TECM 4300: Usability and UX for Technical Communication

University of North Texas

Fall 2023

## Instructor and Course Information

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| Time | Wednesday 5:00PM-7:50PM |
| Place | AUDB 308 |
| Instructor | Dr. Ana Krahmer |
| Office | Willis 326 |
| Email | Ana.Krahmer@unt.edu (I will respond to email that requires a response within 48 business hours) |
| Office hours | Monday 11-1 and by appointment; meetings can take place over Zoom or in person, in my office. |

## Course Description

The purpose of this course is to develop your skills related to usability and user experience assessment as it relates to careers in technical communication.

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be able to

1. Identify methods of usability and user experience assessment
2. Identify the best methods to use in various testing scenarios
3. Develop and conduct a usability assessment protocol, and
4. Analyze data to write useful recommendation reports

## Required Readings

It is imperative that you complete weekly required readings to complete daily in-class assignments successfully. A reading list is available at the bottom of this syllabus, and supplementary readings will be leading in each week’s module.

* Barnum, C. *Usability Testing Essentials, 2nd Edition*. New York: Elsevier, 2020. Available through [UNT Libraries’ catalog](https://www-sciencedirect-com.libproxy.library.unt.edu/book/9780128169421/usability-testing-essentials), as well; requires UNT login.
* Norman, D. *Design of Everyday Things*. New York: Basic Books, 2013.
* Through [UNT Libraries’ catalog](https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=658202&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_Front_Cover), as well; requires UNT login.
* Supplementary readings made available through Canvas and UNT Libraries.

## Required Materials

1. Internet access: for Canvas and many of the software tools we’ll use in the class.
2. External storage device: for maintaining project materials.

# Course Policies

## Attendance

Attendance in this course is not optional. You are expected to attend every class period. I understand that unforeseen circumstances happen. You will be allowed 2 absences during the semester. Each absence beyond the first two will result in a loss of a full letter grade. If you must be absent for usability testing purposes, you must email me at least one hour prior to class. Additionally, testing is not a solo endeavor, so you must test in your teams.

## Tardiness and Early Dismissals

If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will be counted absent for the day. If you leave more than 15 minutes early without my approval, you will be counted absent for the day.

## Technology

* Each week, you must check out or bring a laptop with you to participate in class.
* This course uses Canvas (<http://canvas.unt.edu>), where you will find all course materials, including activities, assignments, reading materials. I open up each upcoming week’s Module on Monday, and the week ends on Sunday.
* You can download the reading list, with links, from Canvas, and I will link supplementary readings in the week’s module. Supplementary readings are not optional; they are intended to enhance your understanding of that week’s usability skill.

## Assignment Submission

All assignments in this class will be submitted via the Canvas learning management system, unless otherwise indicated. Homework will not be accepted late (even if you are absent). It is your responsibility to make up in-class assignments missed due to absence.

## Major Assignments

For major assignments, I have provided 2 late coupons. 1 coupon is good for submitting a major assignment up to 24 hours after the assigned due date. You only receive 2 coupons each semester, and after you have used your 2 coupons, you will not be able to submit major assignments late again.

You may not use program templates (e.g. Word templates) to format any of your documents. These don’t encourage you to learn the programs and result in dull, unpersuasive documents.

## Email

Please read my email policies carefully. Email professionalism is a skill that correlates with the most successful workplace communicators. To help make our interactions respectful, polite, and courteous, follow these guidelines when emailing me:

* I respond to email within 48 hours of receiving it. I only respond to email during business hours (8am-5pm) on Monday–Friday.
* You must have a valid UNT email address, and you must check this account regularly. I often use email to send class updates and advisories.
* I send my responses to the account where your email originated. Do not email me from one account, for example, and ask me to reply to another. You are responsible for managing your email accounts.
* Check the syllabus or assignment schedule before you send your email as I will not respond to requests for information contained in the course materials or texts.
* I do not discuss major assignment grades over email or Canvas Chat. Instead, please schedule an appointment with me. When contacting me, provide three possible dates/times when you are available to meet via Zoom or at my office.
* Your email should address me by name. My name is Dr. Krahmer, so you can address me as Dr. Krahmer.

## Classroom Behavior

This course takes place in a computer lab; however, you should use the computer for in-class activities. If you are checking email, surfing the internet, or working on an assignment while I am lecturing or while you are supposed to be doing a class exercise, you will be asked to leave the classroom and will receive an absence for the day. This rule applies to computers, phones, and tablets equally.

