Course Objectives
This seminar will be a project-based, hands-on approach to a range of task analysis methods, including information gathering, various analytical techniques, and assessment methods. The emphasis of the course is to introduce students to three related areas of product and system development: task analysis, iterative development, and usability testing. Used in both academic research settings and industry, these techniques allow analysts to describe what is required in the execution of a task, support ideation about the tools and systems that can support the task, and test potential design outcomes for optimal human-system interaction. This course will use a combination of lectures, discussion, in-class exercises, demonstrations, and individual projects to convey the material to be learned.


Textbooks and Reading Assignments
All assigned readings and articles are available for download on the course website. Additional articles may sometimes be assigned, and these will be added to the course website.

ACTIVE READING: All reading assignments must be read actively before class begins, which often means reading the articles more than one time, and taking notes while you read. I recommend making notes in each of the following categories: 1) things you find interesting, useful, and important from the reading, 2) ideas that you do not understand or that you find confusing, 3) new ideas for research or scholarship that come to you from the reading, and 4) ideas that you disagree with. Discussions about the course material will be structured around these four issues – taking notes in each category while you read will help make sure you have something to say!

Additional Resources:


Course Assignments and Grading
Grades will be based on in-class quizzes (25%), class participation (15%), take home assignments (25%), a midterm exam (15%), and a comprehensive final exam (20%).
**Weekly Quizzes**

25% of your grade will be based upon (unannounced) reading quizzes that will be administered at the beginning of the class period. Quizzes are designed to test whether or not a student is keeping up with reading assignments, but not to test mastery of the material. Most quizzes are short (5-10 questions), and are designed so that a student who has actively read an assignment will easily score well (I think of ‘active’ reading as a close reading of a text that includes taking notes about important aspects of the text, and making note of questions about the material to bring to the class discussions). Note that passively reading the material is not sufficient to perform well on quizzes or in class discussions.

**Class Participation**

15% of your grade will be based on your instructor’s observations of your in-class participation during discussion of the readings and during in-class demonstrations. Many students fail to participate in class because they feel like they have nothing to add to the material; please not that the ‘active’ reading that is required for the course should ensure that everyone has things to say, and that most student questions and comments make class discussions better. Class participation is essential to this course, and students are encouraged to become active participants in the class by reading course assignments, thinking about the readings, and bringing questions and comments to class. Students are also encouraged to engage with classmates and the professor outside of class, and during office hours.

**Take-Home Assignments**

25% of your grade will be based on one-week take home assignments. The goal of these assignments is to provide students with an opportunity to apply HF analysis techniques as though they were HF analysts. More information will be given about take-home projects as they are assigned.

**Midterm Exam**

15% of your final grade will be based on your performance on a midterm exam. The exam may include multiple-choice, drawing, matching, fill-in-the-blank, short or long essay questions, hangman, crosswords puzzles, or any other format of question deemed relevant by the professor. Please bring something to write with to the exam, but no other materials are required (e.g., I do not use Scantron sheets).

**Final Exam**

20% of your final grade will be based on your performance on a comprehensive final exam. The exam may include multiple-choice, drawing, matching, fill-in-the-blank, short or long essay questions, hangman, crosswords puzzles, or any other format of question deemed relevant by the professor. Please bring something to write with to the exam, but no other materials are required (e.g., I do not use Scantron sheets).

**Attendance**

Attendance is required in all lecture sessions without exception. I will routinely take attendance at my discretion using formal roll calls, attendance quizzes, or simply by noticing that you are not in class. As a courtesy, I allow one unexcused absence per semester. After one absence, you will incur a penalty of a reduction in your overall course grade of half a letter for each further unexcused absence (e.g., a student who earns a grade of “A-” and who misses two classes would receive a grade of “B+,” a “C-” would become a “D,” etc.) If you must miss class, you must make arrangements with me in advance or provide university-approved documentation of an unexcused absence to make up all assignments. No graded assignments will be accepted late, nor will make up work be allowed, in the event of missed quizzes,
homework, or exams for unexcused absences. Unless otherwise arranged in advance, missed assignments must be made up within one week of returning from a university-excused absence.

Please do not arrive late to class. Being late disrupts other students who are on time, may cause you to miss quizzes, and also risks being counted absent (see attendance policy above). Students who miss quizzes or other materials because of lateness will not be given the opportunity to make up the work and will be treated as absent.

**GMU Honor Code**

George Mason University has an Honor Code that each student accepts as a condition of enrollment. This code is consistent with APA’s ethical principles for working professionals, and it is required that each student adhere to the Honor Code. For this course, group studying is expected and encouraged, but all students are required to produce original work on all assignments unless otherwise noted. Plagiarism, academic dishonesty, and other failures to follow the GMU honor code will result in disciplinary actions that include receiving a failing grade for this course; along with referral to the GMU Honor Committee for further review and documentation of the offense. A lack of knowledge about what constitutes a violation of the GMU honor code is not a defense against possible violations; it is your responsibility as a GMU student to review and adhere to this code. If you have ANY questions about plagiarism or the GMU honor code, I encourage students to review the code for themselves at:

http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/

**Performing at Your Best**

*Learning Accommodations:* It is my policy, as well as the university’s, to accommodate all students with disabilities that might affect their learning, course participation, or assignment completion. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please feel free to speak with me about making appropriate accommodations and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474, or online at http://ods.gmu.edu/ Most academic accommodations will be arranged through that office.

*Stress and Academics:* Let’s face it, being a student today can at times be stressful, and life events can create anxiety or depression that can hurt anybody’s academic performance. GMU is committed to helping students maintain their emotional well-being through the GMU Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) office, located online at: http://caps.gmu.edu/ and by telephone at: 703-993-2380. CAPS services are free to Mason students, and include one-on-one stress and anxiety counseling, and highly regarded Academic Skills Workshops that can teach students how to ‘study smarter’ and make the most of your investment in higher education.

*Improving Academic Writing:* Strong writing is a skill that is learned through guided instruction and practice. Strong writing skills are likely to be a benefit for students pursuing academic or industry careers in most domains. Students who seek to improve their academic writing are encouraged to do so by visiting the GMU Writing Center. Information can be found online at: http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/