

INSC 435: Usability Testing and Methods

Spring 2021

COURSE INFORMATION

INSC 435 (Usability Testing and Methods), Spring, 2021, 3.0 Credit Hours
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Course Mode: Online, synchronous
Class Meetings: Tuesday/Thursday; 1:10-2:25 ET
ZOOM Course ID/Link: <https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/96524694868>
Password: REQUIRED (See Canvas for password)

Faculty Contact Information

- Rachel Volentine
- She/Her
- rvolenti@utk.edu
- 230 Communications Bldg.
- 865.974.9865
- Office hours: by appointment



SIS Office Information

- 450 Communications Bldg.
- 1345 Circle Park Drive
- Knoxville, TN 37996-0341
- SIS Office: 865.974.2148
- Fax (SIS): 865.974.4667

Welcome Statement

Hello! My hope is the readings, lectures, and hands-on activities will provide a useful and tangible experience that you can use throughout your academic and professional lives.

COURSE INFORMATION

Catalog Description

This is an advance course in the UXD concentration in the BSIS degree. This course specifically covers usability testing process and methods used for usability testing. Upon completion of this course students will be able to run usability tests using multiple simple and advance protocols and develop assessment reports for websites or mobile content. (Card Sorting, Charrettes, Cognitive Walkthroughs, Contextual Task Analysis, Facilitated Brainstorming, Focus Groups, Heuristic Evaluation, One-on-One Interviews, Participatory Design, Surveys)

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Define usability and usability testing
2. List and use multiple tools and software testing for usability testing
3. Use tools and software for usability testing
4. Develop usability testing plans
5. Conduct usability tests using multiple methods
6. Summarize and report data from usability tests

Course Design

This course adapts an active learning approach. This course is delivered synchronously via Zoom. Course content will include lectures, demos, discussion, and hands-on activities. You will complete group and individual assignments, which will be managed via Canvas. You will use Canvas to submit assignments and grades will be returned using this system.

Required Text(s)

Handbook of Usability Testing: How to Plan, Design, and Conduct Effective Tests (2nd Edition) by Jeffrey Rubin and Dana Chisnell ISBN-10: 0470185481; ISBN-13: 978-0470185483 [HB in Course Outline]

Other scholarly and professional readings will be assigned. Each student will be responsible for completing the readings and contributing in class discussions and meetings. Reading materials outside of the required texts will be available on the Canvas course site or LinkedIn Learning.

COMMUNICATION

Email

I am required to communicate with you through your UTK email address. If you prefer to use another address, consult the [OIT Helpdesk](#) to obtain directions for forwarding your UTK email to your preferred address if you do not wish to check both accounts.

Instructor Availability

Please feel free to email me at any time with updates, questions, or concerns. I try to respond as quickly as possible, and I'll typically respond within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. I'll notify you if I will be out of reach for any length of time.

COMPUTING REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCES

Requirements

This class requires you to be comfortable with different technologies, including Online@UT (Canvas and Zoom), the Internet, word processing, and presentation software.

There are campus resources to support your use of technology (see list below), but ultimately it is your responsibility to make sure you have the necessary technical equipment and knowledge needed.

Course Resources

- Technology at SIS: <http://www.sis.utk.edu/sis-technology>
- UT Office of Information Technology (OIT): <https://oit.utk.edu/Pages/default.aspx>.
- LinkedIn Learning: A great source, with tutorials and video on everything from Google Drive to our own out-of-class software Canvas, so check it out at <https://oit.utk.edu/training/online-training/lil/>
- Information about using Zoom: <https://oit.utk.edu/teachingtools/liveonline/best-practicesfor-participants/>
- UT Libraries: <http://lib.utk.edu>

Technical Support

- Online @UT Canvas Resources for Students: <https://oit.utk.edu/teachingtools/online/studentresources/>
- Office of Information Technology (OIT) HelpDesk: <https://help.utk.edu/footprints/contact/>, or (865) 974.9900.
- SIS Technical Support: dgreene@utk.edu

COURSE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICIES

Learner Expectations

- Be prepared for all classes.
- Read the assigned materials.
- Be on time for classes.
- Actively contribute to the learning activities in class.
- Use audio in Zoom for asking questions or engaging in discussions. Zoom chat should be used minimally.
- Be prepared to work in small groups in classroom activities.
- Be respectful of others.
- Be respectful in communicating with the instructor.
- Abide by the UT Honor Code.
- Check your email and Canvas on a regular basis for announcements.

