Course Syllabus
ADES 5410 | Introduction to Interaction Design
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This course meets on Mondays from 6:30 to 9:20 pm in room 104 at UNT’s New College in Frisco.

Course Description
This combination survey/seminar course is designed to help students enrolled in their first semester of study in the CVAD, Department of Design graduate program “MA in Design with a Concentration in Interaction Design,” or the “MA in IxD” achieve the following, learning-based goals:

01 | ensure that they come to broadly understand how and why interaction design approaches and methods have evolved to yield the diversifying scope of interactive experiences available to contemporary user groups, and how these will affect the future of a wide variety of social, technological, public policy, environmental and economic initiatives;

02 | ensure that they learn how and why interaction design is situated at the nexus of the internet, human computer interaction (HCI), visual communication/storytelling, and the operation of knowledge- and service-based initiatives fueled by a wide variety of socio-economic, public policy, environmental and technological needs and aspirations;

03 | ensure that they come to understand that effective interaction design processes are guided by ongoing epistemological and ontological inquiry, and that they are human-centered and goal-oriented;

04 | ensure that they understand that effective interaction design processes must account for ever-changing meso-, macro- and micro-level technologies and technological infrastructures, business models, social constructs, political initiatives, and environmental changes.

Prerequisites (for MA in Des w/ Concentration in IxD students):
admittance into the MA in Design with a concentration in IxD program; (for Com Sci, Tech Comm, Anthropology, Journalism, Marketing and Logistics, ITDS, Psychology and Sociology students): permission of the instructor.

Required Texts


Recommended Texts


Materials
In addition to weekly readings from your course textbooks, other reading material will be posted as PDFs or MS Word documents in the Readings folder on the Canvas- or Dropbox facilitated course website. You should bring a sketchbook (roughly 9” x 12” in size), and a dark pen(s), pencil(s), or other sketching tool(s) you’re comfortable using (e.g., an iPad or other form of digitechnically enhanced rendering tablet).

Course Objectives
Through the completion of course assignments, students will acquire competency in the following areas:
· learning to formulate and operate data gathering processes that allow them to analyze data gleaned from etic and emic field research methods so they can cultivate understandings about the relationships between particular

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groups and the interactive systems they use (etic approaches are operationalized outside a given social group, from the perspective of an observer; emic approaches are operationalized from within a given social group);
· the following foundational approaches and methods necessary to frame and strategically plan interactive experiences that prove to be useful, usable and desirable (and perhaps even delightful…) for specific user groups: the ability to accurately assess human factors, socio-cultural perceptions and levels and types of cognition;
· the analytical and evaluative capacities necessary to assess the relative efficacies (re: usability testing and data processing/management performance) of extant interactive systems and experiences.

Through the completion of course assignments, students will develop competency in the following areas:
· the ability to strategically plan and operationalize failure analysis processes and protocols to assess the design and functionality of (relatively) small-scale interactive systems;
· the skills and understandings necessary to effectively identify interactive situations that are somehow problematic for particular groups;
· the skills and understandings necessary to effectively account for and then analyze how and why a diverse array of contextualizing factors, conditions and behaviors cause or contribute to “what it is” that causes a given interactive situation to be problematic for a specific group;
· the capacity to iteratively develop multiple, inventive and/or innovative approaches to re-thinking and re-making a given interactive situation so that it becomes less problematic for a specific group;
· the aptitudes and capabilities necessary to effectively document their working processes, so that they emerge from this learning experience with a variety of means to showcase and, if necessary, “pitch” what they will have developed to potential collaborators, private investors and public funding agencies.

Course Structure
This course is offered in a design studiolab format, and will meet for one, 170-minute class session per week. Course content and studiolab etiquette during critically dialectic exchanges between fellow-students and students and the instructor are all consistent with the requirements of pursuing a career in professional User Experience and Interaction Design environments.

Under the guidance of the instructor, students will spend approximately the first half of the semester engaging in a succession of week- to two-week-long learning experiences—commonly referred to in the User Experience and Interaction Design disciplines as “sprints”—that build their understandings of how and why particular approaches to designing for interactivity have evolved as they have, and how these have affected the development of specific types of affordances and signifiers. Some of these learning experiences will be informed by students’ critical examinations of scholarly articles, combined with assigned readings from their course textbooks, as well as simple-yet-informative (and carefully chosen) blog posts or other online pieces, and case studies.