Additionally, students are expected to familiarize themselves with the UNT Student Code of Conduct to know appropriate classroom behavior.

## ADA

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act, I will work with the Office of Disability Accommodation to help reasonably qualified students with disabilities. If you have such an issue, please advise me in writing of your needs no later than the third week of class.

## Sexual Harassment and Misconduct

According to Texas Senate Bill 212, I am a mandatory reporter. This means that if I witness or receive information about sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and/or stalking that involves a current student or employee, I am required by law to report the incident to UNT’s Title IX Coordinator. A Title IX report generally triggers an investigation. If I fail to report the information, the law requires that I be fired from my position of Adjunct Professor at UNT. Further, I will be charged with a Class B or a Class A Misdemeanor, which carries with it fines and/or jail time. What this means for you, my student, is that if you come to me with any concerns or information, I am required to report it. Licensed professional mental health counselors and health care professionals at UNT’s Student Health Center are considered confidential employees, who are required to report incidents, but they do not trigger an investigation.

## Religious Holidays

In accordance with State law, students absent due to the observance of a religious holiday may take examinations or complete assignments scheduled for the day missed within a reasonable time after the absence. Travel time required for religious observances shall also be excused. Please see the UNT Student Handbook for information on which holidays or holy days are covered by this policy. State law also requires that students notify their teachers at the beginning of the semester if they expect to miss class on a religious holyday during the semester but want to make up the work missed. Students will be allowed to make up the work provided they have informed their teachers in writing within the first 15 days of the semester. Once again, all assignments and scheduled work must be turned in before the date of the excused absence. University policy requires that students provide their teachers with an official notification card issued by the university if they want to make up any in-class work they missed while they were involved in a university authorized activity.

## Academic Dishonesty and Integrity

It is your responsibility to become familiar with UNT’s [Policy of Academic Integrity.](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.003%20Student%20Academic%20Integrity.pdf)

This policy includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication or falsification of data or citations, and facilitating academic dishonesty in others. All instances of academic dishonesty in this class will result in a 0 on the assignment and appropriate judicial action, which includes a report of academic misconduct to your college Dean.

You are NOT to work with any other student on a project or assignment unless I explicitly give you permission to do so. You may always get feedback from other students on your work, but you should not “co-create” work unless it is part of a group project.

# Projects

All projects will be explained in more detail later in the semester.

Discussion Participation 10% of final grade

Usability research requires community discussion, and you will become a part of the usability community through active participation in this course. Daily class discussion will require you to complete weekly reading assignments and to prepare and converse about in-class Canvas submissions.

Daily Work 20% of final grade

These represent in-class activities that are designed to help you master the skills of usability, to enhance your understanding of reading assignments, and to prepare for major assignments. It is critical that you complete all assigned readings prior to class, as you will complete assignments related to these readings during class.

Discovery Site Visit Report 15% of final grade

In usability research, the Discovery phase requires the researcher to gain unbiased understanding about a process or product that interests them and then to study how the process or product is used in its natural environment by its intended audience.  You will prepare a brief report about this site visit.

Low-Fidelity Project Proposal 15% of final grade

You will prepare a proposal to employ low-fidelity prototype usability testing to study the usability of a process, site, or product of your choosing.

Group Project 40% of final grade

This entails multiple smaller assignments that you will complete, the sum of which will comprise 40% of your course final grade. You will work with a group to conduct a usability assessment on a site that your group chooses.

1. Usability Project Team Research Proposal: 20% of Group Project grade
2. Complete Usability Test Plan: 30% of Group Project grade
3. Presentation to Client & to Class: 50% of Group Project grade

## Course Schedule and Reading List

This schedule may change, depending on course progress or weather closure. Supplementary readings linked here will also be available in that assigned week’s module. If a reading is listed as being available through UNT Libraries, you will need to be logged into the UNT Libraries’ website or UNT VPN to access this reading.

Unless otherwise stated, all major assignments are due on Sunday before midnight, at the end of the assigned week. These dates will be reflected on Canvas, as well.

