

**Spring 2025 – Wednesday 2:00**

**Section:** 21891

**Location:** ASC 231

**Instructor:** Tina Austin

**Office:** Room or meeting area

**Office Hours:**

**Contact Info:** [traustin@usc.edu](mailto:traustin@usc.edu)

## **Course Description**

User interface design isn't just about software – it's about human experience and technology-mediated communication. The purpose of this course is to explore the human experience of technology through the lens of user interface (UI) design and user experience (UX) design. We will examine research, discuss how engaging content is developed, and evaluate the future of interface design for new technologies. Students will cover a broad overview of these and other topics critical to a holistic understanding of user interface design beyond software engineering and information architecture. Topics include usability, research, digital audiences, prototyping, and product marketing. It is expected that you will have opportunities to create some work that may be useful in other projects or as part of your portfolio for prospective employers, so please consider what's best for you individually as you learn in this course.

## **Student Learning Objectives**

- Analyze interfaces from usability, human-centered, and user experience design perspectives
- Demonstrate proficiency in design tools: Adobe InDesign and Miro
- Define intended user/audiences through the use of well-defined personas in detail
- Construct prototype interfaces using industry-leading design tools
- Assess the ethical considerations of interface design through a lens of diversity, equity and inclusion

## **Course Notes**

Lecture slides and notes will be provided on Brightspace following each lecture.

This graduate-level course requires extensive reading, in-depth primary and secondary research, quantitative and qualitative analysis, strategic planning and implementation, and creative development and content creation. Attendance is required for all class sessions, which will consist of lectures, discussions, guest speakers, and hands-on application of concepts and methods. In addition, this course is web-enhanced, with mandatory discussions on Brightspace. Students will also use ChatGPT or other AI apps to complete projects. For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects 2 hours of out-of-class student work; consequently, prepare to invest at least 8 hours per week outside of class into course-related work.

## USC computing support

- [USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program](#)
- [Zoom information for students](#)
- [Brightspace help for students](#)
- [Software available to USC Campus](#)

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- [Designing the User Interface: Strategies for Effective Human-Computer Interaction \(Sixth Edition\)](#) by Ben Shneiderman, Catherine Plaisant, Maxine Cohen, Steven Jacobs, & N. Elmqvist
- [The Design of Everyday Things](#) by Donald Norman
- [Designing UX: Prototyping](#) by Ben Coleman & Dan Goodwin
- [Persuasive Technology](#) by B.J. Fogg
- Tutorials for Adobe InDesign and Miro, as needed (see assignments)

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

To facilitate the learning experience, students will select a sample HCI product or experience and use it for assignments throughout the course. Student grades will be calculated on a scale of 100 points from the assignments and quizzes, each building on the knowledge of the last and culminating in a final design. The courses will, therefore, employ several technology tools.

**Adobe InDesign Mastery** Students are expected to master usage of Adobe InDesign by the conclusion of the course, and to render an improved version of their chosen interface for the Final UXD Plan. Students will be prepared to obtain the “Adobe Certified Professional in Print & Digital Media Publication Using Adobe InDesign certification.

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**Usability Evaluation** An evaluation of the usability of an interface; must discuss the affordances, constraints, signifiers and other aspects of the design (300-400 words).

**Persona Design in Miro** A well-conceived persona of a prospective user for your chosen interface that creatively and realistically addresses the requirements for your users. This will be produced using the design collaboration tool Miro.

**Discussion Posts** 3 required discussion posts (based on case studies selected from recent events, by your instructor)

**Final UXD Plan** A detailed UXD strategy to improve your interface for a key user group, with best practices of usability research and design, including an example layout of your interface made with Adobe InDesign (10-12 slides).

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### Participation

Your attendance and participation in class discussion, assignments and activities is worth 10% of your grade.

### Grading Breakdown

Description of assessments and corresponding points and percentage of grade.

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Adobe InDesign Mastery	10	10%
Usability Analysis	5	5%
Persona Design	10	10%
Discussion Posts	15	15%
Quizzes	30	30%
Final UXD Plan	30	30%

### Course Grading Scale

Letter grades and corresponding point value ranges.

Letter grade and corresponding numerical point range		
95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B- (B minus)	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

### Grading Standards

What each letter grade demonstrates.

