ADES 1513 | Section 501 “Contextual Research Approaches & Methods” | Syllabus and Schedule | f 2021
Omari Souza, Instructor | omari.souza@unt.edu

This course meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00 to 5:50 pm in room 284 of the CVAD Building Complex

Office hours available via Zoomchat by pre-arranged e-mail appointment every Xday between Y and Z am/pm. E-mail should be the primary means that students enrolled in this course communicate with their instructor outside of class time.

ADES 1513 students who do not read the footnotes in this document will be severely disadvantaged.

Useful acronyms that students will need to know the meanings of as they read this document:
UXDT = User Experience Design Track;
CVAD = College of Visual Arts and Design;
D-o-D = Department of Design
S.T.E.E.P. = Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political/Public Policy

Course Overview

Required Textbooks
- Just Enough Research by Erika Hall;
- Evil by Design by Chris Nodder
- The Inevitable by Kevin Kelly
- UX for Beginners: A Crash Course in 100 Short Lessons by Joel Marsh

Recommended Textbooks
- Interviewing Users: How to Uncover Compelling Insights by Steve Portigal

Credits and Prerequisites
All students enrolled in this course must have already taken and successfully passed (i.e., earned a final course grade of “C” or better) the following courses: ART 1600 (or an equivalent), ART 1700 (or an equivalent), and ADES 1500\(^1\). (Students enrolled in ADES 1513 this semester should also be enrolled in ADES 1513 this semester as well.) ADES 1513 is a three-credit hour, undergraduate course that is required for all UNT CVAD Communication Design majors seeking a B.F.A. in Communication Design with a concentration in User-Experience Design. This course may NOT be taken by ANYONE who has not met its prerequisites, or who is NOT a UXDT major. There are NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY.

A Brief Articulation of UNT’s Non-Discrimination Policy
As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. UNT’s full Non-Discrimination Policy can be found in the UNT Policies section of this syllabus.

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\(^1\) This is a good “place” to remind all ADES 1513 students to be sure to take ART 2350 “Art History Survey I,” ART 2360 “Art History Survey II,” and ART 2370 “Art History Survey III” AS SOON AS IT IS POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO DO SO, so that when it comes time for you to take AEAH 4842 “A History of Communication Design” during the spring of 2023, you will actually have taken all of the pre-requisites for this Art History course offering that is required for ALL Communication Design majors in CVAD.
Required Supplies and Materials*

- well-equipped personal computers loaded with the Adobe CC Creative Suite;
- access to Figma Mural, Miro, or Adobe XD prototyping softwares (the latter is included with the Adobe CC Creative Suite);
- at least one, preferably two, external hard drive(s) with at least 1TB capacity to facilitate the “hard storage” of the various types of files you will create as you complete your assigned coursework;
- Access to some form of cloud-based, digital storage, such as Dropbox, Google Drive or Microsoft One Drive;
- at least 200 Post-It Notes™ in at least five different low chroma colors
- a 25’ to 50’ roll of inexpensive, white butcher paper that is 36” wide
- a “cheap” box of eight (8) Crayola, washable markers
- one (1) Bienfang brand, 100-sheet “Parchment 100 Tracing Paper” pad (9” x 12”)
- one (1) Bienfang brand, 50-sheet “Graphics 360” pad (9” x 12”)
- at least four (4) Sharpie brand “Fine Point” black markers (use these for sketching and note-taking)
- at least four (4) Sharpie brand “Ultra-Fine Point” black markers (ALSO use these for sketching and note-taking)
- at least four dry erase markers (these are the ONLY types that can be used on the whiteboards in room 284)

Course Description

Succinctly put, the intent of this course is to immerse first-semester, second-year UXDT students in a series of learning experiences that will allow them to both acquire and construct knowledge that will

1. enable them to broadly understand what UX research is and why it is necessary,
2. help them become familiar with some of the most common/essential UX research methods,
3. familiarize them with how to plan user research sessions that yield useful and usable information
4. facilitate their ability(ies) to utilize (roughly) ten user research tools commonly used in UX design
5. enable them to plan and conduct user interviews that yield actionable understandings that, in turn, guide design decision-making processes
6. facilitate their ability(ies) to engage in the “hands on” research method known as card sorting
7. empower and enable them to effectively analyze the research they have gathered in ways that can guide positive design decision-making

