Syllabus SI 350: UX Field Research in the Public Sector

May 2024

Course Description:
In this course, we explore the application of user experience research methods to understanding the citizen perspective of community issues. Students work with local government staff to conduct user experience research around civic information issues. We learn through practice, facilitated by direct interaction with government staff and citizens. Students will work in teams to collect user data, using multiple UX research methods. They will apply UX research analysis methods to find insights from that data, and communicate their findings and recommendations in a written report and formal presentation to our partners in local government.

Students should plan for individual and collaborative work, both during and outside of class hours. Because this is an intensive experience, you should plan for time outside of class each day to coordinate and complete UX research assignments in the community. Plan for flexibility in your schedule outside of class.

Topic:
Artificial intelligence has rapidly become a powerful and concerning technology that impacts our lives in multiple ways. It can help us create content (lists, images, email messages, homework assignments, etc.), manage and curate data, and manage daily life (scheduling appointments, creating shopping lists, recommending shows). These powerful applications have generated concerns about privacy, trust, equity, and job security as AI models improve rapidly at an increasingly wide range of tasks.

In this class, we will explore the opportunities and challenges of using AI in local government from the perspective of the residents. We will aim to empathize with their perspective on AI by identifying their concerns about the technology, and the possibilities that they see for AI improving their lives. This course is not about evaluating any current implementation of AI in government, but instead discovering the user needs and concerns that point to innovative and responsible implementation of AI in a government setting.

Learning Objectives:

- Literacy in practical challenges that affect user research
- Literacy in UX research methods appropriate for user discovery
- Awareness of current topics in civic technology
- Competence in communicating professionally with an external client
- Competence in working in a fast-paced team context

Instructors:
Scott TenBrink (dstb@umich.edu)   517.914.6605
Angie Zill (azill@umich.edu)   734.474.2018

Schedule:

1-5pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

May 7 - May 23 **presentations on the last day of class are mandatory!**

Office Hours:
Friday 1pm-3pm via Google Meet (appointment via Google Appointment Slots)

Course Location:
North Quad 2245, as well as field trips within Ann Arbor

Learning Tools:

- Canvas, for assignments, resources, grading, and official course announcements, and communication with the teaching team
- Slack, for persistent chat and communication during and between class sessions
- UMGPT, for content generation, class activities, and homework assignments

Resources & Readings:

Resources and readings will be posted to the Canvas site. They will provide instruction on methods and context for our research topic.

Assignments:

Students have a mix of individual and team assignments. Many assignments require considerable work, and will require significant time outside class.

- 20% Attendance and active participation in class meetings
- 40% Daily homework (individual assignments)
- 40% UX recommendation report & presentation (team assignments)

The finalized report will be submitted to the community partner by the end of the class.

Course Format:
This course runs on an intensive schedule, with each day of class equating to one week of class in a regular semester.

Week 1   **UX research collection**
Using methods like diary study, survey, observation, and interviews, we will aim to collect data about the user experience.

Week 2   **UX research analysis**
Using methods like affinity diagramming, personas, journey maps, and basic quantitative analysis, we will aim to convert the collected data into meaningful findings and insights about the user experience.

Week 3   **UX research presentation**
Using narrative, data visualization, and presentation strategies, we will aim to provide a clear and concise explanation of the process, results, and value of our user research to the client.

- Engaged learning- Classroom time will emphasize interaction, practice, workshops, peer critique, and team meetings. We're going to avoid lectures for the most part.
- Fieldwork- You will go into the community we work with, meet with and present to our community partner org, and interact with people in that community. This includes time during and outside of scheduled class time.

Participation:

- Students will participate and be evaluated on three levels:
  - Individual task- complete small assignments that prepare you for class activities and team assignments
  - Team research- submit weekly assignments as a team
  - Class report- generate a final report and presentation to the client, as a class
- Participation will be measured in two ways:
  - **Class meetings**
    Measured via completion of short polls each day in class
  - **Workshops and Break-out sessions**
    Measured via contribution of content to classroom activities and engagement in class discussion
- Make-up assignments will be available for one missed class day (or any part of that day), excluding the mandatory final presentation on 5/23. The assignments will be designed to address the topics and activities in the missed class, and sufficient to ensure

that the student is prepared for activities in the next class meeting.
These make-up assignments are only available for emergencies and absence with prior notice. They require more effort than attending class, and it is always better to attend class than to do make-up assignments.

- It is always in your best interest to notify the instructor as soon as you know you will miss any part of a class meeting.
- Assignment deadlines will not be extended as a result of absence from class.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools

ChatGPT and similar technologies are rapidly becoming part of our professional lives. As such, we expect that you will incorporate these technologies into your work in this class as appropriate, and will treat the work you produce as demonstration of your abilities to engage with these new tools. We expect that you cite the technologies used as part of your submissions so that we're all engaging in a dialogue around the role and efficacy of these tools.

Generative AI (GAI) should not be used as a replacement for your understanding on course topics, your experience executing assigned research activities, or your description of your experience. As such, some assignments are identified as inappropriate for GAI use. There is no situation where use of such tools to replace or fabricate reports on assigned activities is acceptable.

WARNING: the current state-of-the-art of machine capabilities have two salient features: 1) the quality is such that more work may be required in a machine-assisted mode; 2) it is feasible to discern the presence of "machine fingerprints." Our goal as a community of learners is to explore and understand how these tools may be used to augment human performance. However, violation of this policy may subject students to reporting to the UMSI Student Affairs for potential Academic Misconduct, as per the section below.

Academic Integrity and Misconduct

Unless otherwise specified in an assignment, all submitted work must be your own and/or your team's original work. Any excerpts, statements, or phrases from the work of others must be clearly identified as a quotation, and a proper citation provided. Any violation of the School's policy on Academic and Professional Integrity (stated in the UMSI Student Handbooks) will result in serious penalties, which might range from failing an assignment, to failing a course, to being expelled from the program. Violations of academic and professional integrity will be reported to UMSI Student Affairs. Consequences impacting assignment or course grades are determined by the faculty instructor; additional sanctions may be imposed by the assistant dean for academic and student affairs.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Michigan recognizes disability as an integral part of diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment for students with disabilities. Students who are experiencing a disability-related barrier should contact Services for Students

with Disabilities (https://ssd.umich.edu/; 734-763-3000 or ssdoffice@umich.edu). For students who are connected with SSD, accommodation requests can be made in Accommodate. If you have any questions or concerns please contact your SSD Coordinator or visit SSD's Current Student webpage. SSD considers aspects of the course design, course learning objects and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student. Further conversation with SSD, instructors, and the student may be warranted to ensure an accessible course experience. The instructional team will treat any information that you provide in as confidential a manner as possible.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

University Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressures and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. If the source of your stressors is academic, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. Ashley Evearitt, a Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) counselor, is embedded in UMSI. Information about how to schedule an appointment with her can be found here.

For personal concerns, U-M offers a variety of resources, many which are listed on the Resources for Student Well-being webpage. You can also search for additional well-being resources on that website.