Course Description

This course emphasizes the exploration of how data-cum-information\(^1\) can be organized and visualized or written or verbalized to enhance a particular audience's ability to a. comparatively and contextually perceive and interpret essential meaning about a particular issue or situation or set of circumstances, and then b. (perhaps) think differently about them, and—finally—c. (perhaps) act/behave differently based on this/these perceptions and interpretations. More specifically, students enrolled in ADES 5450 will learn to design visually and/or linguistically communicative depictions of a variety of types of data-cum-information in ways that help audiences make effective comparisons between and derive contextualized understandings from key concepts and patterns at work within given data sets.

To achieve these goals, ADES 5450 students will be immersed in learning situations as the semester progresses wherein they will learn to utilize user-centric, concept-driven, and method-based approaches to develop the effective formal and functional realization of information delivery systems.\(^2\) Over the course of the semester, students will complete three assigned projects using a variety of design tools and media that span a broad gamut (depending on individual students’ areas of interest and expertise) from static, pencil-and-paper models, to video, audio, animation, three-dimensional/sculptural realizations, interactive experiences facilitated by various prototyping softwares, and the interactive web.\(^3\)

Prerequisites

(Continued on the next page)

Office hours for graduate students, by appointment (facilitated via Zoomchat):
- Tuesdays: 9:00-10:00 am
- Thursdays: 3:00 to 4:00 pm

(There may be occasions when these will be facilitated as face-to-face meetings in my office in room 304 of the CVAD Building Complex, but the vast majority of these will be facilitated as Zoomchats. To secure an office hours’ appointment, please use email to request a 20- to 30-minute block of time within the aforementioned Tuesday and Thursday “windows.” Please do this well in advance of when you’d like to meet, as any available appointments usually book well in advance.)

1. “Data-cum-information” is a colloquialism in the world of information design that refers to what occurs when raw data—qualitative or quantitative—is depicted visually, linguistically (in prose or verbally) in ways that allow an audience to easily discern and understand a story, or stories, from it. This can then enable them to use the data in a purposeful way, which can help them act on instructions effectively, understand complex cause-and-effect relationships, “find their way” through a built or a virtual environment, take medication properly, prepare food, make voting decisions, etc.

2. These include but are not limited to:

- maps
- wayfinding systems
- instructions.

3. (continued on the next page)

Required Texts


Recommended Texts


Materials

In addition to weekly readings from your course textbook, other reading material will be posted as PDFs or MS Word documents in the Readings folder on the Canvas- or Dropbox-facilitated course support website and digital archive. You will occasionally need to utilize 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 digitically enhanced rendering tablet), and/or audio recording equipment as you engage in the early stages of the three to four projects that will constitute your coursework. You may also find that you need to make use of photographs or audio or video sequences you have recorded or shot, as well as graphics, audio and video applications software such as Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, Audition, and/or Photoshop, as well as Figma, Sketch, or Adobe XD prototyping softwares (of these last three, as of this writing in early August of 2023, Figma is most likely to be useful and usable to you). As a UNT student, you have free access to online-facilitated tutorials re: all of these softwares via LinkedIn Learning tutorials.

It would also be a really good idea to lay in a reasonably robust supply of Post-It Notes or 3” x 5”
cards, in four or five different colors—as well as a roll of 36” wide butcher paper (OR—some of you may prefer using Mural or Miro software for what others prefer to use butcher paper and Post-It Notes or 3” x 5” cards to accomplish re: data sorting and organization for—of the array of project management and information organization softwares available to UX and IxD designers as of this writing in mid-August of 2023, Mural has the best array of features for blind and visually impaired people...).

Course Objectives

Through the completion of the readings and the coursework, graduate students enrolled in ADES 5450.501 will develop competency in the following areas:

· The ability to effectively analyze common data domains—text, cartography, networks, multivariate data—to discern essential patterns and relationships that could guide the development of particular data visualizations, and, beyond these, information design constructs; (another way to think about data domains is to refer to them as particular sets of values or attributes that share common meaning or purpose, SO—as information designers, it can be helpful to think about specific examples of data domains being “customer data,” “product data,” “employee data,” “asset data,” and “financial data,” among others)
· The ability to discern and then utilize broadly informed and deeply examined interpretations of the aforementioned patterns and relationships between data domains to guide the development of information design systems that function as BOTH analytical tools AND storytelling systems
· Practical experience using iteratively structured design decision-making processes to create effective information constructs from initial idea generation and rough-sketching/prototyping to final realization as interactive, information communication entities
· Practical experience using visual and or auditory approaches—or some combination of both—to guide the iterative development of narratives that allow specific audiences or groups of users to compare, contrast, and contextualize data domains and data sets that subjectively informs their thinking and their decision-making