- Submit assignments on time. Late submissions will incur penalty
- Use technology and software such as Zoom and Canvas, among others, and associated features responsibly and ensure safety and security. [See also the Disclaimer section].

Instructor Expectations

- Be prepared for all classes.
- Evaluate all work fairly and equitably.
- Be respectful of all students.
- Create and facilitate a meaningful learning environment.
- Create and facilitate meaningful learning activities.

Attendance and Participation

See section below. You are expected to attend all classes and actively participate.

Class Cancellation

Should it be necessary to cancel a class meeting, I will inform you in advance via email and in an announcement on the Canvas course site.

Inclement Weather

The chancellor (or appointed representative) may officially close or suspend selected activities of the university because of extreme weather conditions. When a decision to close is made, it applies to all classes (whether on-campus or online). The information is distributed to the campus community, shared with local media, and posted on the [University homepage](#).

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND POINTS OF INFORMATION

Disability Services

Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact [Student Disability Services](#) in Dunford Hall at 865-974-6087, or by video relay at 865-622-6566, to coordinate reasonable academic accommodations.

University Civility Statement

Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other's well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus. For more information, see the [UT Principles of Civility and Community](#).

CCI Diversity Statement

The College of Communication and Information recognizes that a college diverse in its people, curricula, scholarship, research, and creative activities expands opportunities for intellectual inquiry and engagement, helps students develop critical thinking skills, and prepares students for social and civic responsibilities. All members of the College benefit from diversity and the quality of learning, research, scholarship and creative activities is enhanced by a climate of inclusion, understanding and appreciation of differences and the full range of human experience. As a result, the College is committed to diversity and equal opportunity and it recognizes that it must represent the diversity inherent in American society. The College is acutely aware that diversity and fairness are foundations that unite the College's faculty, staff, students, and the larger communication and information community.

Instructor Status as a Title IX Mandatory Reporter

University of Tennessee faculty are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. Please be aware that if you choose to confide in a faculty member regarding an issue of sexual misconduct, dating violence, or stalking, we are obligated to inform the University's Title IX Coordinator, who can assist you in connecting with all possible resources both on- and off-campus. If you would like to speak with someone confidentially, the Student Counseling Center (865-974-2196) and the Student Health Center (865-974-3135) are both confidential resources. For additional resources and information, visit titleix.utk.edu.

ASSIGNMENTS, ASSESSMENTS, AND EVALUATIONS

Academic Integrity

Students should be familiar with the [Hilltopics Student Handbook](#), and comply with all academic policies. This includes the University of Tennessee Honor Statement and the Academic Integrity Policy.

The Honor Statement reads: *“An essential feature of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. ‘As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.’”* For more information, see the Honor Statement on the Academic Policies and Procedures page of the current [catalog](#) for student and faculty responsibilities.

The Academic Integrity policy reads: *“Study, preparation and presentation should involve at all times the student's own work, unless it has been clearly specified that work is to be a team effort. Academic honesty requires that the student present his or her own work in all academic projects, including tests, papers, homework, and class presentation. When incorporating the work of other scholars and writers into a project, the student must accurately cite the source of that work.”* For additional information, see the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism in any of its forms is intolerable, and attention to matters of documentation in all written work is expected and required. Inadvertence, alleged lack of understanding, or avowed ignorance of the various types of plagiarism are not acceptable excuses.

Specific examples of plagiarism are:

1. Copying without proper documentation (quotation marks and a citation) written or spoken words, phrases, or sentences from any source.
2. Summarizing without proper documentation (usually a citation) ideas from another source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge).
3. Borrowing facts, statistics, graphs, pictorial representations, or phrases without acknowledging the source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge).
4. Collaborating on a graded assignment without the instructor's approval.
5. Submitting work, either in whole or in part, created by a professional service and used without attribution (e.g., paper, speech, bibliography, or photograph).

