

USC Iovine and Young Academy

*Arts, Technology and the Business
of Innovation*

IDSN 523: Product Design for User Experience

Units: 4.0

Spring 2025–Thursdays-4-6:50 pm

Location: IYH 213 and Online

Instructors: Estevan Benson

Office / Office Hours: Virtual / By Appointment

Contact Info: ecbenson@usc.edu,

IT Help: 2U Student Support

Hours of Service: Available 24/7, 365 days/year

Contact Info: studentsupport@iovine-young-online.usc.edu, 1-855-487-3504

Course Description

This course provides a comprehensive overview of the user experience design process. Students learn the fundamental methods, concepts and techniques necessary to design useful, functional and delightful mobile and web products. The course focuses on both core theories and concepts as well as hands-on learning experience using the design tool Figma.

Key Learning Objectives

- Through this course students will learn: Principles of what makes quality user experiences – e.g. ones that are useful, usable, enjoyable, and equitable
- Fundamentals of user-centric design and the Design Thinking methodology
- Techniques for giving and receiving critique in a design setting
- State of the art digital tools used in industry for UX design and user testing
- Techniques for early product ideation that are rooted in testing assumptions with target users
- Importance of user research and techniques for effectively identifying, recruiting, and engaging with target users
- Principles of quality visual communication, visual storytelling, and persuasive presentation
- Principles of information architecture design
- Principles of usability testing
- Understand how UX designers fit into product development teams and the basics of team leadership
- Apply evaluation results to improve UX designs

Detailed Objectives and Outcomes

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Design apps and websites hands on using Figma
- Create functioning Design Systems and Components in proper technical format in Figma
- Produce UX documentation including wireframes, designs, prototypes, and user flows
- Understand workflows from Figma to hand-off to coders for apps and websites

- Navigate the UX community of practice online with a working knowledge of the tools and techniques used in industry

Prerequisite(s):

None

Recommended Preparation

Students are encouraged but not required to get some hands on exposure to Figma via Figma.com.

Course Notes

Grading type: Letter. Software used in the class will be browser based.

Students use personal laptops or computers and connect to course sessions via Zoom.

Lecture slides and any supplemental course content will be posted to 2U Digital Campus for use by all students. Any and all announcements for the course will be posted to the Digital Campus.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students must provide their own laptop. The laptop specifications take into consideration that students will be creating, streaming, and downloading audio and video; communicating using video conferencing applications; and creating and storing large multimedia files.

	Apple	Windows PC
Laptop (Minimum standards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.6 GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 or 2.0 GHz quad-core Intel Core i7 • Minimum 13” display • 250 GB SSD or larger • 16 GB memory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intel Core i5 or Intel Core i7 • Minimum 14” display • 250 GB SSD or larger • 16 GB memory
Warranty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturer warranty or extended warranty coverage (AppleCare) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturer warranty or extended warranty coverage
Operating System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mac OS X 10.13 or higher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows 7, 10 operating system or higher
Peripherals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HD webcam, speakers and microphone (Most newer laptops have built-in webcam, speakers and microphone) • Headset • Digital camera (Cameras on newer smartphones are acceptable) • External drive for cloud account for backup and storage 	
Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign) • Adobe Acrobat Reader • Microsoft Office Suite • Sophos Endpoint Security (antivirus) • Browser: Most recent version of Firefox, Chrome, Safari, or Internet Explorer 	
Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cable modem, DSL, T1/T3 or higher 	

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

There are no required textbooks for this class. That said, the following books provide important background, and will be used as reference material:

- Krug, Steve (2014). Don't Make Me Think, Revisited: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability. New Riders. ISBN-10 0321965515
- Chandler, Carolyn (2013). Adventures in Experience Design. New Riders. ISBN-10 0321934040.
- Norman, Don (2013). The Design of Everyday Things: Revised and Expanded Edition. Basic Books. ISBN-10 0465050654.
- Eyal, Nir (2014). Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products. Portfolio. ISBN-10 1591847788.