Please note that, unlike many of the other courses you will enroll in as you strive to complete your coursework in our User Experience Design Track B.F.A. (Bachelor of Fine Arts) program here, you will not be as engaged in this course in creating actual FINISHED designed artifacts, products, systems, services and experiences. Instead, the primary intent of this course is to ensure that you learn how to engage in research processes that will effectively inform and guide your future design decision-making as you endeavor to develop the aforementioned artifacts, products, systems, services and experiences as you progress through our curriculum.

Course Structure

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* You will utilize many of these required supplies and materials in this and several of the other courses you will be enrolled in as you progress through the UXDT curriculum here.

3 As a User Experience Design Track major in the Communication Design area of UNT CVAD’s Department of Design, you are hereby STRONGLY encouraged to routinely—at LEAST once per week—back up ALL of your course assignments from this course and any other UXDT courses you are taking to BOTH an external hard drive AND to some form of Cloud-based storage. You are entering a major course of study where “the computer ate my homework” will NOT be accepted as an excuse for your inability to turn in assigned work by the deadlines that are stipulated in the weekly schedule.
This course is offered in a design studiolab format, and will meet for two, 170-minute class sessions per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00 pm until 5:50 pm) beginning on August 24th and culminating on December 2nd, thus satisfying the requirements for a 15-week course. Course content and studiolab etiquette (more about this can be found beginning on page 10 of this document) during critical exchanges of dialogue between fellow-students and your 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, each BFA CDES: UXDT student enrolled in ADES 1513 will need to spend approximately four to six hours per week working outside of our scheduled class time engaged in effectively completing assigned coursework.

This course will challenge those enrolled in it to complete seven, two- to three-week modules of study that will empower and enable them to operationalize knowledge and understandings rooted in each of the seven (7) areas listed above in the “Course Description” section of this document. Stated succinctly, these seven modules will be logistically structured as follows:

MODULE 01: What is User Experience Research (and Why Do you Need to Learn It)? | 08.24–09.07

MODULE 02: Introducing and Utilizing Some Common UX Research Methods | 09.07–09.21

MODULE 03: How to Plan User Research Sessions | 09.21–10.05

MODULE 04: Introducing Essential UXD Research Tools | 10.05–10.21

MODULE 05: Planning and Conducting Effective User Interviews | 10.21–11.04

MODULE 06: Introducing Card Sorting (and Why It Can Be Helpful to UX Design Teams) | 11.04–11.18

MODULE 07: Analyzing UX Research to Effectively Guide Design Decision-Making | 11.18–12.09

Three quizzes regarding assigned readings and the contents embedded in the learning modules will occur on the following dates: 09.23, 10.28, 12.2.

Course Objectives
By 11:00 am Thursday, December 9 (again, students enrolled in this course will make the final presentations of their products, systems and/or experiences at this time in lieu of a final exam), ADES 4523 students will be able to:

1. Recall and define the essential tenets of user experience research in ways that will allow them to make effective use of these as means to guide the formulation and operation of user experience research processes, as well as the gathering and analyzing of data;

2. Effectively organize and deploy fundamental user experience research methods to reveal different insights of and about how and why user groups perceive and act within given situations and sets of circumstances as they do;

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4 Students are reminded here that, although the last class day of the fall semester 2021 is Thursday, December 2, the time slot for the final exam of this course will be from 11:00 am until 2:50 pm on Thursday, December 9. It is during this final exam time slot that f21 ADES 1513 students will make their final presentations of material created in response to the practical exercise parameters for Learning Module 07 “Analyzing UX Research to Effectively Guide Design Decision-Making.”