The second half of the semester will challenge students to operationalize what they will have learned during their enrollment in its first half to guide the development of proposals—in the forms of prototypes—for new kinds of interactive experiences that facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and/or the delivery and/or transaction of services. The week-to-week structure of this course is designed to allow students to successively construct knowledge that they can then use.

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use to inform their design decision-making as the semester progresses.

Students will work in the studiolab as required, and participate in class discussions and critical dialogues during class hours and as they engage in assigned work outside of our Monday evening class sessions. Students will submit their work on assigned course projects for critical discussion in iterative phases as stipulated by a per-project development schedule provided to them by the instructor.

The CVAD Computer Lab (located in room 375 of the still-under-construction, brand new CVAD building complex on the corner of Welch and Mulberry Streets in Denton), and the computing facilities in room 121 of the New College in Frisco are available (during their respective hours of operation) to students to work on assigned course projects outside of scheduled class time. Students enrolled in this course are also expected to engage in a significant portion of their coursework on their own personal computing rigs.

**Evaluation/Grading**

Each assigned project will be worth a specific number of total course points to individual students or (perhaps) students working in design teams. Each assigned project will be evaluated according to criteria articulated to all students on the day it is launched. How effectively each student/student team is assessed to have addressed specific project criteria will be recorded on an assessment document that each student will receive one to two weeks after the culmination of each project. The per-project course points each student earns as the semester progresses will be added together at the end of the semester to determine that student’s final course grade. A final project and final project presentation must be completed by the final class-meeting date and time for this course. There is no final exam for this course.

**Primary course project** (68 course points):

**Improving technology to enhance/positively augment a personal relationship(s)**

A semester-long, individual-project experience that will yield the presentation of a medium-fidelity prototype by December 10.

The 68 possible course points available toward the completion of this project will be awarded based on an evaluation of the following as the semester schedule evolves:

- the presentation of and dialogue surrounding the low-fidelity prototype you will complete by ~week 11/12 (15 points);
- the iterative/evolutionary steps that will guide the design and development of the mid-fidelity prototype you will complete by week 15/December 10 (15 points);
- assessments of other weekly assignments (4 points each x 8 = 32 points)
- your final presentation (December 10; 6 points)

The remainder of each student’s grade (32 course points) will be calculated as follows:

- individual student “responses” to assigned readings (2 points per class x 10 = 20 points)
- daily class participation/in-class + group work (12 points, tallied over the course of the semester)

Please note: as UNT Canvas’ facilitation of its “Assignments” feature leaves much to be desired re: usability by all its target users, please send me your homework assignments either as e-mail attachments (unless I inform you otherwise), OR deposit them in a designated “f18-ADES_5410” course Dropbox. To do this, send me your documents in whatever format I call for (per assignment, per week, likely in .pdf form or as MS Word documents during the first half of the semester, and as outputs from whatever prototyping softwares and tools you choose to use during the second half of the semester), AND—please use the following language in your subject line: “ADES 5410-YourLastName-assignment title.”

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Attendance Policy
Attendance is mandatory. The instructor will take roll at the beginning of each class session. Every unexcused absence over two will result in a full letter-grade reduction off of the final course grade, beginning with the third unexcused absence. Five absences accrued over the course of the semester—excused or unexcused—will cause a student to automatically flunk this course and receive NO course credit for having taken it.

Each two instances of tardiness after two of these has been recorded will be counted as one absence. A student is tardy if he/she arrives after the first 15 minutes of class have elapsed.

No make-up opportunities for a missed class session will be given to any student enrolled in ADES 5410 unless that student presents the professor with a UNT-Approved Absence Verification form within 72 hours of the ending of the class session that was missed. Students are hereby notified that meeting with the Instructor of Record for this course during an office hours session does NOT make up/cannot be substituted for a class session that was missed.

Absolutely no incomplete grades will be issued without clearly documented proof of circumstances beyond an individual student’s control to complete the course.

Course Risk Factor
This class has been assigned a Level 1 Risk Rating, a course in which students are exposed to some minor hazards (most particularly, repeated computer usage), but are not likely to suffer bodily harm.