Through the completion of course assignments, graduate students enrolled in ADES 5450.501 will develop competency in the following areas:

· Constructing the capacities and competencies necessary to engage in visual and/or aural ideation as means to a) systematically explore relationships and patterns contained within and between data domains, and as b) a means to articulate and explain these to a specific audience
· Cultivating understandings of how to iteratively structure, represent, and communicate information across different media platforms in ways that allow periodic assessment by particular users and types of users (or audiences) in ways that positively affect design development and implementation
· Classifying information gleaned from data according to the following six structural rubrics: Hierarchical, Relational, Temporal, Spatial, Spatio-Temporal, and Textural
· iteratively designing representative data domains and sets that in systems that manifest themselves as statistical charts, graphs, maps, diagrams, auditory compilations, interactive products and experiences, and video-facilitated storytelling;
· iteratively developing and designing information design constructs in ways that combine various statistical expressions and visualizations or auditory renditions with some form of narrative (including those are normative or polemic in nature).

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 faculty are all consistent with the requirements of pursuing a career in professional User Experience and Interaction Design environments.

Students will likely have to work four to six hours per week outside of class to complete their assigned coursework. Outside of class time, students may work in the UNT Denton CVAD Student Computing Lab (SCL) in room 375 on the third floor of the CVAD Building Complex, and must participate in class discussions and critical dialogues during our class time together. Each student enrolled in ADES 5450.501 should own and be able to effectively utilize his, her, or their own personal computer, or “computing rig,” that is loaded with an array of software, memory—both RAM and on-board storage—a font library, and access to the internet necessary to effectively aid and abet his, her, or their efforts to consistently engage in the assigned coursework of ADES 5450.501. Students will submit their work on assigned course projects in iterative phases as stipulated by a per-project development schedule, or by the instructor during each class session, or some combination of both.

Course Components
Each of the three to four aforementioned information design challenges that will evolve as this course progresses will necessarily involve a good deal of in-class critical analysis and discussion. Because of this, these activities will constitute the primary “course component” of ADES 5450. Specifically, this means engaging in critical, broadly informed analysis of human-centered, user-experience-based design decision making. Each student will be required to actively contribute to the critical dialogues that will transpire in our classroom during almost every class session of the semester. This means that each student MUST COME TO EACH CLASS PREPARED TO SPEAK CRITICALLY ABOUT HIS, HER, OR THEIR WORK, AND THE WORK OF HIS, HER, OR THEIR PEERS. Each of the three to four assigned, information design challenges that will be addressed by either individual students or student teams will be assessed for grading once they have been turned in.

Evaluation/Grading
Each assigned and independent project will be worth a specific number of total course points to individual students or 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 or student team is assessed to have addressed specific project criteria will be recorded on an assessment document that each student will receive one to three weeks after the culmination of each project. The per-project course points (see below) 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. There is no final exam for this course, as the final course project will take the place of this.

Articulation of per-project course points:
01 | Hello: An Autobiographical Information Design Experience/Exposition: 15 points (08.24.23–09.21.23)
02 | Chronicling Change Over a Set Span of Time: 25 points (09.21.23–10.19.23)
03 | Critically Assessing Extant Examples of Information Design (Wayfinding, Instructions, Interactive Controls/Control Panels, etc.): 10 points (10.19.23–11.09.23)
04 | “Rhetorically loaded” mapping (team-based): 40 points (11.09.23–12.14.23)

The remainder of each student’s grade (10 course points) will be calculated according to the following criteria:
  - daily class participation + in-class + group work

The University of North Texas
College of Visual Arts and Design
Department of Design

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Please note: as 1) our class size is relatively small, and 2) the fact that Canvas’ facilitation of its features that facilitate the “turn-in” of specific assignments that require large amounts of memory leaves much to be desired re: general usability, please send me the final versions of your four coursework assignments either as e-mail attachments or place them in a to-be-determined online repository (such as Dropbox, NOT Google Drive or MS One Drive...) or you may make use of WeTransfer to send overlarge files to me at my email address. To avail yourself of the “e-mail or WeTransfer” option,” send me your documents in whatever format I call for (per assignment, likely in .pdf form or as MS Word documents or auditory/aural files), AND—please use the following language in your subject line: “ADES 5450-YourLastName-assignment title.”