Additional reference material and online reading will be provided in class.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Individual Assignments (30%)	Points	Due in Week
A1 LinkedIn Learning Figma Tutorials	10	2
A2 Read and Prepare	12	3
A3 Critical Thinking and Problems that Interest Me	12	3
A4 Figma Ninja	10	3
A5 Tommy Trojan Illustration	14	4
A6 Design Your Avatar	10	5
A7 Three Problems and Three Close Contacts	30	5
A8 Accommodation App	44	6
A9 Elevator Pitch v2 + Comparison Chart	30	6
A10 Read and Reflect	10	7
A11 Feedback and Iteration	20	7
A12 Reading - How to Crit	10	7
A13 Student Interest Survey	6	8
A14 User Manual for You	10	8
A20 Read and Reflect	25	11
A23 Read and Reflect	25	13

Group Assignments (20%)	Points	Due in Week
A15 Personas, Scenarios, and Storyboard	30	9
A17 Visual Value Proposition v2	50	9
A18 Wireframes of Key User Stories	50	10
A19 Qualtrics User Research	50	11

Final Group Project (15%)	Points	Due in Week
A21 Final Group Project v1	20	13
A22 Final Group Presentation v1 (rehearsal)	20	13
A24 Final Group Presentation v2 (rehearsal)	20	14
A25 Final Group Project v2	35	15
A26 Final Group Presentation v3	40	15

Note 1: Regarding grading / assessment: each assignment includes a specification and an assessment rubric. Each rubric defines qualities of work that is: Excellent, Okay, and Not Adequate. These rubrics are provided to enable the instructor to grade subjective submissions with objective rigor. Students are encouraged to study the rubrics and ask any questions about meaning in any column prior to submitting assignments.

Note 2: regarding grading of group assignments and the group project: All group members will receive the same grade on these assignments. However, students will also fill out an anonymous peer evaluation survey in Week 14 of the semester. Data from this survey may affect an individual student's grade on group assignments and the group project if a pattern shows that the student is not carrying sufficient weight among peers.

Grading Breakdown

The weight of the graded material during the semester is listed below:

Item	% of Grade
Individual Assignments	35%
Group Assignments	20%
Participation	10%
Mid Term Exam	10%
Final Exam	10%
Final Group Project	15%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

Final course grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter Grade	Numerical Score
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments will be submitted digitally. Each assignment specification will include a due date.

Late Submissions

Assignments will be accepted after the deadline with the following grade penalties. Do not ask for extensions; the below are the extensions.

Submission in the 24 hours after the deadline	10% deduction
Submission between 24 and 48 hours after the deadline	20% deduction
Submission between 48 hours and 3 days after the deadline	50% deduction
Submission more than 3 days after the deadline	100% deduction

Keep copies of all your files and emails until the end of the semester.

Grading Timeline

Instructors will provide feedback and grading on all deliverables in a timely manner, usually within 48-72 hours following an on-time submission.

Correcting a Grading Error or Disputing a Grade

If you don't inform the instructor of missing or incorrect grades within two weeks of those grades being posted, the grades will be assumed correct. Do not wait until the semester's end to check or appeal any grades. If you feel a grade merits re-evaluation, you are encouraged, within one week of the instructor providing a grade and initial feedback, to send the instructor a memo in which you request reconsideration. The memo should include a thoughtful and professional explanation of your concerns. Be aware that the re-evaluation process can result in three types of grade adjustments: positive, none, or negative. (Note: Complaints on the date of a graded assignment's return to you will not be addressed; it is essential to wait one full day prior to raising a concern.)

Academy Attendance Policy

The Academy maintains rigorous academic standards for its students and on-time attendance at all class meetings is expected. Each student will be allowed two excused absences over the course of the semester for which no explanation is required. Students are admonished to not waste excused absences on non-critical issues, and to use them carefully for illness or other issues that may arise unexpectedly. Except in the case of prolonged illness or other serious issue (see below), no additional absences will be excused. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the final grade by $\frac{1}{3}$ of a grade (e.g., an A will be lowered to A-, and A- will be lowered to a B+, etc.). In addition, being tardy to class will count as one-third of an absence. Three tardies will equal a full course absence.

Students remain responsible for any missed work from excused or unexcused absences. Immediately following an absence, students should contact the instructor to obtain missed assignments or lecture notes and to confirm new deadlines or due dates. Extensions or other accommodations are at the discretion of the instructor.

Automatically excused absences normally may not be used for quiz, exam or presentation days. Using an excused absence for a quiz, exam or presentation, such as in the case of sudden illness or other emergency, is at the discretion of the instructor.