5 Ibid.
3. Categorically classify data gathered and analyzed by formulating and engaging in user research into one or more of the following dimensions: qualitative, quantitative, attitudinal, and behavioral;  
4. Engage in the planning necessary to operate a user research session guided by meaningful, well-contextualized research objectives and informed by the judicious use of user research approaches;  
5. Appraise a given user experience design opportunity in terms of which particular UXD research tools should be deployed to gather and analyze the data necessary to guide effective design decision-making;  
6. Construct the knowledge necessary to formulate questions that can be operationalized during interviews with users/participants of particular types of products, services and experiences that yield the kind of useful and usable information that effectively fuels and guides design decision-making;  
7. Effectively facilitate card sorting exercises as means to help UX designers and their collaborators assess and qualify how and why potential users group particular components, features, things and objects as they do;  
8. Organize and formulate the means to analyze the results of various types of user experience research to guide design decision-making

**Course Requirements**

Each student enrolled in ADES 1513.501 “Contextual Research Approaches & Methods” must complete the readings associated with each learning module, engage in the in- and out-of-class discussion groups during which aspects of the readings and key aspects of each of the seven learning modules that constitute this course will be discussed. Each ADES 1513.501 student must also complete each of the seven (7) “practical exercises” that will occur as the culminating learning experience in each of the seven (7) learning modules that constitute this course. Three quizzes will be given over the course of the semester, and each ADES 1513.501 student must take each of these. The grading of individual students’ achievements in ADES 1513.501 will be calculated according to the following, and when taken together, will be used to assign each student’s final course grade in early December:

- Class participation over the course of the entire semester: 15%  
- Grades earned on the three (3) quizzes: 15%  
- Grades earned on each of the seven (7) practical exercises associated with each learning module: 70% (each of these exercises is worth 10% of the total course grade)

- **Changes to the ADES 1513 Course Syllabus**

The instructor reserves the right to make adjustments/changes to the course syllabus with or without notice as he/she/they sees fit/deems necessary as the semester progresses. The course schedule for ADES 4523.501 is articulated on page 3 of this document.

**Course Specific and UNT Policies**

ADES 1513 Attendance Policy

Good attendance and punctuality are expected for this class and will strongly affect your grades. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each class session. A student will be considered late/tardy if he/she/they arrives after roll has been taken. If a student is late/tardy, it is his/her responsibility during that class session to make sure the instructor knows that he/she/they is present before he/she/they leaves that particular class session. Each student will receive two (2) “free tardies” over the course of the semester. After the first two tardies, every two (2) tardies will equal one (1) unexcused absence. Only two (2) unexcused absences over the course of the semester will be accepted. The third unexcused absence will lower a student’s final course grade by one letter grade. The fourth unexcused absence will lower a student’s final course grade by two letter grades. The fifth unexcused absence will lower a student’s final course grade by three letter grades. A total
of six absences, excused or unexcused, will result in the student receiving a final course grade of “F,” which will result in a flunking of ADES 1513 during the fall semester of 2021. Students who sleep during class will be counted absent.

There are no excused absences for anything other than a verifiable death in the immediate family (obituary, funeral home notice or death certificate must be presented), or a verifiable illness suffered by the student accompanied by printed and signed doctor’s note provided on his/her stationery with a telephone number. Please note: the reason for the doctor’s visit should NOT be revealed in the doctor’s note, as this would violate UNT and state- and federally-mandated privacy laws. The doctor’s note must be presented during the class immediately after the one that was missed. A receipt from the doctor’s office is not acceptable. A dental appointment—unless it was necessitated by an emergency—does not count as an excused absence.

Because this course meets twice per week, a student will be counted absent—and this absence will be unexcused—if he/she/they comes to a given class session more than 30 minutes late. A student who exhibits a pattern of not bringing any or bringing only incomplete work to a series of three or more class sessions may earn additional unexcused absences at the discretion of the professor. If a student comes to a class session without his/her assigned work for that day, that student will be counted absent. If a student is absent from a given class session, that student is responsible for contacting a class member in order to get any information or assignments that were given during the class session that was missed. INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS MAY NOT CONTACT THE INSTRUCTOR TO GAIN INFORMATION ABOUT “WHAT THEY MISSED DURING A GIVEN CLASS SESSION,” NOR CAN “WHAT THEY MISSED” BE MADE UP DURING AN OFFICE HOURS SESSION WITH THE INSTRUCTOR.