Students who may be unsure of the nature of plagiarism should consult the instructor or a guide for writing research reports. Resources are available through the University Libraries, including a [Citing Sources guide](#).

Infractions of academic integrity are penalized according to the severity of the infraction but may include a course grade of "F."

Assignments

This table provides a brief summary of assignment by name, due date, point value and percentage of final grade. A brief description of each assignment follows the table.

Assignment	Topic	Point Value	Percentage of Final Grade	Due Date
Assignment 1	UX benefits essay	10	10%	02/04/2021
Assignment 2	Write a usability test plan	15	15%	02/25/2021
Midterm Exam		15	15%	03/11/2021
Assignment 3	Conduct the usability test	15	15%	04/01/2021
Assignment 4	Write a usability test report	15	15%	04/22/2021
	Class presentation	10	10%	04/27/2021
Participation		15	15%	
Attendance		5	5%	
TOTAL		100	100%	

Assignment 1: UX benefits essay. For this assignment, you will research the benefits of conducting usability studies. You will write a short essay on your findings.

Assignment 2: Prepare a usability test plan. For this assignment, you will create a usability test for the website of your choice, including orientation script, questionnaires, and tasks. (Reference: Chapter 8)

Assignment 3: Conduct the usability test. For this assignment, you will run at least 3 participants through the usability test created for Assignment 3. You will turn in the video recordings or other evidence of your usability test sessions. (Reference: Chapter 9)

Assignment 4: Write a usability test report. For this assignment, you will write up the results from Assignment 3 and provide usability recommendations. (Reference: Chapter 10 and 11)

Class presentation: For this presentation, you will present an overview of your usability study, including your methodology, findings, and recommendations.

Attendance and Participation

It is important to note that class participation is 15% and attendance is 5% of your grade. This is because participation is an important component of facilitated learning, and participation is a key component to understanding and mastering usability testing and methods. Participation points come from discussions in class and in Canvas activities.

You are expected to attend all classes. You will lose attendance points for excessive and unexcused absences and for arriving late to class. You should be in zoom and ready to start at 1:10PM.

If you cannot attend a class, you must:

- Inform me in advance or as soon as possible after class.
- Submit any work due from the missed class period.
- Obtain notes, handouts, etc. from Canvas.

Acceptable reasons for absence from class include:

- Illness (UT policy for COVID can be found here: <https://www.utk.edu/coronavirus/>)
- Serious family emergencies
- Military obligation
- Religious holidays
- Obligations for court imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty and subpoena)
- Other reasons (at the instructor's discretion).

Missing more than one class meeting for reasons other than those listed above will have a negative impact on your course participation grade.

Examination

There will be a mid-term exam. Multiple choice, true/false, and/or case-study questions will test your knowledge of the subject matter of the course.

Preparing Assignments

Student work is assigned a grade based on quality of thought and writing style, thoroughness of research and of references, appropriateness of length, and originality. Only exceptional work will receive a high point value.

- I do not require a specific reference format, but I do expect you put all references in a consistent style (e.g., APA).
- All sources must be cited; quotations must be formatted and attributed correctly. Not doing so constitutes plagiarism.
- Grades for assignment submissions that include incomplete in-text citations or reference lists will be lowered by a point (e.g., an assignment that would have received 17/20, will be lowered to 16/20).
- All assignments must be word-processed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and include your name, date, and course number.
- Paginate all assignments.

Submitting Assignments

Assignments should be submitted to the “assignments” area of Canvas and are due by 11:59 p.m. EST/EDT on the due date listed on the Syllabus. Late assignments are not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made, or if you have an unexpected emergency.

Assigning Grades

Please note that I do not assign letter grades for individual assignments, but will mark your paper with my comments and provide a point score. If you’d like to compute a letter grade based on the score provided, divide.

