IST400/600

INFORMATION DESIGN

Spring 2011

Wednesday, 1pm-5pm
Hinds Hall, Room 011

Instructor
Jaime Snyder

Contact
jasnyd01@syr.edu
Cell /Text: 315-751-3977
Office hours:
Wed, 11:00am-1pm, Hinds 221

Course website
ilms.syr.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Information design has been described as "the art and science of preparing information so that it can be used by human beings with efficiency and effectiveness" (Jacobson, 2000). The term information design is most frequently applied to the design of documents, interfaces, three-dimensional spaces and pathways; however, it can also refer to the development of a host of information systems and environments.

This course will examine the process of designing with information within the context of iSchool research and practice. Conceptual and practical themes (e.g., way-finding, user-centered design, multimodality, human-in-the-loop, nature and flow of information, and mechanics of communication) will be examined across fields of study such as human computer interaction, information architecture, information retrieval, artificial intelligence, information visualization, and interface design.

Course material will include graphic and visual communication, but also go beyond this to include more systems-based notions of information design. The practice of information design will also be discussed within an historical context, drawing on examples ranging from the evolution of alpha-numeric systems to early computing machines. Course content will be presented in lectures and assigned readings, during seminar discussions, and through a series of hands-on field studies. IST400 Information Design and IST600 Information Design will be meeting together.

OBJECTIVES

This course will enable you to:
- Develop a conceptual understanding of information
- Identify designed components of information-driven systems and experiences
- Understand how the flow and meaning of information can be influenced through specific design choices
- Visualize information attributes, systems and experiences
- Relate concepts of information design to research and practice conducted in the iSchool

REQUIRED TEXTS
"Information Design," Robert Jacobson, MIT Press, 2000

"Information Design Workbook: Graphic approaches, solutions, and inspiration + 30 case studies," Kim Baer, Rockport 2010

"Glut: Mastering Information Through the Ages," Alex Wright, Cornell Univ Press, 2008

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS
Additional course material (including readings, video, etc) will be distributed as PDFs posted to the iLMS and/or as links to material on the web.

COURSE STRUCTURE
This course will combine a seminar format (readings and group discussions) with short field studies that will give you an opportunity to identify instances of designed information in your environment. You will be asked to make both formal and informal presentations throughout the semester. In addition, students will be asked to keep a visual journal (in the form of a sketchbook or blog). Course content will be arranged a series of themes, with the final project being driven by your individual interests.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
This is a preliminary schedule, subject to change.

Week	Date	Topic
1	Jan 19	Designing with Information
2	Jan 26	What is Information?
3	Feb 2	**Field study 1:** Information in its native habitat
4	Feb 9	Systems, networks and hierarchies
5	Feb 16	Artificial intelligence: Humans in the loop
6	Feb 23	**Field study 2:** Computing the human experience
7	Mar 2	Visualizing information
8	Mar 9	Designing the user experience
	Mar 16	**Spring break**
9	Mar 23	**Field study 3:** Representing information
10	Mar 30	Wayfinding and urban planning
11	Apr 6	**Field study 4:** Intervention
12	Apr 13	Guest lecture
13	Apr 20	Work session
14	Apr 27	Final presentations
	May 4	No class. Last day to turn in late/revised assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignment	Percentage of total grade
Visual journal	10%
Participation, readings and discussions	20%
Field studies and reports (4)	40%
Final project	30%

Ongoing

JOURNAL: Every week you are expected to add at least one entry the discussion on the iLMS. Although these journals may be highly visual records, each entry must include a **300-600 word description or discussion and at least one image or video**. Use this as an opportunity to keep track of thoughts, ideas, questions and inspirations that will eventually lead to your final project. I will be checking these randomly. You are also responsible for commenting on the posts of your colleagues. This is worth 10% of your final grade.

PARTICIPATION: This refers to **voluntary** contributions to class discussions as well as attendance, arrival to class on time and ready to work and engagement with your peers during group activities and critiques. This is worth 20% of your final grade.

FINAL PROJECT: It would be ill advised for you to wait to work on this until the end of the semester. Throughout the semester, use your journal, class discussions and field reports to play with a topic or question that you find compelling. Keep notes to document your train of thought. When it comes time to choose a final project, you'll be glad that you documented your process. Details about the final project will be distributed later in the semester. The final project, including both presentation and written component, is worth 30% of your final grade.

Weekly

FIELD STUDIES AND REPORTS: Four field studies will be completed during class time. Reports will be due the following week. Details about requirements for both studies and reports will be distributed at the time they are assigned. These will combine to make up 40% of your final grade.

READINGS: You are responsible for completing all reading assignments and coming to class prepared to discuss. I will provide discussion guides to help focus your reading. You will also be expected to make notes about your questions, confusions, insights, confusions and challenges.