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 letter grade reduction of the final course grade beginning with the second unexcused absence. Each two instances of tardiness beyond an initial two of these will be counted as one absence. A student is tardy if he/she arrives after the first 15 minutes of class have elapsed, or leaves before 9:00 pm. No make-up opportunities for a missed class session will be given to any student enrolled in this course 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.

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 and the Professor’s bad jokes), but are not likely to suffer bodily harm.

American Disabilities Act
The College of Visual Arts and Design and our Department of 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 accommodations 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.

Building Emergency Procedures
In case of fire emergency, an alarm will sound. If this occurs, please follow the building evacuation plans posted on each floor of your building, or listen to the evacuation instructions provided by your instructor. We will exit the CVAD Building Complex by walking down the staircase in the northwest corner of the building, exiting from its northwest doorway, and
proceeding due west to the parking lot located due west of Curry Hall (about 100 yards west of the CVAD Building Complex). In case of a tornado (campus sirens will sound), or another weather-related threat, please go to the nearest hallway or room on your floor without exterior windows (both men’s and women’s bathrooms on the second floor of the CVAD Building Complex meet this criteria, as does room 219), 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.

Faculty Evaluation
Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13, 14 and 15 (specifically, from November 20 to December 7) of this semester to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from “UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification” (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. All they then have to do is click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey, they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website (http://spot.unt.edu/), or send email to spot@unt.edu.

Concerning Plagiarism
Plagiarism is a serious violation of UNT’s code of academic conduct. The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline, Policy Manual, Graduate Catalog, and Undergraduate Catalog explain specific policies, penalties, and the appeals process. The UNT Policy on Academic Misconduct provides definitions of plagiarism and states that the instructor can assign penalties for violations of the policy.

The Graduate Catalog states:
“The term plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. Plagiarism also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.”

The UNT policy further states that all students:
“...are responsible for making themselves aware of the definitions and implications of academic misconduct. For further information on academic misconduct, penalties and appeal procedures, the student should refer to the “Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.”

Penalties are assigned by instructors and can range from reducing the grade for a test or assignment to revoking an academic degree already granted.

It is the policy of this instructor re: the operation of this course that individual cases of plagiarism—once proved—will result in automatic course failure and a recommendation for removal or expulsion from any and all other courses in the MA in Design with concentration in Interaction Design curriculum at UNT.

Plagiarism described more specifically
Plagiarism is copying: retyping, cutting and pasting, or paraphrasing. All students in this course are warned as follows:
- Do not quote or paraphrase published sources, including assigned readings and Web-based sources, without explicit reference to the original work. Credit the source using guidelines provided in the 16th edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.
· Do not insert parts of class lectures, online modules, or tutorials, including examples, into your own work. These are published by the instructors, who properly cite the sources of any external published sources.
· Do not insert parts of previous students’ work into your own work.
· Do not insert parts of current students’ work into your own work without his or her express permission to do this. If the current student is your project draft exchange partner, that student trusts you to respect his/her intellectual product.

You are expected to study and learn from the materials provided, then to use your own words in your assignments, or clearly credit sources using the guidelines provided in the 16th edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.

With all of that stated: Individual f23 ADES 3513 students are hereby encouraged—rather than discouraged—from using the generative, artificial intelligence softwares ChatGPT, Bard, DALLE-2, Mid Journey and Stable Diffusion to aid and abet their efforts to engage in the ideation/brainstorming/prototyping processes that will constitute necessary aspects of their learning experiences during the evolution of this course. Generative AI may also be used to generate various portions of the text/copy that will be required to appear on/across all four of the assigned projects that comprise the coursework of f23 ADES 5450.501. Students enrolled in this course will likely find—at least at this stage of much of the development of generative AI—that there will be instances when “well-prompted” AI endeavors will yield useful and usable results, AND THAT THERE WILL ALSO BE INSTANCES when even “well-prompted” AI endeavors yield results that, to use polite language, will be less-than-useful, usable, or desirable.

Disclaimer
The instructor retains the right to change the course syllabus and schedule without notice.