The instructor will not use any class time to repeat missed lectures or assignments. Do not—for any reason—call the main office or the Department of Design office of UNT CVAD to leave the instructor a message that you will be missing a given class session of ADES 1513. Under no circumstances should you leave a project with anyone in either of these offices for the instructor to “retrieve later.” Neither of these offices will accept student projects.

Academic Integrity Policy
Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. [Insert specific sanction or academic penalty for specific academic integrity violation.]

ADA Policy
UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodation at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website (https://disability.unt.edu/).

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)
The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic
information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

**Emergency Notification & Procedures**
UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**Retention of Student Records**
Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student’s records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University’s policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

**Access to Information: Eagle Connect**
Students’ access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student’s Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail Eagle Connect (https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect).

**Student Evaluation Administration Dates**
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 [insert administration dates] of the long semesters 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. Simply 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 email spot@unt.edu.

**Survivor Advocacy**
UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940.565.2648.

**Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses**

**Federal Regulation**
To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website (http://www.ecfr.gov/). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(ii)(G).
The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

University of North Texas Compliance

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course. If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

(1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.

(2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

Student Verification

UNT takes measures to protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance education courses by verifying student identity, protecting student privacy, and notifying students of any special meeting times/locations or additional charges associated with student identity verification in distance education courses.

See UNT Policy 07-002 Student Identity Verification, Privacy, and Notification and Distance Education Courses (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002).

Use of Student Work

A student owns the copyright for all work (e.g. software, photographs, reports, presentations, and email postings) he or she creates within a class and the University is not entitled to use any student work without the student's permission unless all of the following criteria are met:

- The work is used only once.
- The work is not used in its entirety.
- Use of the work does not affect any potential profits from the work.
- The student is not identified.
- The work is identified as student work.
If the use of the work does not meet all of the above criteria, then the University office or department using the work must obtain the student’s written permission.

Class Recordings & Student Likenesses
Synchronous (live) sessions in this course will be recorded for students enrolled in this class section to refer to throughout the semester. Class recordings are the intellectual property of the university or instructor and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share the recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

Academic Support & Student Services

Mental Health
UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

Student Health and Wellness Center (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center)
Counseling and Testing Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
UNT Care Team (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)
UNT Psychiatric Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry)
Individual Counseling (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling)

Chosen Names
A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. Below is a list of resources for updating your chosen name at UNT.

- UNT Records
- UNT ID Card
- UNT Email Address
- Legal Name

Please note: UNT euIDs cannot be changed at this time. The collaborating offices are working on a process to make this option accessible to UNT community members.

Pronouns
Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction, both virtually and in-person. Just as we ask and don’t assume someone’s name, we should also ask and not assume someone’s pronouns. You can add your pronouns to your Canvas account so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

**Additional Student Support Services**

*Registrar* (https://registrar.unt.edu/registration)

*Financial Aid* (https://financialaid.unt.edu/)

*Student Legal Services* (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services)

*Career Center* (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center)

*Multicultural Center* (https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center)

*Counseling and Testing Services* (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)

*Pride Alliance* (https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance)

*UNT Food Pantry* (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry)

**Academic Support Services**

*Academic Resource Center* (https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources)

*Academic Success Center* (https://success.unt.edu/asc)

*UNT Libraries* (https://library.unt.edu/)

*Writing Lab* (http://writingcenter.unt.edu/)

**Computational and Technological Resources**

**Computer Skills & Digital Literacy**

Students enrolled in ADES 1513 are expected to be able to be adept at:

- Using Canvas
- Using email with attachments
- Downloading and installing software
- Using spreadsheet programs
- Using presentation and graphics programs

**Technical Assistance**

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a *Student Help Desk* that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

*UIT Help Desk*: UIT Student Help Desk site (http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm)
Email: helpdesk@unt.edu
Phone: 940.565.2324
Telephone Availability:
  Sunday: noon-midnight
  Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight
  Friday: 8am-8pm
  Saturday: 9am-5pm

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130
Walk-In Availability: 8am-9pm
Laptop Checkout: 8am-7pm

For additional support, visit Canvas Technical Help (https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328)

Course-Specific Student and Instructor Policies

Acceptable Student Behavior
Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students’ opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student’s conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University’s expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Please visit UNT’s Code of Student Conduct (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) to learn more.