Date	Topic	Assignment Due (Readings distributed the previous week)
Jan 19	Designing with Information	• IDW: Chapter 1- *About Information Design*, p. 11-30 • ID: Jacobson, *Introduction*, p. 1-10
Jan 26	What is Information?	• ID: Horn, *Information Design: Emergence of a New Profession,* p. 11-33 • ID: Dervin, *Chaos, Order, and Sense-making*, p. 35-57 • Lester & Koehler, *Fundamentals of Information Studies*, p. 1-37 • Buckland, *Information as Thing* (1991)

Feb 2	**Field study 1:** Information in its native habitat	• GLUT: *The Ice Age Information* Explosion, p. 39-47 • GLUT: *Illuminating the Dark Ages*, p. 78-98 • GLUT: *A Steam Engine of the* Mind, p. 99-121 • Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*, p. 1-33 (1988)
Feb 9	Systems, networks and hierarchies	**Field Report 1 is due.** • GLUT: *Networks and Hierarchies*, p. 5-21 • GLUT: *Family Trees and the Tree of Life*, p. 22-38 • IDW: Chapter 6- *Information Graphics Case Studies*, p. 147-170 • Meadows, *Thinking in Systems*, p. 11-34 (2008) • Berners-Lee, *Information Management: A Proposal* (1989)
Feb 16	Artificial intelligence: Humans in the loop	• ID: Shedroff, *Information Interaction Design*, p. 267-292 • Bush, *As We May Think* (1945) • Buchanan, *What Do We Know About Knowledge?* (2006) • Engelbart, *Augmenting Human Intellect: A Conceptual Framework* (1962)
Feb 23	**Field study 2:** Computing the human experience	• ID: Screven, *Information Design in Informal Settings,* p. 131-192 • ID: Holtzman, *Sculpting in Zeroes and Ones,* p. 317-326 • Licklider, *Man-Computer Symbiosis* (1960)
Mar 2	Visualizing information	**Field Report 2 is due** • IDW: Chapter 3- *Process: Protoypes and Testing*, p.63-88 and • IDW: Chapter 4- *Design Toolkit*, p. 89-121 • ID: Hansen, *Graphic Tools for Thinking, Planning, and Problem Solving*, p. 193-220 • Ware, *Visual Thinking for Design*, (2008)- Chapter 1: Visual Queries and Chapter 2: What We Can Easily See • Tufte, *Visual Explanations*, Chapter 2: Visual and Statistical Thinking: Displays of Evidence for Decision Making (1997)
Mar 9	Designing the user experience	• ID: Whitehouse, *The Uniqueness of Individual Perception*, p. 103-129 • Kay, *User Interface: A Personal View* (1989) • Raskin, *The Humane Interface* (2000)- Chapter 2: Cognetics and the Locus of Attention, p. 9-32 • Norman
Mar 16	**Spring break**	**Spring break**

Mar 23	**Field study 3:** Representing information	**Final project concepts due.** In-class presentations. • Ware, *Information Visualization: Perception for Design* (2004)- Chapter 9: Images, Words, and Gestures • McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (1993)- Chapters 2 and 3
Mar 30	Wayfinding and urban planning	**Field Report 3 due.** • ID: Passini, p. 83-98 • IDW: Chapter 7- *Interactive Case Studies,* p. 171-194 • IDW: Chapter 8- *Environmental Case Studies,* p. 195-218 • Jacobs, *Downtown is For People, Fortune Magazine* (April 1958) (link) • Jane Jacobs, Obituary, Washington Post, April 2006 (link)
Apr 6	**Field study 4:** Intervention	• IDW: Chapter 9- *Experimental Case Studies*, p. 219-237 • Whitelaw, *Art Against Information: Case Studies in Data Practice* (link)
Apr 13	Guest lecture	**Field Report 4 due.** No readings.
Apr 20	Work session	No readings.
Apr 27	Final presentations	**Final projects due**. Presentation and written document
May 4	No class.	Last day to turn is any late or revised assignments.

CLASS POLICIES
Attendance and Participation
Attendance is required and excused only for medical or special circumstances, with appropriate notes from doctors, etc. Each absence beyond **three** (including both excused and unexcused) during the semester will result in an automatic drop in your final grade of one whole letter (i.e., from a final grade of B to a C).

If you need to miss a class, email the instructor ****before*** the missed class. You are responsible for obtaining class notes, materials and assignments from a classmate.

Lateness is defined as coming in after roll call. After 4 "lates," each subsequent "late" will result in your final grade being dropped one letter.

Failure to participate will negatively impact your grade. Participation includes being present in class, voluntarily contributing to discussions, completing all assignments on time and actively engaging with team members during group assignments.

Homework Policy
Assignments are due by the start of class on the due date. Late assignments will be penalized. Because of the advantage of viewing and critiquing examples of work created for this class, some students' work will be shown to future classes.

Future Use of Student Work
This course may use course participation and documents created by students for educational purposes. In compliance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, works in all media produced by students as part of their course participation at Syracuse University may be used for educational purposes, provided that the course syllabus makes clear that such use may occur. It is understood that registration for and continued enrollment in a course where such use of student works is announced constitutes permission by the student. After such a course has been completed, any further use of student works will meet one of the following conditions: (1) the work will be rendered anonymous through the removal of all personal identification of the work's creator/originator(s); or (2) the creator/originator(s)' written permission will be secured. As generally accepted practice, honors theses, graduate theses, graduate research projects, dissertations, or other exit projects submitted in partial fulfillment of degree requirements are placed in the library, University Archives, or academic departments for public reference.

Academic Integrity
The academic community of Syracuse University and of the School of Information Studies requires the highest standards of professional ethics and personal integrity from all members of the community. Violations of these standards are violations of a mutual obligation characterized by trust, honesty, and personal honor. As a community, we commit ourselves to standards of academic conduct, impose sanctions against those who violate these standards, and keep appropriate records of violations. The academic integrity statement can be found at: http://supolicies.syr.edu/ethics/acad_integrity.htm

Students with Disabilities
If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.