Letter Grade	Description
A	Excellent; demonstrates extraordinarily high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded.
B	Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings.

C	Satisfactory/Fair; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.
D	Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding.
F	Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding.

### Rubric

Assignments will be graded on the following criteria without fixed percentages, since unacceptable quality in any one area (writing, research, etc.) can undermine an entire project. Conversely, exceptional quality in one area may contribute to an overall positive evaluation.

- **Critical Thinking:** In communication there are few right answers: so-called "best practices" for one entity might fail for another — or even for the same entity at another time. Consequently, you should not just answer the questions, you should also question the answers, including methods and data. (Academic journal articles are not immune from critical analysis.) Assignments are not just reports: they must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.
- **Creativity:** Your work should feature original ideas, not just “best practices,” and should NEVER consist of copied or AI-generated work (see “Academic Integrity” in this syllabus). Creativity is expected for both content ideas and market strategies. You may certainly be “inspired” by others, including AI, as long as you properly credit the sources, but most of the thinking and execution should be yours, and higher grades are awarded to work that is innovative and imaginative. The goal is to distinguish yourself — after all, “outstanding” literally means “to stand out.”
- **Production Quality:** Your work should feature professional production values in terms of writing, design, and (as applicable) video and audio content. Treat your work as a submission to a client, supervisor, or investor. Eliminate all errors by proofreading meticulously, using Microsoft editing tools, AI apps, and/or Grammarly.com (strongly recommended). For help with fluency or simply polishing your writing, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach (<http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/>). For design tips, read *Presentation Zen* (available via USC library).
- **Research Quantity and Quality:** Support your work with research from multiple authoritative sources, including academic journals, major news publications, and credible experts — no guessing, generalizations, or stereotypes (such as "Gen Z").
  - Start with the USC online library and our librarians, who have prepared Research Guidelines for departments throughout the university (<https://libguides.usc.edu>).
  - Search Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>) before searching regular Google.

- Never cite Wikipedia; rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article.
  - Cite every use of AI tools (please see <https://libguides.usc.edu/generative-AI/citing-generative-ai>).
  - Avoid company blogs (unless they are companies you are researching) and superficial news sites like the 3F's (*Forbes*, *Fortune*, and *Fast Company* are not authoritative).
  - Conduct direct primary research, such as focus groups, surveys, and interviews, particularly of subject-matter experts like professionals and professors.
  - Within the body of papers, include reference notes, either parenthetical, such as (Lee 2017), or in the form of footnotes or endnotes.
  - Bibliography entries must include COMPLETE source information, not just a URL.
- **Timeliness:** As in the professional world, meeting deadlines is critical, since missed deadlines can result in penalties, lost business, or legal actions. Without an exceptional circumstance and the instructor's permission, late assignments will be penalized one grade level (e.g., A to B) per day of lateness.

### **Policies and Procedures**

- Attendance: Participation from each student is critical to the success of this course; therefore, class attendance is mandatory. You must attend all classes, arrive on time, and stay for the entire session. Note that attendance alone won't earn participation points. Whether online, in class, or with your team, you must come prepared, converse, ask and respond to questions, and debate respectfully. Staying silent is unacceptable, since it conveys disengagement. You might be in attendance, but not truly "present."
  - Excused absences: If you need to miss a class for a valid reason, such as religious observances or medical procedures, you must attain written approval from the instructor in advance (except, of course, in emergencies). Student athletes should provide approved Travel Request Letters. Note that work-related absences, such as job interviews, are not excused; please plan them around your academic commitments.
  - Illness: If you are feeling ill, particularly with COVID symptoms, stay home to protect the health of your classmates, your instructors, and yourself. If you show up to class with an illness, you will be asked to leave and will be recorded as absent.
  - Unexcused absences: Although no points are awarded for attendance, an unexcused absence will result in the loss of 5 grade points (half a grade); 3 or more unexcused absences will result in a D or lower for the course. In addition, arriving late or leaving early without instructor permission may result in a 1 participation point deduction.
  - Electronics: You must have a computer for accessing course materials from home; *however, phones, tablets, and computers may NOT be used during class meetings without permission of the instructor* and should be completely hidden away before class begins. Any unauthorized use of electronics will result in the loss of 1

participation point, and you might be asked to leave the session and recorded as absent.

