

Syllabus for HCI 445: User Research Methods, Fall 2023

Overview

HCI 445 provides students with skills necessary to conduct, analyze and communicate user research. Topics include: (a) common methods for collecting user data (e.g., observation, interviewing, surveys); (b) analysis techniques to examine user research data; and (c) ways to document and communicate user research findings.

Note that HCI 445 was redesigned in Fall 2022. While we will discuss surveys, we will no longer be designing, conducting and analyzing surveys. We have created a stand-alone Survey course as an elective to better cover the complexity of surveys.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- conduct common user research methods and articulate their advantages and disadvantages,
- select appropriate analysis techniques to examine data that emerge from methods,
- effectively document and communicate user research findings.

Prerequisites

HCI 440

Textbooks

- Required textbook: Goodman, E., Kuniavsky, M., and Moed, A. (2012). *Observing the User Experience: A Practitioner's Guide to User Research* (2nd Edition). San Francisco, CA: Elsevier.
- **Electronic resources:** We are going to use a CASDAS software solution called [Atlas.ti](https://atlas.ti.com/). The student version is available for \$51 for six months or \$99 per year.

Attendance

You are expected to attend OR view all Zoom and in-person classes and participate in class activities as scheduled. If you cannot attend a Zoom or in-person class there will be a weekly 'quiz' available that will allow you to indicate that you viewed the recording. Calling it a 'quiz' is generous, it will simply be an open-ended question about something we discussed or your opinions about our critique. However, many important bits of information are communicated in these meetings, so it is important that you attend or watch.

Class Plan

The following class plan is tentative and subject to change as the course progresses.

- **Class 1:** (9/11) Introductions. Syllabus Review. Navigating the CITI system.

- **Class 2:** (9/18) What are research methods? What this course will cover. Ethical issues.
- **Class 3:** (9/25) Technical Writing. Idea Report Template and Expectations.
- **Class 4:** (10/2) Ethnography. Observations.
- **Class 5:** (10/10) Analysis of observation data and flow diagrams. Task Analysis/Workshop. Recruiting. Observation protocols + consent form + calendar/schedule on how you will meet your milestones. Reports: Methods sections, Findings sections, Discussions and abstracts
- **Class 6:** (10/16) Interviews. More on inductive coding. Workshop: Coding interviews with Atlas.ti (NOTE: Sign up for Atlas.ti before watching videos.)
- **Class 7:** (10/23) Personas/User Profiles. Scenarios.
- **Class 8:** (10/30) Deductive/Systematic Coding. Interview Protocols (and expectations). Writing up interview findings. Interview Codebooks. Other ways to visualize user research findings.
- **Class 9:** (11/6) Introduction to Surveys.
- **Class 10:** (11/13) Focus groups. Diary studies.
- **Class 11:** (11/20) Final Report Presentations

Instructor Information

Email	peterh@cdm.depaul.edu
Home Page	http://reed.cs.depaul.edu/peterh/
Phone	312-362-5736
Office Hours	Via Zoom, phone, or in-office: Mondays and Wednesdays: 3:30-5:00pm, or by arrangement
Address	CDM Center 717

Assessment

Your final grade will be calculated on these items, out of 100 points. (More detail below.)

What	Points
Participation	6
Idea Report	14
Quizzes and individual assignments	25
Group Project	55

The grading scale will be:

Points	Grade
93.3+	A
90	A-
86.6	B+
83.3	B
80	B-
76.6	C+

73.3	C
70	C-
66.6	D+
60	D
< 60	F

Late assignments

Late assignments will NOT BE accepted. Please, please do not push this. The only exceptions are for *extraordinary* events. If you feel that you have experienced an extraordinary event that will prevent you from turning in your assignment, email me *at least* six hours before the due date and we can discuss. When I say extraordinary, I mean it.

Anti-slacker rule:

Much of your grade is based on your group project. Therefore, it is imperative that you significantly contribute to your team project. I have built in several checkpoints to mitigate slacking (see assignments). However, in EXTREME cases, if group members have clear evidence that another member is not contributing in a substantial manner to the project, they can formally **fire** that team member.

In such cases, first, the team should formally communicate their concerns and evidence of lack of engagement with the instructor via email, copying all the members other than the one in question. The instructor will then send ONE written warning to the team member. If the team member in question still does not participate in a satisfactory manner, the group should send me another email with evidence of lack of participation and again explaining the circumstances. The team member will then receive written notification from me that **they have been fired**. A fired member will still be required to submit the same assignments on the syllabus on the same topic as their former group. A fired group member will automatically **lose 40% of the points** for ALL submissions for the project.

Academic Integrity Policy

Work done for this course must adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the Student Handbook or by [visiting the Academic Integrity website](#).

All assignments will be submitted to TurnItIn for automatic plagiarism testing, and "Originality Scores" will be visible. This system is very good at finding things that have been copied, so *just do not copy anything*. If you are unsure of how to cite a source, ask! It is also very good at picking up text that has been written by an AI. We will discuss the limitations of this method of generating text. It does not produce good text, and will not get you a good grade.

Student rights

You have rights as a student. To learn about these rights please read DePaul's policies for students regarding student rights, located here: [Handbook](#)

Incompletes

An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made by finals

week and will need approval by the Associate Dean who is responsible. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request. Furthermore, most students who request an incomplete *do not finish it*, so they end up failing anyway.

Communication

If you have questions, I prefer that you post them on D2L. I have set up forums for questions about each of the assignments, along with forums for exercises and other things. The benefit of posting a question this way is that when I answer, everyone will be able to see it. And you might even get a faster answer from a fellow student. If you have a private question, you can email me, but you should put "HCI 445" in the subject line so I will notice it. I should respond within 24 hours. If I don't, that means it got lost in the sea of junk email I get, so please try again.

Students with disabilities:

If you feel you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

At DePaul, in CDM, and in this class, we take Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion very seriously. In particular for this class, that means that I am committed to maintaining an environment which values diversity, and where *all* members of the learning community will be given the support they need to best achieve the learning objectives of the course. For more information, consult [CDM's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion page](#).

[School policies on instructor evaluation, email, plagiarism and incompletes](#)