Grading Scale

Semester grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	93-100	Superior performance (4 quality points)
A-	90-92.99	Intermediate superior performance (3.7 quality points)
B+	88-89.99	Very good performance (3.3 quality points)
B	83-87.99	Good performance (3.0 quality points)
B-	80-82.99	Intermediate good performance (2.7 quality points)
C+	78-79.99	Fair performance (2.3 quality points)
C	73-77.99	Satisfactory performance (2.0 quality points)
C -	70-72.99	Unsatisfactory performance (1.7 quality points)
D+	68-69.99	Unsatisfactory performance (1.3 quality points)
D	63-67.99	Unsatisfactory performance (1.0 quality points)
D -	60-62.99	Unsatisfactory performance (0.7 quality points)

F	0-59.99	Failure performance (0.0 quality points)
S		Satisfactory; only assigned for C or better work when a course is taken on a S/NC grading basis. Carries no point value.
NC		No Credit; indicates failure to complete a course satisfactorily, and is only assigned for C- or worse work when a course is taken on a S/NC grading basis. Carries no point value.
I		Under extraordinary circumstances and at the discretion of the instructor, the grade of I (Incomplete) may be awarded to students who have satisfactorily completed a substantial portion of the course but cannot complete the course for reasons beyond their control. An I carries no quality points. If the I grade is not removed within one calendar year or upon graduation, it shall be changed to an F and count as a failure in the computation of the grade point average.
W		Indicates student has officially withdrawn from the course or the university. Carries no point value.

Incompletes

Based on adopted University of Tennessee-Knoxville policy, a grade of *I* (Incomplete) is reserved for emergencies that prevent the student from completing the course on time. Incompletes are granted only under "the most unusual of circumstances" and solely at the discretion of the instructor. Plan your semester's course of study carefully to insure sufficient time to complete the required work. For students who simply "disappear" without contacting the instructor and without completing the required form, an "F" is submitted.

COURSE EVALUATION

You will be invited by email to evaluate the course at the end of the term via TNVoice. Please participate in this valuable process. I also invite your comments throughout the course and read all comments, suggestions, and recommendations.

DISCLAIMER

- Be aware revisions may be made to this syllabus over the course of the semester. As such, the content contained within may be subject to change.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week #	Date	Topic(s)	Readings
Week 1	Jan 21	Introductions, course overview, course expectations What is usability?	None
Week 2	Jan 26	Why does usability Matter? Advocacy for usability.	HB Chapter 1
	Jan 28	Heuristic evaluation	Outside readings to be determined
Week 3	Feb 2	Heuristic evaluation	Outside readings TBD
	Feb 4	Usability testing definition and concepts Assignment 1 due	HB Chapter 2
Week 4	Feb 9	Simple usability testing protocols and tools	HB Chapter 3
	Feb 11	Simple usability testing continued.	HB Chapter 4
Week 5	Feb 16	Usability test plan	HB Chapter 5
	Feb 18	What's in a usability lab? User-eXperience Lab tour	HB Chapter 6
Week 6	Feb 23	Usability test participants	HB Chapter 7
	Feb 25	Preparing for usability test Talk from UX Expert Assignment 2 due	HB Chapter 8
week 7	Mar 2	Conducting the usability test	HB Chapter 9 HB Chapter 10
	Mar 4	Analyzing usability test data	HB Chapter 11
Week 8	Mar 9	Reporting usability findings	HB Chapter 12
	Mar 11	Midterm	
Wek 9	Mar 16	Participatory Design/Journey Mapping	Outside readings
	Mar 18	Charrettes/Facilitated Brainstorming	
Week 10	Mar 23	Cognitive Walkthrough/Talk from UX Expert	Outside readings
	Mar 25	Contextual Task Analysis	
Week 11	Mar 30	Focus Groups	Outside readings
	Apr 1	Focus Group exercise Assignment 3 due	

Week 12	Apr 6	Card Sorting	Outside readings
	Apr 8	Interviews/Surveys/Talk from a Usability Expert	
Week 13	Apr 13	Eye Tracking	Outside readings
	Apr 15	Other advanced usability methods (e.g., biometrics, EEG, etc.)	
Week 14	Apr 20	Guest Lecture from a Usability Expert	Outside readings
	Apr 22	Review/Synopsis of course Assignment 4 due	
Week 15	Apr 27	Student presentations	
	Apr 30, May 3-6	Exam week—no exam	