

Information Architecture MLIS 7999

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I will reply to email enquiries within 48 hours of receipt.

Course Description:

Prerequisite or corequisite: MLIS 7000 or consent of the instructor. Theory and techniques of designing Web sites for effective information delivery. Study of organization, labeling, navigation, and indexing systems is included.

About Information Architecture:

Information architecture (IA) is the area of information science that analyzes the need for an information service, and then determines a system that meets those needs in terms of appropriate form, function, metaphor, navigation and interface, interaction, and visual design. As defined by Richard Saul Wurman, a philosopher of information and communication who coined the phrase, IA is the practice of making information understandable and delivering it in a manner that conveys an intended meaning.

IA determines the organization, labeling, navigation, and indexing systems that are required to support both the browsing and searching of audiences of users in today's online information environment. It plays a crucial role in determining whether users can easily find the information they need.

Course Outcomes:

After completing this online course, students will be able to correctly assess the usability of an online information service, and identify appropriate changes to the organization, labeling, navigation and indexing that will enhance the form and function of that site for its audiences.

Class Activities:

In order to build familiarity with the processes of IA and how information architects carry out their work, this online course focuses on engaging its students in the practice of assessing actual, ongoing online services. Using a checklist of assessment criteria, students will, on a weekly basis, visit a different information service on the Internet and determine the degree to which that site meets each criterion on the checklist. With each week's focus on yet another aspect of information architecture, perceptions of what is "inadequate," "adequate," "good," and "excellent" are refined and reinforced as students progress through the course and its content. As they read and discuss the aspects of information design, usability analysis, and graphic and navigational layout, students in the course test out their understanding on these principles on real online services on a weekly basis.

Textbooks and Required Readings: There are two required texts for the course,

- Brinck, Tom, Darren Gergle, and Scott D. Wood. *Usability for the Web: Designing Web Sites That Work*. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann, 2002. ISBN: 1558606580
- Rosenfeld, Louis, and Peter Morville. *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Mass.: O'Reilly, 2002. ISBN: 0596000359

There are also required, supplemental readings for each of the course's twelve (12) topical units. These readings are made available to the student through the web, as either html documents (web sites) or pdf files. It is expected that each student will have the ability to download and open up both pdf files and Word (doc) files.

Grading:

The weekly assessments of different online services, plus the instructor's weekly feedback on those assessments, gives each student experience with the course's final examination--each student's personal assessment of the workability of an online information service using the already-familiar checklist of criteria. A new site that have not been discussed or analyzed in class is assigned to each student, whose task is to complete this final assessment for a significant portion of his or her course grade.

1. Weekly Assessment Exercises 60 % of course grade
2. Final Information Services Site Assessment 40 % of course grade

The information services/sites assessment grading scale is as follows . . .

6	A	A truly excellent, even superior, piece of work. Its indicates a commanding grasp of the site's or service's architecture,
5	A-/B+	Some characteristics of an excellent assessment; some characteristics of a good assessment.
4	B	It is a good, solid piece of work that fulfills the assessment assignment well. The responses are based on appropriate and adequate analysis. It may provide comments that, taken as a whole, are less obviously seminal or comprehensive than an A assessment.
3	B-/C+	Some characteristics of a good assessment; some characteristics of an adequate assessment .
2	C	The C project is adequate to fulfill the assessment assignment , and its general responses and treatment are clear. Its may be oversimplified or based on a bare minimum of responsiveness. It does not adequately cover the objectives of the assessment.
1	D	The project does not fulfill the objectives of the assessment , and typically it omits important points.

Technological Requirements:

As this is an online course that also focuses its attention on online information services, students must have almost daily access to the Internet. That access will use email and the web (through the student's browser) for class-related communication. As mentioned above, it is expected that each student will be capable of dealing with pdf files and Word documents (doc files).

Course communications will use . . .

1. private emails (back and forth between a student and the instructor)
2. class emails (email to and from a group messaging--group mail, etc.--service OR a authenticated-access group bulletin board service)
3. a distribution list, maintained and used by the instructor to deliver weekly announcements of upcoming events and activities to each student in the class
4. a public course website, used by the instructor to make links available for each unit of the topical units

Several of these communications functions above (at least item 2, if not item 3 as well) may be orchestrated through VSU's course management system, WebCT.

Topical Units

1. Information Architecture: an overview

1. Definitions of IA
2. How People Navigate
3. Developing an Architecture
4. Maintenance and Expansion
5. Organizational Schemes
6. Ways of Presenting Navigation to the User
7. Labeling and Orientation Cues
8. Search Techniques and Search Engine Design
9. Embedding a Site Within the Framework of the Web

2. The Design Process

1. Requirements Analysis, Conceptual Design, Mockups & Prototypes, Production, Launch, Evaluation
2. Project Management
3. Resources: Budget, Staff, Schedule
4. Comparisons of Usability Methods

3. Target Audience and Target Platform

1. Scenarios
2. Individual Differences: Designing for Diversity
3. User Preference Settings
4. International Differences

5. Hardware and Software Differences

4. User Needs Analysis

1. Objectives of Needs Analysis
2. Setting Objectives
3. Surveys
4. Competitive Analysis
5. Interviews/Focus Groups

5. Task Analysis

1. Use Cases
2. Hierarchical Task Analysis
3. Hybrid Task Analysis
4. Performance Improvements
5. Human Error Tolerant Design

6. Page Layout

1. The Goals of Page Layout: Simplicity, Consistency, Focus
2. Page Components and Basic Page Layout
3. Common Page Structures
4. Page Layout Techniques: Templates, Simplification & Reduction, Contrast, Balance, Repetition, Gestalt
5. Page Layout Constraints, Common Pitfalls and Solutions

7. Design

1. Mockups
2. The Mockup Creation Process
3. The Mockup Review Process
4. Prototypes

8. Writing for the Web

1. How People Read
2. What to Write About
3. Writing Style
4. Writing for the Web versus Writing for Print
5. Text Formatting for the Web

9. Elements of Design

1. Goals of Graphic Design for the Web
2. Design Parameters
3. Color
4. Typography as a Design Technique

5. Icon Design
6. Designing Online Forms
7. Navigation
8. Interactivity and Multimedia

10. Usability

1. Usability Problems
2. Web Site Engineering Techniques
3. Engineering Web Site Components
4. Usability of Web Technologies

11. Launch Process

1. Before Launch
2. Quality Assurance Testing
3. Hurdles Before Going Live
4. Taking the Site Up
5. After the Site is Up
6. Post-Launch Testing and Analysis

12. Evaluation

1. Types of Evaluation
2. Usability Inspection
3. Group Walkthroughs
4. User Testing

VSU Policies

Please become aware of and be guided by these VSU policies.

Access Office for Students with Disabilities:

<http://www.valdosta.edu/ssp/index.shtml>

Academic Dishonesty, p. 248 of Graduate Catalog, 2004/05:

http://www.valdosta.edu/catalog/0405/grad/catalog_0405_grad_242-248.pdf

Student Code of Conduct: http://www.valdosta.edu/stulife/handbook/pages_39-48.pdf

Equal Opportunity Statement:

<http://www.valdosta.edu/eopma/eos.shtml>

Sexual Harassment:

<http://www.valdosta.edu/legal/shp.html>