American Disabilities Act
The College of Visual Arts and Design is committed to full academic access for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. In keeping with this commitment, and in order to facilitate equality of educational access, faculty members in the College will execute reasonable accommoda-

tions for qualified students with a disability, such as making appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment, as well as to the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies that are operated within the structure of the course, as long as actuating any of these adjustments does not fundamentally alter the content that must be delivered within the structure of the course.

If you have a disability, it is your responsibility to obtain verifying information from the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA; https://disability.unt.edu/), and to inform the instructor of your need for an accommodation. It is preferred that requests for accommodation be given to the instructor no later than 5 pm CDT on the final day of the first week of classes for students registered with the ODA as of the beginning of the current semester. If you register with the ODA after the first week of classes, your accommodation requests will be considered after this deadline.

Grades assigned before an accommodation is provided will not be changed. Information about how to obtain academic accommodations can be found in UNT Policy 18.1.14, at https://disability.unt.edu/, and by visiting the ODA in Sage Hall on the UNT Denton campus, room 167 (visit the UNT website for updated location information). You also may call the ODA at 940.565.4323.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is literary or artistic theft. It is the false assumption of authorship, the wrongful act of taking the product of another person’s mind and presenting it as one’s own. Copying someone else’s writing, design or art work, intact or with inconsequential changes, and adding one’s name to the result constitutes plagiarism.

If the instructor suspects a given student of an incidence of plagiarism, he/she will notify this student of this concern within 48 hours of the suspicion being raised. Plagiarism may result in disciplinary probation, suspension...
from the university, expulsion (permanent), or the revocation of your degree, and it **will**
cause you to *flunk* this course.

**Protocols regarding E-Mail and Voice Mail and Office Hours**

Students may not leave me voicemail as I do not maintain an office phone (this is not by my choice, but rather is the result of a round of UNT-mandated budget cuts from a few years ago...). Please do **NOT** leave voice messages for me on any of the CVAD main phone lines, or in the Department of Design or in the Department of Art Education and Art History phone lines, or in the administrative offices of UNT’s New College at Frisco. I won’t ever get them/hear them.

I will **NOT** read or respond to any e-mail communiqué from ANY student enrolled in this course that requires more than a total of 120 seconds (two minutes) of my time to process. **DO NOT WRITE ME LENGTHY E-MAILS.**

**Building Emergency Procedures**

In case of emergency, an alarm will sound. If this occurs, please follow the building evacuation plans posted on each floor of your building (UNT’s New College at Frisco occupies only one), and proceed to the nearest parking lot. In case of a tornado (campus sirens will sound), or other weather-related threat, please go to the nearest hallway or room on your floor without exterior windows and remain there until an all-clear signal is sounded. Follow the instructions of your instructors and act accordingly.

**Student Rights and Responsibilities**

Each University of North Texas student is entitled to certain rights associated with higher education institutions. See www.unt.edu/csrr for further information.

**Disclaimer**

The instructor retains the right to change the course syllabus and schedule without notice. **For more crucial information about this course— including our weekly schedule—please continue reading on p. 5 (the next page), and on p. 6.**

**Course Ethos**

It is the express intent of the instructor of ADES 5410 to maintain a broadly informed, objectively facilitated teaching and learning environment. All involved with the evolution of this course should endeavor to allow and encourage each other to develop and exercise the critical skill sets necessary to analyze literature/ readings, arguments, and scientific, subjective and designerly assumptions related to the formulation and operation of design research methods and designerly ways of knowing. The more nuanced skill sets that participants in this course must explore and adroitly deploy as they critically yet respectfully assess the thoughts of their classmates and their instructor are crucial to its successful day-to-day operations. This mutuality of support and respectfully exercised criticism will make the classroom environment of ADES 5410 one in which a wide variety of ideas may be developed, explored, and brought to maturity.

