Designing conversational media

OBJECTIVE
To lay a foundation for understanding and informed criticism of visual and informational artifacts as well as the methods of devising effective communication strategies. To learn methods and strategies for structuring a design research project while at the same time managing and completing it through a reflective process.

OVERVIEW
Can media applications support conversations in a meaningful and organic way? If so what is the appropriate form for these media responsive both to the content of conversation and the character and concerns of individuals participating? Can we design “conversational media,” media applications that turn with the organic flow of a conversation?

The course Designing Conversational Media engages the above questions through theoretical readings, criticism and reflection on contemporary digital media artifacts, a series of short experimental design exercises, and a semester-long project in collaboration with an external client to design and prototype a suite of digital artifacts. More specifically from the theoretical side, we will review models of communication understood as information exchange; rhetorical presentation and persuasion; and situated interaction and conversation. We will draw on this review to open up and inquire into concepts such as evidence, conversation, and shared decision making.

On the side of practice, this class will be centered on a semester-long project in collaboration with the Knowledge and Evaluation Research (KER) Unit at the Mayo Clinic exploring how digital artifacts might support shared decision making during patient doctor conversations.

This is an advanced studio course that expects students to be already familiar with design as a strategy as well techniques of digital design. We will however explore and review design methods and strategies such as ideation, iterative prototyping, and criticism as well as some of the basic foundations of visual and interaction design.

Open to students from all disciplines.
Learning Outcomes

- Understand basic theoretical foundations of interaction design.
- Understand information design artifacts as reasoned and persuasive arguments that are audience specific and situated.
- Use the theories and topics presented in this course to identify the problems and analyze the issues of information artifacts in the respective rhetorical and problematic contexts.
- Create digital artifacts with an awareness of history, audience, and context.

CLASS POLICIES

Evaluation

This course consists of discussions of selected readings, studio/critique sessions, and a set of projects.

Grades will be determined based on the following:

- Project 1: 10%
- Project 2: 60%
- Readings: 30%
- Extra 10%: active sketchbook; blog posts; and other individual explorations and contributions to class
- * Also, see note on attendance

Attendance

Due to a significant amount of in-class material and work, prompt attendance and active participation in class discussions and group critiques is required. Two absences are allowed. After that, your grade will drop by one letter grade with every two absences. You will fail the course if you are absent for 6 sessions or more.

Readings

As you can see under grading section, I put a great emphasis on your preparation and participation in class. All of you are required to read the assigned papers/book sections and be ready to discuss them in class. In addition, I will be making you in charge of some of the readings in class in which case you will be required to open and lead the class discussion.

Communication

I will use email as means of communication for this course. It is your responsibility to check email often to obtain information related to the course. T-square is also used heavily for communication in class. Make sure to update the settings on your t-square page so you will receive automatic emails about announcements, readings, and assignments. You are responsible for all announcements made in class, via email or t-square.

Office Hours

Fridays 2pm – 3pm. You can always request a meeting by email.

Information for Students with Disabilities
Please notify the instructor if you have any disabilities with which you need special assistance or consideration. The campus disability assistance program can be contacted through ADAPTS: http://www.adapts.gatech.edu

**Honor Code Statement:**
Students are expected to adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code: honor.gatech.edu

**READINGS**

**Required**

*A selection of readings will be distributed for the theoretical portion of the studio.*

This course is also inspired and informed by the following readings:
Booth, Wayne C. The company we keep: An ethics of fiction. (1988)
Dewey, John. Art as Experience. (1934)

**SOFTWARE & SUPPLIES**

**Software**
We will be doing most of the work using paper and pencil, the Adobe Creative Suite as well as the prototyping tool Axure. Programming skills are a plus but not required. While most of the software are available at Georgia Tech library, students are responsible for accessing the software and not the course. It is also important to note that this is not a class on the software.

