

Course Description and Schedule

ENGL 6420

Instructor: David Hailey

Telephone:

Office: 435 797 2741

Home: 435 258 5233

E-mail: david.hailey@usu.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 – 3:00 PM; Thursdays 9:00 – 10:00 AM

But I am usually in and if you need to see me, please drop in.

This applies to phone calls as well. If you are having a problem and think I can help, don't hesitate to call me at work or at home.

Course Description

This class is named “Usability Studies” because it was developed back in the dark ages when usability was the only recognized tool for Web evaluation. Back in those days, we had one of the first usability labs in education. Since then we have abandoned it and re-envisioned Web analysis as a much bigger collection of evaluation tools. Now, my lab (<http://imrl.usu.edu>) examines these topics.

The newer testing methodologies I will introduce include the Delphi Method, User Cognition Studies, User Preference Studies, Content Quality (accuracy and rhetoric), plus Code and Metadata Analysis, and, finally, Web analytics (ongoing examination of existing sites). We will look at additional problems as students (who, as a body, know much more than me) bring them up.

Adding these more complex processes makes it possible for you to integrate different analysis models at different times and different parts of the document. For example, you might do a Delphi Study to determine what questions you need to ask as you build the site – determine which tests and when.

Texts –

Web Analytics: an hour a day, Avinash Kaushik, Sybex press, 2007.

Plus your choice:

Steve Krug's Don't Make Me Think. A great book if you are working largely independently or with a small group where you need a book with easily accessible answers.

Jakob Nielsen's Designing Web Usability, A good book that looks much more at visual design issues.

Carol Barnum, Usability Testing and Research A very comprehensive book that looks at all of the different usability ideas.

Assignments and Grading

Master's students will produce one article suitable for publication in a professional magazine such as *Intercom* or suitable for publication on a professional Web journal. Such articles are typically about 2000 words and present ideas professionals in the field can use in the workplace. Voice is typically professional and accessible, not academic. Although it is much too long, my chapter makes a good example.

Doctoral will produce a first draft of a scholarly paper suitable for publication in a journal such as *Technical Communication* or *IEEE Transactions in Technical Communication*, or you may adapt ideas you find in the course to a publication such as *Popular Culture*.

The topic of all of your articles should reflect something you have discovered in this course. You do not have to take the topic in a direction I would expect, nor do you have to agree with the things I propose in the course of the class (course of the course?).

I will open a "articles" forum where you can brainstorm your topics with other students. And I **expect** you to brainstorm your topics. You should know what the students think of your ideas and you should be able to see theirs. In the end, these papers could be more important than anything I say.

Course Schedule

As the course proceeds, we will no doubt discover topics that demand our attention. That said, I cannot predict how the flow of the course will go on a day to day basis. The schedule breaks the semester up into topics. We will brush by some of them and spend weeks on others of them. The following schedule, then, is at best a good guess.

The topics below begin early in the week I recommend, but you may feel free to discuss the ones that are of particular importance to you for as long as you like.

Week one – Planning the course and intro to text quality analysis. Now where did that week go?

Week two – Introduction of syllabus and a genre theory approach to identifying problems and solutions in texts.

1. Content Relevance.

Week three— Continuation of first topic.

2. Readability
3. Rhetorical quality.

Week four— Continuation of first topic.

1. Rhetorical quality

Week five – Reader Preference studies.

1. Pairs testing
2. Eye tracking

Week 6 – Web Analytics

1. End user surveys.
2. Demographics
3. Geolocation

Week 7 – Usability

1. Usability theory (what is usability).

Week 8 – Usability

1. What is not usability (what is not usability).
2. Economics of usability.

Week 9 – Usability.

1. The idea of heuristics.
2. Problems with usability results.
3. Usability successes.

Week 10 – Delphi Studies

1. A small study I developed that improves usability studies.

Week 11 – Back to Usability

1. Very expensive studies
2. Quick and cheap studies.

Week 12 – Usability

1. Preparing and running usability tests.
2. Cognitive usability studies.

Week 13 – Code Analysis

1. Code quality
 - a. Code Style guide.
 - b. Cascading style sheets style guide
 - c. Naming protocols.
 - d. File Management

Week 14 – Code Analysis

1. Metadata.
 - a. Where it is.
 - b. What it does.

Week 15 – Takeaways.

2. What have we discussed and what does it mean?