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| **Week** | **Topic** | **Reading Assignment** | **In-Class** | **Major Assignments Due** |
| 1 | Introductions/ What is the Usability Method |  | Introductions, Class Discussion |  |
| 2 | Potential for Usability Research | Barnum, Ch. 1-2    McGowan, [Getting the Most out of On-site UX Research](https://usabilitygeek.com/on-site-ux-research/)    Rosala, [Discovery Phase in UX Projects](https://www.nngroup.com/articles/discovery-phase/) | Class Discussion, introduce Discovery Assignment, Discovery Site Brainstorming,  Developing Usability Testing Goals |  |
| 3 | Site Visits: Discovery, Heuristic Evaluation | Norman, Ch. 1, Barnum Ch. 4 | Class Discussion, Discovery Site Visit Preparation & Scheduling, Working with Clients |  |
| 4 | Usability Testing Fidelity: Prototyping | Barnum, Ch. 3  Still, [“The Blank-Page Technique: Reinvigorating Paper-Prototyping for Usability Research”](https://doi-org.libproxy.library.unt.edu/10.1109/TPC.2010.2046100) (Available through UNT Libraries) | Usability Testing Goals;  Low-Fidelity versus High-Fidelity Prototyping, Paper-Prototyping |  |
| 5 | Ethics of Usability, Usability & Accessibility, Data-Gathering Methods | Barnum, Ch. 5  Norman, Ch. 7, pgs. 291-298  [Smith, “Everyone Is Always Aging: Glocalizing Digital Experiences by Considering the Oldest Cohort of Users”](https://www-ingentaconnect-com.libproxy.library.unt.edu/content/stc/tc/2022/00000069/00000004/art00005) (Available through UNT Libraries) | Gathering quantitative & qualitative data | Site Visit Report Due (9/24/2023) |
| 6 | Usability Test Planning, Usability & Access Design | Barnum, Ch. 6 Lammers & Palumbo, [“Barriers to Fanfiction Access: Results from a Usability Inspection of Fanfiction.net”](https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jmle/vol9/iss2/6/) | Introduce the Usability Test Plan Worksheet, Usability Personas |  |
| 7 | Evaluating User Data | Norman, Ch. 5, pgs 162-186,  Slegers & Donoso, [“Impact of Paper-Prototyping on Card-Sorting: A Case Study”](https://doi-org.libproxy.library.unt.edu/10.1016/j.intcom.2012.05.005) | Differences between Usability and User Experience; Data coding and analysis, data representation & reporting |  |
| 8 | Begin Group Project | Norman, Ch. 6, pgs 217-235  Barnum, Ch. 7 | Usability Team Roles, Determine Usability Test Product and Client | Low-Fidelity Project Proposal Due (10/8/2023) |
| 9 | Group Project | Norman, Ch. 3, pgs 74-85  Phelps, [“Opening the Conversation: The Development of a Faculty-Facing Module on Teaching Students with Dyslexia”](https://doi-org.libproxy.library.unt.edu/10.1109/TPC.2021.3089859) (Available through UNT Libraries) | Communicating with Clients; Begin Usability Test Plan;  Eye-tracking Demonstration | Begin Group Project Assignment 1: Usability Project Proposal |
| 10 | Group Project | Revisit Barnum Chs 1-4  Crane, [“Out of Industry, Into Classroom: UX as a Proactive Academic Practice”](https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/books/innovative/chapter1.pdf) | Individual Group Meetings with Dr. Krahmer to discuss Usability Project Proposal | Group Project Assignment 1: Usability Project Team Research Proposal Due (10/25/2023) **IN CLASS FOR MEETING WITH DR. KRAHMER** |
| 11 | Group Project | Barnum, Ch. 8 | Discuss project progress; group work: Prepare Usability Test Plan | Group Project Assignment 2: Complete Usability Test Plan Due (11/5/2023) |
| 12 | Group Project | Barnum, Ch. 9 | Discuss project progress; group work: pilot testing the Test Plan; begin scheduling user tests; celebrate World Usability Day (November 9, 2023) |  |
| 13 | Group Project | Friess, [“Discourse Variations between Usability Tests and Usability Reports”](https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc38891/) | Discuss project progress; group work: user testing, data analysis |  |
| 14 | Group Project | Thanksgiving Week—no class | Use this week to complete user testing and analysis and begin report. |  |
| 15 | Group Project |  | Group Presentations to Client & Class |  |
| 16 | Group Project |  | Group Presentations to Client & Class |  |
| Finals Week |  | No final |  |  |