

CEP 917 Knowledge Media Design

*Course Syllabus
Fall 2012*

Schedule

Tuesdays, 6:00 ~ 8:50 pm (alternate weeks starting September 4)

452 Erickson Hall and online

Class website: <http://punya.educ.msu.edu/cep917>

Instructor email: cep917instructor@gmail.com

Instructors

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The ideal designer is a composite ... he is not a scientist, he is not a mathematician, he is not a sociologist, or a writer; but he may use the knowledge and techniques of any or all of these disciplines in solving design problems — N. W. Dougherty

Introduction

This course is about design. Design as a way of thinking, working and learning about and with technology. Design is both a noun & a verb—a product as well as a process. Design is involved in the construction of any artifact, be it a web site or a car; a poem or a research project.

Design lies in an area that touches upon a variety of disciplines—science, technology, engineering, psychology, art to name just a few. It is this multi-dimensionality that makes the act and process of design so important and so complex. Nowhere is understanding design more important than in the realm of educational technology—where we try to bring the logic of technology to the world of learners and their minds.

Design is increasingly becoming of interest to educational scholars. However, we know little about what happens when we do design. What kinds of knowledge do designers need? How does this knowledge differ from other kinds of knowledge? Where do new ideas come from? Which ideas survive and which don't, and why? What is learned from

design, if anything? What role does technology play in design? How do users respond to artifacts we create? How can we recognize good designs from bad ones? What role does aesthetics play in the design process and in the user experience? What happens to the designed artifact once it leaves the designer's desktop and enters the wider world? These are just some of the questions that we will be exploring through the semester.

A multi-dimensional issue like design requires us to tackle it in a multifaceted way. So we will be doing many different things this semester. We will read a wide range of research and theory articles. We will discuss these articles (both in class and on the discussion board). We will learn to appreciate design-quality by sharing and discussing examples of good and bad design in the world around us. We will engage in an extended design project as well as a few smaller, more creative ways of understanding design.

Readings

There are no assigned books for this class. Readings will be available electronically, either as Web (html) documents or as pdf documents. We have, over time, amassed a wide range of books and articles on design and thus reserve the right to change the readings as the course progresses and our interests get more focused (or more diffuse, as the case may be).

What are we going to do this semester?

A typical class meeting will involve some reading and discussion about the reading (both in and out of class). The schedule of reading will be posted on the course web site. The class will meet once every other week (exact dates are given in the calendar page). There will be small-group and online work required during the two weeks between whole-class meetings. The participants in this class range from students who are on-campus, to those who are distributed around the country and the world. Our goal is develop a course-structure that respects the strengths of each of these populations.

The online students will join the class using GoToMeeting, with smaller discussions happening via Google Hangouts. (More information on the technology requirements can be found under the appropriate tab on the top navigation menu.)

Tentatively, each face-to-face class meeting will consist of:

- Housekeeping (10 – 15 minutes)
- Open discussion based on the readings and the activity (1 hour)
- Short activity (optional) and examples of good and bad design (30 minutes)
- Updates on group projects and individual projects (15 minutes)
- Working in groups on projects and notes on design reflections (remaining time).

Design can be many things, so the assignments in this class will attempt to cover a lot of groups, through different goals, approaches and media.

Assignments

There are three main assignments that you will complete in this class, details for each are given on the course website (under the Assignments page). Assignment I is in three sequential parts, each running approximately 4 weeks or so. Assignment II & III run through the semester and will be due at the end of the semester. Deadlines for each of these assignments will be discussed in class and are also posted on each Assignment page, and the Calendar on the course website. You will have some time to work on these assignments, and touch base with your group on them, during class meetings. We will be forming groups – and our goal will be to create groups that have an equal number of on-campus and online participants. The specific responsibilities are described in greater detail below. Only one of the course assignments is a group project – that said, we expect the groups to be sites for discussion and exploration of ideas, to provide constructive feedback etc.

These are the main assignments (with links to their pages on this course site):

Assignment I: Creative Explorations in Design & Technology

- *Photo Essay: Understanding the Social Life of Things (Individual: September 4 – October 2)*
- *Radio Story: Unpacking the Creative Process (Group: October 2 – October 30)*
- *Visual Representation: Mapping an Emotional Experience (Individual: October 30 – November 27)*

*Assignment II: Applying Design Thinking to a Problem of Practice
(Individual: September 4 – December 4)*

*Assignment III: Reflections on Learning & Design
(Individual: September 4 – December 4)*

Individual Responsibilities

Since this is a doctoral seminar we expect a lot from each of you (and from ourselves). We expect each and every one of us to read the articles/ chapters/ papers assigned and to think deeply about them. We expect each of you to work well with your assigned groups. Group work can sometimes be difficult, but not when each and every individual is contributing to the overall goal, is open to others ideas, and is willing to both lead and follow as and when needed.

Individual responsibility I: Class participation.

We expect each of us to participate in in-class and online discussions. Since students in this class are both face to face and online, it is important that we participate equally on both platforms. We expect an engagement with ideas, independent research on the issues, an open yet critical perspective on what we discuss.

Individual responsibility II: Assignments will be completed thoughtfully according to the parameters of each. (See above)

Group Responsibilities

On the first class meeting we will break up into 5 groups. These groups will last through the semester. Your input will be considered, though we have the final say in how they are constituted. The groups will have three main responsibilities:

Group Responsibility I: Sharing examples of good/bad design

Each group will be responsible for sharing examples of good/bad design during one assigned whole-class session. Each member of the group is to share at least one example, providing reasons why this is an example of good/bad design. These examples have to be from the world around you, not merely through a google search.

Group Responsibility II: Documenting the week

The group of the week is required to create a document that captures the class session. This document should include a summary of class activities, links to resources, the shared examples of good / bad design etc. This will be shared with us by email to be included on the website.

Group Responsibility III: Radio Story: Unpacking the creative process. See above.

Grading

The final grade for the course will depend on:

- Participation – online and face to face (Individual): 15%
(The emphasis is on quality of participation)
- Group design project: 40%
- Individual, social life of artifacts project: 30%
- Group Work: 15% (Design of classroom activity etc.)