**One last, Crucial thing...**

Do **NOT** sexually harass any of your classmates during or preparing for any of the ADES 5410 class sessions that will transpire during the fall 2018 semester for any reason, as doing this will cause the instructor to lose his temper and throw you out of the room (the instructor would very much like to kick students who sexually harass other students in his classrooms down at least four flights of concrete stairs, but as the New College in Frisco facility has but one story, this is impossible, AND—a variety of state and federal laws prevent him from doing this). Sexual harassment is not tolerated in any form within the environs of UNT’s New College, its Denton campus, its CVAD, or its Department of Design; violation of this policy is at least grounds for dismissal from ADES 5410 (and earning a final letter grade of “F” in this course), and at most could result in your expulsion from UNT, and even in criminal prosecution.
A BRIEF, WEEK-TO-WEEK SYNOPSIS OF WHAT WE’LL BE LEARNING AND DOING THIS SEMESTER

Overview

Due

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>08.27.18</td>
<td>What is interaction design? Approaches to identifying and framing design opportunities/proposals (rather than “problems”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>09.03.18</td>
<td>Examining design critiques†</td>
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<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>09.10.18</td>
<td>Ideation fueled by sketching</td>
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<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>09.17.18</td>
<td>Coming to know the core concepts that inform design and design processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>09.24.18</td>
<td>Engaging in divergent and convergent thinking to fuel design synthesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>10.01.18</td>
<td>Operationalizing personas, scenarios-of-use, and storyboarding§</td>
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<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>10.08.18</td>
<td>Exploring design rationales</td>
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<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>10.15.18</td>
<td>An immersion into “paper prototyping”§§ and usability testing</td>
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<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>10.22.18</td>
<td>An introduction to a specific array of prototyping tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.29.18</td>
<td>Making your “initial pitches:” exploring communication and assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.05.18</td>
<td>A deeper immersion into prototyping§§ and usability testing</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.12.18</td>
<td>Critically reflecting on your design decision-making</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.19.18</td>
<td>Initial iterations of each student’s end-of-semester presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.03.18</td>
<td>Final iterations of each student’s end-of-semester presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.10.18</td>
<td>Final documentation due.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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†Due to the Labor Day Holiday, the fall 2018 section of ADES 5410 will not meet on Monday, September 3, 2018.
§You’ll get a “richer, more indulgent taste” of these during your enrollment in ADES 5420 “An Introduction to Human-Centered Design,” but that won’t preclude you from also gaining understandings of and about these concepts in this course as well.
§§Also known as “low-fidelity prototyping”
§§§Also known as “mid-fidelity prototyping”

Please enter this learning experience with an open, “broadly framed” array of mindsets, and plan on thinking in ways that may be new to you.

Brief, per-student “biographies” & design problem
Per-group “bug list” & design approaches
Alternatives presented as rough sketches
Documentation + presentation of group brainstorming
Documentation + presentation of design synthesis
Per-group pres. of scenarios & storyboards
Per-group design defenses
Per-group paper prototype presentations
Per-group digital prototype presentations (V1)
Per-group digital prototype presentations (V2)
Per-group presentations re: the politics of design
Refrainiments (per group) of digital prototypes
Per-group presentations of final prototypes + documentation/write-up(s)

This counts as the final exam in this course.
Your Individual, Full-Semester Project

The primary project of this course is one that you will develop, over the course of the entire semester. This process will evolve from the initial identification and framing of a situation you wish to improve, through its conceptualization and onward through a design research phase to ideation. All of these phases of development will be followed, or will cyclically overlap with, a prototyping phase that will evolve from your creation of a low-fidelity prototype to a mid-fidelity prototype.

Along the way, you will create a number of developmental artifacts that will allow you to effectively engage in the different, iterative stages of the design process (rough sketching and diagramming, personas, low-fi prototypes, etc.). The class activities and assigned coursework described in the course schedule will help each of you evolve your projects.

Each of you is hereby challenged to focus on a problematic social, technological, economic, public policy or environmental situation he/she cares deeply about, and that affects or involves your relationships with people you care about. You may choose something because it connects to your research interests, or some aspect(s) of your personal life. You’ll then be challenged to address whatever you’ve identified by engaging in the (here’s that word again…) iterative steps of systematically and perhaps systemically developing a means to effectively address your problematic situation. One of the end-goals of this endeavor is to equip each of you with enough “material” to continue developing your project further at some point in the future, either within this curriculum or on your own.

Getting more specific…

Each of you regularly participates in a number of important relationships: with your parents, siblings, romantic partners, friends, and relatives. The current means for developing and supporting relationships through interactive technology—Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, etc.—do not explicitly distinguish between relationship types, nor do they provide unique functionality to facilitate different types of relationships. (One exception to this is corporate groupware technology, but for the purposes of this project, the primary challenge is to consider non-work relationships.) One effect of this is that the distinct characteristics of specific types of relationships are not particularly well-supported by current social technologies. Your over-arching challenge during this project is to improve this situation.