In the case of prolonged illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen serious issues, the student should contact the instructor to arrange for accommodation. Accommodation may also be made for essential professional or career-related events or opportunities. All accommodations remain at the discretion of the instructor, and appropriate documentation may be required.

Additional Policies

Class notes policy: Notes or recordings made by students based on a university class or lecture may only be made for purposes of individual or group study, or for other non-commercial purposes that reasonably arise from the student's membership in the class or attendance at the university. This restriction also applies to any information distributed, disseminated, or in any way displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via e-mail or otherwise on the Internet, or via any other medium. Actions in violation of this policy constitute a violation of the Student Conduct Code, and may subject an individual or entity to university discipline and/or legal proceedings. Again, it is a violation of USC's Academic Integrity Policies to share course materials with others without permission from the instructor.

No recording and copyright notice: No student may record any lecture, class discussion or meeting with the instructor without his/her prior express written permission. The word "record" or the act of recording includes, but is not limited to, any and all means by which sound or visual images can be stored, duplicated, or retransmitted whether by an electro-mechanical, analog, digital, wire, electronic or other device or any other means of signal encoding. The instructor reserves all rights, including copyright, to his/her lectures, course syllabi and related materials, including summaries, slides (e.g., Keynote, PowerPoint), prior exams, answer keys, and all supplementary course materials available to the students enrolled in the class whether posted to the LMS or otherwise. They may not be reproduced, distributed, copied, or disseminated in any media or in any form, including but not limited to all course note-sharing websites. Exceptions are made for students who have made prior arrangements with The USC Office of Disability Services and Programs and the instructor.

Participation: Students are expected to actively participate in this course. In an online forum, participation includes:

- Careful reading and viewing of assigned materials by the date due
- Regular, substantive contributions to discussions
- Active engagement with online content
- On-time attendance and full attention (with camera on) in synchronous sessions
- Significant collaboration with classmates and teammates

Course grades may be affected for students who do not contribute to the course through active participation. Students should notify the instructor in advance if they are unable to attend class. Those unable to attend will be required to review the online recording for the session missed, and submit thoughtful feedback to the Instructor.

Contact Hours

This 3-unit course requires 2250 minutes (37.5 hours) of instructional time per semester, which equals 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of instructional time each week. In addition, it is expected that students will work, on average, an additional 300 minutes (5 hours) per week outside of class — on readings/viewings, homework assignments, field experiences, and individual or team projects.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics	Assignment
Week 1	Overview of the Course + UX Design 101	Figma Tutorials UX Problems That Interest Me (precursor to semester projects)
Week 2	Design Thinking Hands On	<u>Figma Drawing – Tommy Trojan + Your Avatar</u>
Week 3	Figma Deep Dive 1	Figma Hands On – Design and Fantasy Hotel app
Week 4	User Research and Customer Development	Personas, Scenarios, Storyboard
Week 5	Design Principles: UX Framework + Make Semester Teams	<u>Visual Value Proposition</u>
Week 6	Storytelling Techniques for Design Efficiency	Wireframes
Week 7	Wireframes + Principles of Information Architecture	Exam 1 + Figma Design System
Week 8	Exam 1 + Figma Design Systems	Semester Project v1 User Test
Week 9	Visual Design 1 – Color + Typography	Critical Thinking 1
Week 10	Visual Design 2 – Imagery + Composition	Semester Project Execution 1
Week 11	Figma Deep Dive 2	Semester Project Execution 2
Week 12	Decision Making and Design Efficiency	Semester Project Execution 3
Week 13	Usability Testing and Validation	Rehearsals 1
Week 14	Future of Figma + Rehearsals	Rehearsals 2
Week 15	How Not to Get a Job in UX + Final Presentations	Final Project / Presentation + Exam 2

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/HYPERLINK "https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/"scampus](https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/) HYPERLINK "https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/"-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/HYPERLINK "http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct"scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

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

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)
-213-740-9355 (WELL)

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/>

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services provides immediate therapy services for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (e.g., sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking).

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

USC Policy Reporting to Title IX (213) 740-5086

<https://policy.usc.edu/reporting-to-title-ix-student-misconduct/>

The university encourages individuals to report prohibited conduct to the *Title IX Office*. Individuals can report to the university's *Title IX Coordinator* in the *Office of Equity and Diversity*.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/ HYPERLINK \"https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/\"ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/HYPERLINK \)

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

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

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

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

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) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.