G. Uphold and maintain academic and professional honesty and integrity - 3. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's ideas, words, or opinions without attribution. Any assignment that contains plagiarized material or indicates any other form of academic dishonesty will receive a grade of "F". A second instance will result in an automatic grade of "F" for the course. Penalties may be harsher depending upon the severity of the offense. See Indiana University's "Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct" (link above).

There is more to avoiding plagiarism than simply citing a reference. To aid students both in recognizing plagiarism and in avoiding the appearance of plagiarism, Indiana University's Writing Tutorial Services has prepared a short guide entitled Plagiarism: What it is and how to recognize and avoid it. For example, here are some strategies for avoiding plagiarism:

1. Put in quotations everything that comes directly from the text especially when taking notes.

2. Paraphrase, but be sure you are not just rearranging or replacing a few words. Instead, read over what you want to paraphrase carefully, cover up the text with your hand, or close the text so you can't see any of it (and so aren't tempted to use the text as a "guide"). Write out the idea in your own words without peeking.

3. Check your paraphrase against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words, and that the information is accurate.

This guide provides explicit examples of plagiarism and offers strategies for avoiding it. Each student should be familiar with this document and use it as a guide when completing assignments. In fact, there are many pamphlets at Writing Tutorial Services that you might find useful as you begin your graduate work.

Indiana University and Department of Information and Library Science policies on academic dishonesty will be followed. Students found to be engaging in plagiarism, cheating, and other types of dishonesty will receive an F for the assignment and additional penalties applied at the discretion of the instructor.

Statement for students with disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact IU Disability Services for Students.

Course Outline

Session 1

Intro to the course; what to expect, etc.

In-class activity

Session 2

Topic: The role of the IA in a development team

Who communicates which stage of the project? How do you package and present work?

Readings:

- A Posting for a Job That Does Not Exist: How We Might Define Information Architects in Today's "Integrated" Advertising Agency by Dan Klyn

- Sample web development process

- How to Give a Good Creative Presentation

IA Toolbox due

Session 3

Topic: Client interaction part 1

Knowing when to meet in person versus sending an email is critical. We'll cover how to communicate design, build relationships, and establish trust.

Readings:

- Communicating Design by Dan M. Brown pages 205-224

- Customer interaction and innovation in Creative-Intensive Business Services: a framework for exploring co-innovation in advertising agency-client relationships

- How To Deliver Exceptional Client Service

- Write that killer proposal - 5 essential tips

Heuristic Evaluation due

Session 4

Topic: Client interaction part 2

Sometimes it's ok to give in to client demands. Sometimes you should stand your ground. How do you know which is best? Is there a way to compromise?

Readings:

* [Give the Client What They Want](#)

* [Compromised Design](#)

In Class Activity 2

Proposal Writing due (presentations)

Session 5

Topic: Communication & presentation

So much of how work is judged comes down to how it's presented. We'll talk about what you need to know in order to do that effectively.

Readings:

* Communicating Design by Dan M. Brown pages 22-33 and 225-231

* [13 Ways Designers Screw Up Client Presentations](#)

Session 6

Topic: Research techniques

There are lots of problem solving techniques. All of them have their merits in certain circumstances, but which are best for specific situations?

Complex Concepts due (presentations)

Session 7

Topic: Research techniques in practice

Readings:

- Interaction Design: Beyond Human-Computer Interaction page 261

- About Face: The Essentials of Interaction Design by Cooper, Reimann, Cronin, and Noessel pages 31-59

- The User Experience Team of One: A research and Design Survival Guide by Leah Buley, pages 121-150

Research Techniques due (presentations)

Session 8

Topic: Content strategy

Readings:

- Kissane, Erin. (2011). Basic principles (pp. 4-13) and Tools and techniques (pp. 38-70) in The Elements of Content Strategy. New York: A Book Apart.

- [Responsive Design Won't Fix Your Content Problem](#)

- [Your Content, Now Mobile](#)

- [How to Use Customer Experience Maps to Develop a Winning Content Marketing Strategy](#)

Recommended reading:

Wachter-Boettcher, Sara. (2012). Content Everywhere: Strategy and Structure for Future-Ready Content. Brooklyn: Rosenfeld Media.

Client Problems due

Session 9

Topic: Content-first approach and writing for the web

Readings:

- [Convince Your Client to Put Content First](#)

- Wachter-Boettcher, Sara. (2012). Content Everywhere (pp. 137-172; 203-212). Brooklyn: Rosenfeld Media.

In Class Activity 3

Content Strategy due

Session 10

Topic: Content chunking and structured content

Walls of text are out. Let's talk about how best to display different types of content, and how to chunk it for better user experience.

Readings:

- McGrane, Karen. (2012). Information Architecture (pp. 108-135) in Content strategy for mobile. New York: A Book Apart.

- Wachter-Boettcher, Sara. (2012). Content Everywhere (pp. 30-48). Brooklyn: Rosenfeld Media.

Session 11

Topic: Multi-device design

Readings:

- McGrane, Karen. (2012). Your content, now mobile (pp. 7-32) in Content strategy for mobile. New York: A Book Apart.

- Wroblewski, Luke. (2011). Organization (pp. 49-66) and Layout (pp. 108-119) in Mobile first. New York: A Book Apart.

- Designing Multi-Device Experiences by Michal Levin pages 219-248

Chunking and Structuring due

Session 12

Topic: Problem solving & evidence based decision making part 1

How do you present evidence in a way (graphs, etc.) that is compelling for your stakeholders? What types of evidence should you consider when making a decision? Google Analytics and SEO will be covered.

Readings:

*   [Problem Solving: It's All About Smart(er) Questions](#)

*   Rapid Problem Solving with Post-it Notes by Davis Straker; pages TBD

Break Points due

Session 13

Topic: Problem solving & evidence based decision making part 2

Readings:

*   Rapid Problem Solving with Post-it Notes by Davis Straker; pages TBD

In Class Activity 4

Website Interactions due (presentations)

Session 14

Topic: Pitch presentation

Pitch Presentation due (presentations)

Session 15

Topic: Present Your IA Deliverables

Project Deliverables due (presentations)