**Supplies**
A sketchbook & pencil
8.5”x11” paper
COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I. Conversation and Shared Decision Making: Three Paradigms

Week 1, Jan 10
Course Overview
Creativity and Play
Design Thinking
Data

Week 2, Jan 17
Theory: Conversation as Exchange
Reading: “The Mathematics of Communication,” Weaver
Reading: “Communication Theory,” Fiske
Reading: “Visualizing uncertainty about the future,” D. Spiegelhalter, M. Pearson, I Short

Recommended Viewing: “The Imitation Game,” written by Ian McEwan and directed by Richard Eyre

Design Methods and Principles
Viewing: IDEO redesigning the shopping cart
Viewing: Tim Brown, Tales of Creativity and Play
Find: 100 uses for a paper clip
Reading: Thinking with Type (LETTER + TEXT)

Week 3, Jan 24
Theory: Conversation as Negotiation
Reading: Selections from The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Erving Goffman
Reading: TBD

Studio work | Project 1
Project 1: Redesign
Browse: Universal Methods of Design: 100 Ways to Research Complex Problems, Develop Innovative Ideas, and Design Effective Solutions. by Bruce Hanington & Bella Martin

Design Methods and Principles
Reading: Thinking with Type (GRID)
Explore: http://www.designkit.org/methods

Studio work | Project 1
Project 1: Critique and Discussion

Week 4, Jan 31
Theory: Conversation as Storied Inquiry (Thinking with)
Reading: Selections from “Democracy and Education” by John Dewey
Reading: TBD
Studio work | Final Submission of Project 1
Project 1: Redesign
Final Critique and Reflection

Design Methods and Principles
IDEO Method Cards
+ TBD

Part II. Conversational Media

Week 5, Feb 7

Storied Inquiry
“Values as hypotheses: design, inquiry, and the service of values,” Jafari Naimi, Nathan, Hargraves

Studio work | Project 2, Introduction
Introducing Project 2: Conversational Media
Meeting with Maggie Breslin

Week 6, Feb 14

Shared Decision Making
Read: Keeping the Patient in the Equation — Humanism and Health Care Reform (Pamela Hartzband and Jerome Groopman)
Read: Selections From John Dewey on Evidence. TBD

Explore:
Links to some of our current digital conversation support tools:
http://statindecisionaid.mayoclinic.org
http://diabetesdecisionaid.mayoclinic.org
http://osteoporosisdecisionaid.mayoclinic.org
http://takethewind.dyndns-work.com/Mayo6/

Research:
http://shareddecisions.mayoclinic.org

Studio work | Project 2
Project 2: Conversational Media
Class Viewing: Patient-Doctor Conversations
Tentative: Student Presentations

Week 7, Feb 27

Shared Decision Making
Continue Research + Studio Work
http://shareddecisions.mayoclinic.org
Early Concepts Presentations; Q&A

Week 8, Mar 6

Read: The Case Against “the Evidence”: A Different Perspective on Evidence-based Medicine
Studio work | Project 2
Early Concept Presentation and Crit

Week 9, Mar 13

Studio work | Project 2
Concept Presentation and Discussion with Mayo

Week 10, Mar 20

SPRING BREAK

Week 11, Mar 27

Studio work | Project 2
Prototyping and Crit

Week 12, April 3

Studio work | Project 2
Prototyping and Crit

Part III. Values and Principles

Week 13, Apr 10

Studio work | Project 2
Concept Presentation and Discussion with Mayo

Week 14, Apr 17

Theory: Criticism, Conversation, and Design Ethics
Readings: Selections from “The Company We Keep, an Ethics of Fiction,” by Wayne Booth
Reading: “Re-establishing the Center in Human-Centered Design: From Opportunity to Significance in Human Life and Living,” by Ian Hargraves and Nassim JafariNaimi
Reading: “Human Dignity and Human Rights: Thoughts on the Principles of Human-Centered Design” by Richard Buchanan

Studio work | Project 2
Concept Presentation and Dry Run

Week 15, Apr 24

Studio work | Project 2
Final Stage Refinement of Ideas and Prototyping
Final Presentations