



Source: <https://www.qualitestgroup.com/insights/white-paper/functional-testing-vs-usability-testing/>

## ENGL 5243 Usability and User Experience Research

2025 Spring | Online | Tuesday 6 p.m-7 p.m.

This course teaches students advanced concepts and practices in usability and user experience research. The course prepares writing professionals to develop advanced skills in user-centered documentation creation by reviewing academic and professional publications and conducting various user research studies. Students can apply their findings to the practice of document creation, thereby enhancing the overall user experience.

### Course Objectives

- Understand the concepts and theories of user experience and usability at an advanced level.
- Form empathy for users and stakeholders by applying a user-centered approach in professional communication.
- Comprehend various forms of user research, including interviews, surveys, focus groups, and ethnographic research, and demonstrate the ability to conduct independent user research.
- Apply advanced critical thinking and design thinking skills to the document creation process, formal report writing, and class presentations.
- Understand in-depth concepts of usability testing through research of academic and professional publication, and be able to plan, design, and conduct a usability test.

### Contact Information

Instructor: Meng Yu, PhD.

Email: meng.yu@msutexas.edu

Phone: 940-397-4086

Zoom Id: 862 353 9643 (Zoom meeting every Tuesday.)

I will check the email from Monday to Friday 8 am to 5 pm. Messages sent outside this time span will not be check until the next business day. Please note: There is a chance that I will not see the email on the same day that you send it. Therefore, please anticipate waiting at least 24 hours for a response to emails.

Office: BW201

Office Hours: Monday to Wednesday, 10:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. or by appointment

## Texts

Baxte, Courage, and Caine (2015). [Understanding Your Users: A Practical Guide to User Research Methods](#). Elsevier Science & Technology.

Norman, D. A. (2013). The design of everyday things. MIT Press.

Please also check the readings & resources on D2L for more information.

## Assessment

All assignments receive a numeric grade based on the 100-point scale. Assignments are weighted. Here is the rough weight of each major assignment, and I might adjust weights of assignments as the semester progresses.

- Participation, responses, and homework (20%)
- UX concept presentation (10%)
- UX concept information report/ white paper (15%)
- Document usability analysis (15%)
- Final Project Case Study (35%)
- Final presentation (5%)

Your final grade will be converted to a letter grade as follows:

A 89.5-100 B 79.5-89.4 C 69.5-79.4 D 59.5-69.4 D< 59.4

## Attendance & Participation

Students with two unexcused absences are subject to an administrative withdrawal from the course. School closure policy: **If the university is closed due to weather or a security alert on the date of a scheduled class, the class still will be held in Zoom.**

## Professionalism

Members of this class are expected to treat one another with courtesy, professionalism, and respect. Repeated unprofessional, rude, or inappropriate behavior can result in 50-100 points being deducted from a student's final grade for the course per instance of such behavior.

## Honor Code

All students are expected to adhere to the Midwestern State University Student Honor Creed when completing any work for this course. When using the content or ideas of others, both published and unpublished sources, students must use accepted documentation conventions (e.g., APA or MLA). To read the Student Honor Creed and the university's policy on academic dishonesty, access the *MSU Student Handbook* published to the [Office of Student Conduct website](#)

## Research & Creative Opportunities at MSU

MSU provides resources that supports graduate students engaged in research and creative works. Here are some links you can check:

- [Graduate Student Research Grants](#)
- [Graduate Writing Help](#)
- [Graduate Student Resource Center](#)

## Accommodations

Midwestern State University is committed to providing equal access for qualified students with disabilities to all university courses and programs, and by law, all students with disabilities are guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disabilities.

This guarantee is provided through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA reads: "No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subject to discrimination by any such entity."

To obtain disability support services, students must

- be accepted for admission to Midwestern State University,
- complete a request for services form available through the [Office of Disability Support Services](#), and
- provide current documentation from a qualified professional (such as a licensed physician, psychologist, audiologist, etc.) diagnosing the disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

If the instructor does not have proper notification, she will expect the same performance from each student enrolled in the course.

## Spring 2025 Schedule

This schedule reflects a plan for the course, but deviations from this plan will become necessary as the semester progresses. Students are responsible for taking note of changes announced during class time when they occur.

Day	Activities	Readings
Week 1 1/21-1/26	Intro to the course (syllabus & schedule)	
Week 2 1/27-2/1	<b>Week Two: Foundational Concepts in UX</b> Weekly presentation assignment: find a key term in UX or technical communication field.	Readings: Guisepppe Getto “ <a href="#">User Experience</a> ” Norman Ch1
Week 3 2/2-2/9	<b>Design Thinking and UX Process</b>	Norman Ch 2&3
Week 4 2/10-2/16	<b>Ethics in UX Studies</b>	Complete: Human Subjects Research (HSR)- Social-Behavioral-Educational Basic Course <a href="https://msutexas.edu/irb/">https://msutexas.edu/irb/</a>
Week 5 2/17-2/23	<b>UX research methods Overview</b>	Readings: <a href="#">Understanding Your Users : A Practical Guide to User Research Methods</a> , Ch5
Week 6 2/24-3/2	<b>User Persona</b>	Norman Ch 4&5
Week 7 3/3-3/9	<b>Usability test</b>	Norman Ch 6&7
Week 8 3/10-3/16	Spring Break: No Class	
Week 9 3/17-3/23	<b>Interview</b>	Readings: <a href="#">Understanding Your Users : A Practical Guide to User Research Methods</a> , Ch9
Week 10 3/24-3/30	<b>Survey</b>	Readings: <a href="#">Understanding Your Users : A Practical Guide to User Research Methods</a> , Ch10
Week 11 3/31-4/6	<b>Field study</b>	Readings: <a href="#">Understanding Your Users : A Practical Guide to User Research Methods</a> , Ch13
Week 12 4/7-4/13	<b>Focus group</b>	Readings: <a href="#">Understanding Your Users : A Practical Guide to User Research Methods</a> , Ch12

Week 13 4/14-4/20	<b>Card sorting and diary study</b>	Readings: <a href="#">Understanding Your Users : A Practical Guide to User Research Methods</a> , Ch11
Week 14 4/21-4/27	<b>UX and technology: VR, AI, IoT, and others</b>	How People Read Online: New and Old Findings
Week 15 4/28-5/4	Project Presentation	
Week 16 5/5-5/9	Project Presentation	