Rules of Engagement
Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors. Here are some general guidelines:

- While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law will not be tolerated.
- Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in any communication online or face-to-face, even when their opinion differs from your own.
- Ask for and use the correct name and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
- Speak from firsthand experiences. Use “I” statements to share thoughts and feelings. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or other individual’s experiences.
- Use your critical thinking skills to challenge other people’s ideas, instead of attacking individuals.
- Avoid using all caps while communicating digitally. This may be interpreted as “YELLING!”
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm in emails or discussion posts as tone can be difficult to interpret digitally.
- Avoid using “text-talk” unless explicitly permitted by your instructor.
- Proofread and fact-check your sources.
- Keep in mind that online posts can be permanent, so think first before you type.
A Brief Note on the Danger to Com Design, UX Track Majors Who Are Easily Bored, or Who Are Simply Not Particularly Interesting People, Embedded within a Brief Description of My Teaching Philosophy

To quote from Gloria Steinem, “Those [people] who are ‘boring’ have a high tendency to be easily ‘bored,’” those [people] who are ‘easily bored’ have a high tendency to be ‘boring.’” The Com Design, User Experience Design Track is a major that leads to entry into a professional discipline that demands a broadly informed, deeply examined sense of self. In turn, the cultivation of this knowledge requires a willingness to experiment widely, to work unassumptively, and to be as concerned about the questions you attempt to formulate as those you attempt to answer. Those who practice it well enough to sustain careers and fulfill life paths cultivate knowledge and understandings from diverse sources, are well and broadly read, and are good at formulating probative questions that interrogate status quos across extant social, technological, economic, environmental, and political spectrums. They listen as well as they speak, and this enables them to develop the ability to engage in working processes that do not usually yield predictable outcomes.

If one of your primary goals in college and life is to “go with flow,” “not stick out too much,” “wait to see how everyone else is acting before you act,” User Experience Design is not the major for you. (Hopefully you figured this out quite some time ago…) This is also not the major for you if you can’t figure out how to disconnect from social media and other e-based modes of communication for the extended periods necessary to construct the kinds of knowledge you’ll need to succeed in this demanding but richly rewarding major and career.

If you can’t “go dark” for the few hours necessary almost every day to “get thoughtful work planned and done,” you won’t make it in Com Design. You also won’t make it if you haven’t matured enough to treat your collegiate experience as something beyond “13th grade.”

I will teach this course on a daily basis as this semester progresses in a manner that will facilitate you and your peers’ abilities to actively acquire and construct new, user-experience-design-related and embedded knowledge and skills. This means that I will come to class daily prepared to teach you, and also to learn from you, as we both endeavor to engage in the broadly informed, deeply probative processes necessary to not only produce the work this syllabus calls for, but to learn from the decision-making processes that must guide these and almost all other design endeavors. This also means that I expect each of you to be fully engaged—to be “power on”—as emerging UXDT professionals during each of our class sessions together, and as you engage in your coursework outside of our class sessions together. If you choose to be less than fully engaged, bear in mind that I reserve the right to devote the lion’s share of my attention during class time to your peers who are fully engaged. In short, if you blow me or your coursework off, I’ll blow you and your coursework off in return.

Finally, if you’re coming into this experience carrying the attitude of (more or less), “I’m a wet lump of clay, so mold me into something that’s more interesting and useful,” you need to understand RIGHT NOW that I do not and will not teach in this manner. You’ve reached a stage in your learning-cum-life experience where doing exactly what the teacher tells you to do to earn your “A” makes about as much sense as trying to learn how to drive a real car on real north Texas roads by playing a video game that simulates this. Learning how to master the gameplay in the video environment will make you a skillful player of that game, but it does little to prepare you for the exponentially more complex challenges inherent in driving through the Dallas-Fort Worth-Denton metro area.