Over the course of the semester, you must design and then initially test an interactive system that supports/facilitates one particular type of relationship that is important to you but that is not sufficiently well-supported by current tools or toolkits.

As an additional design constraint, assume that the technology which will be used to support/facilitate this relationship must operate while the people in the relationship are living away from each other (e.g., while one is in a different state or country for school). So, the purpose of the technology you are designing is to help you maintain, and potentially even deepen, the relationship while you—or the other(s) in the relationship(s) with you—are separated for an extended period of time.

An essential aspect of the project will be for you to define what the relationship is and means, and what aspects of it you are most interested in trying to support. You’ll need to examine how that relationship is currently supported over
distance and time, as well as what aspects of this “support” don’t work, or work well, currently. The outcome of your project should improve upon this. Critically analyzing specific characteristics of the relationship allows you to deeply think about what makes the relationship special, and allows you to consider how you might best want to support it.

**Scoping**

A helpful way to think about scoping is to define it in terms of the number of steps or interactions that your system will support (or need to support). For example, think about the process of shopping on Amazon. You first search, then the results page appears, then you click on a result to see the details for that item, then you add the item to cart, then you click to check out, etc. Each of these steps—entering a search term, clicking on a result, adding an item to cart—is a user interaction. Some of these interactions happen on the same page (e.g., adding to your cart and clicking the “Check Out” button both occur on the “Item Details” page), while other interactions move the user to a new page (clicking on an item in the results list opens the page with the detailed information for that item).

For your project, you should each attempt to prototype between 15 and 30 user interactions (i.e., steps-through-the-system) that take place across five to ten panels (e.g., web pages, screens of a mobile application, etc.). Most of these panels should be unique.

**A final note**

This is an interaction design class, which means that we will focus on critically examining the front-end, or “user-facing” aspects of technology: web pages, mobile apps, the control interfaces for home automation systems, what museum visitors might want or need to see, what someone seeking help interacting with a government agency might need or desire, etc. There are many interesting problematic situations that are imbued with a user-experience component, but that are ultimately not front-end problems. For example, the order in which Yelp or Amazon results appear is fundamental to the user experience of these systems and is something these companies spend a lot of time thinking about and working to improve.

With that stated, “determining the results-order” would not be a good project to operate in this course since this is an algorithmic problem rather than a user interaction problem. **SO—choose a project that lets you develop a set of interesting user interactions, not something that is fundamentally about under-the-hood machinery.**

**Homework**

You will be challenged with a homework assignment each week. These will be due at the outset of the class each week. Please post all homework assignments to that week’s homework thread in our online repository. Most of these assignments are worth four points each. While your focus should be on quality rather than quantity, not following the directions will result in a deduction of points. Do not upload attachments to our online repository. Submit your assignment as a link (e.g., to a Google Doc, a file shared through Dropbox, Box, SugarSync, Canvas, etc.), or send them to me as e-mail attachments or WeTransfer documents or document sets.

**Reading response**

Each week you will also have a three-paragraph “reading response” pertinent to the readings that are assigned each week. The reading response should posit your critical reflections about these,
and articulate points from the reading you found particularly interesting or compelling: write about what you found in them that was provocative, that you disagree with, or how you think they relate or might relate to your own project in an interesting way, etc. The purpose of the reading responses is to demonstrate that you thought critically about what you’ve read. Reading responses that show you engaged critically with the material will receive 2 points. Reading responses that summarize the readings without much more thought will receive 1 point. Minimal or no responses will receive 0 points.

**Maintaining a design notebook**

As you begin to think about individual project, you should create a design notebook—a place (physical or digital) where you collect as much information that relates to your project as you can find (e.g., screenshots or pictures of other systems that address a similar problem, printouts of messages in online forums where people discuss the problem you are working on, photos of things you encounter in the street, replies from Facebook to a question you posed to your social network, etc.). As you will discover, the design notebook can be a wonderfully effective source of inspiration and will help you generate both more ideas and better ideas for how to proceed with your project. *Each of you will need to turn one of these in after your final presentation on December 10.*