- Artificial Intelligence Apps: Using AI is a valuable skill, particularly for communication students and graduates; consequently, you are encouraged to use tools such as ChatGPT and Claude, but you must adhere to the following guidelines.
  - You must acknowledge using any AI tools, just as you would any other reference source. In each assignment, include a paragraph explaining which AI tools you used and how you used them, including specific prompts. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.
  - AI is useful for helping start an assignment — even overcome writer’s block — but the final submission must reflect your ideas and revisions. Treat AI as a personal assistant: someone who can help you, but who has shortcomings and is prone to mistakes.
  - Don’t trust what AI tools claim as facts. Not only are their databases limited, but AI tools might ALSO draw from fiction and misinformation. In some cases, they might fabricate sources. Assume the answers are incorrect, and doublecheck them. You will be held responsible for any errors.
  - Provide detailed prompts to get the best results. You might have to try multiple variations.
  - Your work might become part of the AI’s database, so do not include any sensitive information.
- Zoom etiquette: Class meetings will take place in person on campus, but occasional meetings might take place on Zoom. Without a valid reason (connectivity issues or privacy concerns), you should turn your camera on and contribute actively to the class. Keep your microphone off except for discussion or questions. Also, *be present*: except for Zoom use, your phone must be turned off and put away and avoid interactions with housemates during class; if such interactions are unavoidable, step away from your camera (or turn it off) to avoid distracting your instructor and classmates.
- Respect: Treat classmates, the instructor, and speakers with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. We are a community, so respect the opinions of others; instead of saying that you “disagree” or even “respectfully disagree,” offer a “different perspective.”
- Appointments: If you have questions or concerns, whether academic, career, or personal, contact the instructor to arrange a meeting (please see email addresses on the first page of this syllabus). In emergencies, see the support systems below.

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct contrasts with the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

### Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation, is prohibited. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an

intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

## **Statement on University Academic and Support Systems**

### **Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

### **Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:**

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate](#)- and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

### **Support Systems:**

#### [\*Annenberg Student Success Fund\*](#)

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

#### [\*Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund\*](#)

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

#### [\*Annenberg Graduate Writing Support\*](#)

In addition to being the place to make one-on-one appointments with the writing coach, this website will host resources, videos, and news about upcoming programs.

#### [\*Annenberg Digital Lounge\*](#)

Free lessons and certifications on a range of digital media.

#### [\*USC American Language Institute\*](#)

English language instruction, assessment, and resources to support the academic and professional success of non-native speakers of English pursuing degrees at USC.



[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-2500

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

A weekly schedule of the topics, readings, and deliverables for the course.

**Important note to students:** Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
<b>Week 1</b>	Introduction	Review syllabus	None
<b>Week 2</b>	Affordances and Empathy	Norman 2	Select your Interface for Assignments
<b>Week 3</b>	Personas	Norman 3, 4 Optional: Podcast: <a href="#">What is wrong with Personas?</a>	Usability Evaluation
<b>Week 4</b>	Understanding Users	Norman 5, 6	Discussion Post 1
<b>Week 5</b>	Research Techniques	Shneiderman et al., 2, 3	Quiz 1
<b>Week 6</b>	Usability Testing	Shneiderman et al., 4, 5, 6	Persona Design in Miro
<b>Week 7</b>	Conducting Interviews	Shneiderman et al., 12, 13, 14	
<b>Week 8</b>	Service Design	<a href="#">What is the value of Service Design?</a>	Quiz 2
<b>Week 9</b>	Interface Content	Shneiderman et al., 15, 16	Discussion Post 2
<b>Week 10</b>	Prototyping	Coleman Goodwin 1, 2	
<b>Week 11</b>	Interface Strategy	Coleman Goodwin 3, 4	Discussion Post 3
<b>Week 12</b>	DEIA & Interface Design	Coleman Goodwin 8	Quiz 3
<b>Week 13</b>	Persuasive Technology	Fogg 2, 3, 4	

	<b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>	<b>Readings and Homework</b>	<b>Deliverable/Due Dates</b>
<b>Week 14</b>	Cultural Design of Interfaces	Video: <a href="#">Eg lash</a>	Final UX Design Plan Adobe InDesign Mastery
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>UXD Plan</b>	<b>NA</b>	NA
<b>TBD</b>	<b>Final UXD Plan</b>		