

Course Syllabus

Information Architecture - LIS 4209

University: University of Denver

Program: Library & Information Science Program

Class Time: **4:00 pm - 6:20 pm - Monday**

Location: Main Campus | **Sturm Hall | Room 333**

Level: Graduate

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor: Alex Martinez, M.A.

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Work Phone: 303-871-4879

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Office Hours: by appointment

Office Location: Office for Teaching and Learning in Academic Commons, Room 350-J

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Course Description

The web is a complex information environment consisting of billions of web pages, users, and clicks and interactions every single day. This course introduces students to the fundamentals of web and mobile information architecture (IA) – a discipline that aims to understand the information needs and activities of web visitors and create design elements to help users find their way around in this complex information environment with ease. The course will cover various strategies and skills, in which information architects structure, organize, label, navigate, and search for information on large websites. A service learning component is built into this course so that students can transfer their IA knowledge and skills to a real-world project. The course is designed to include many engaging hands-on activities from start to finish.

Learning Outcomes for the Course

Upon satisfactory completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Define the four core areas of IA - organization, labeling, navigation, and searching systems.
2. Explain five reasons why IA plays a vital role in any organization.
3. Paraphrase common IA, UX and web development terminology.
4. Facilitate research activities like card sorting, user persona and usability testing.
5. Evaluate and critique several websites from an IA perspective.
6. Create wireframe pages, sitemap and workflow diagrams using Axure RP.
7. Demonstrate effective use of Slack as your team communication tool.
8. Produce a Content, Context and User report.
9. Produce a video for your client that summarizes your research and final IA. Include recommendations for content organization, labeling, navigation, and searching.
10. Present to your client your research findings, diagrams, reports and recommendations.

Required Course Book

Information Architecture: For the Web and Beyond 4th Edition (Polar Bear Book),

By Peter Morville, Louis Rosenfeld and Jorge Arango

Free via <http://library.du.edu>

Weekly Schedule

Week	Topic/Readings	Assignments
1 [9/9]	-Introductions - Define information architecture	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 2: Defining IA

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define the value of information architecture - Discuss course structure and learning objectives - Share examples of prior student work - Discuss client projects - Team work activity - The Marshmallow Challenge and Hurricane survivor. - Assign students to projects - Create Slack accounts - Review final report template 	<p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch welcome video on course homepage <p>Submit:</p> <p>Visit our Canvas discussion board and submit your "Hello, My Name Is ..." post.</p>
2 [9/16] Module 2	<p>Topic: IA Research Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss the IA process -Discuss kick off meeting questions -Discuss IA research methods -Discuss first contact with clients -Review current state of client website -Organize your research notes - Google Doc/ - Google Analytics - - Review final report template <p>Guest Speaker: Mike Hanbery - "Research"</p>	<p>Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet your client in-person, phone or ZOOM. <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 11: Research <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IA Research video • Using Slack at Work with Gary Taylor <p>Review:</p> <p>http://usability.gov</p>
3 [9/23]	<p>Topic: Organization and Labeling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organization & Labeling Slides - Create sitemap using Axure RP - Discuss research data collection progress - Examine client websites - Card sorting activity - Review final report template <p>** Contact your clients to gather research data.</p> <p>Guest Speaker: Ryan Shiba</p>	<p>Submit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client sitemap for current site <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 6 and 7: <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module videos <p>Review:</p> <p>http://usability.gov</p>
4 [9/30]	<p>Topic: Navigation Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Student project updates -Discuss navigation systems -Examine navigation systems -Discuss comparative analysis -Create navigation systems using Axure RP -Create target audience persona 	<p>Submit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User Persona Report (each student must interview one project stakeholder) <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 8: <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module videos

5 [10/7]	<p>Topics: Search Systems and Usability Testing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student project updates - Discuss search systems - Participate in usability testing for new library site - Target audience high priority tasks activity - Usability testing practice activity - Design the perfect search system - Create search page in Axure RP 	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 9: <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Systems <p>Submit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content, Context and User Report
6 [10/14]	<p>VIRTUAL CLASS DAY VIA ZOOM Topic: Design for Finding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student project updates - Review usability test videos - Wireframing activity - UX, the wow factor activity <p>Guest Speaker: Sasha Castillo via ZOOM</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3: <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module video <p>Submit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usability Test Video
7 [10/21]	<p>Topic: Culture, Politics & Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guest Speaker: Peyton Lindley Video - Axure Workflow diagram - Project update (10 minutes) - Work on your project 	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 12: Strategy • Axure RP tutorials & documentation
8 [10/28]	<p>Topics: Content Strategy</p> <p>Guest speaker Kate Johnson - Content Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project update (10 minutes) - Work on your project 	<p>Submit:</p> <p>Risk Factor Report Assignment</p> <p>Draft wireframes prototype</p>
9 [11/4]	<p>Topic: Presentation Rehearsal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project update (10 minutes) - Work on your project <p>Client Presentations: Schedule a date and time with your clients to present your final project.</p>	<p>Submit:</p> <p>Final wireframe prototype</p>
10 [11/11]	<p>Topic: Final Client Video</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work on your project - Client presentation week 	<p>IA Executive Summary Due</p>

11 [11/25]	No class. Client Presentations: <u>Schedule a date and time with your clients to present your final project.</u>	Heuristic Evaluation Video Due
12	All Work is Due on November 27	

Class Activities

Class activities are centered around your class project, which will involve working with real clients. This teaching method will enable you to apply IA knowledge and gain real-world experience. You will develop a professional working relationship with your clients. Each class project will include a group of 2-3 students.

Assignment Schedule

The submission dates below will help ensure that assignments are being completed according to expectations and to avoid assignment overload at the end of the quarter. For detail instructions for each assignment listed below, please video our [Canvas course](#).

Deliverables *	Group/Individual	Submit Date	Points
Content, Context and User Report	Group	Week 4	50
Sitemap	Group	Week 5	50
User Personas	Individual	Week 5, 6 or 7	50
Usability Test Video	Individual	6	50
Risk Factor Report	Group	Week 8	50
Wireframes	Group	Week 8	150
IA Executive Summary Report	Group	Week 10	200
Client Presentation	Group	Week 10	100
Heuristic evaluation video	Individual	Week 11	200
Group member Participation (download rubric)	Individual		100
			TOTAL: 1000

Content, Context, & User Report:

Group Project - Submit your first draft of your Content, Context and User report. This information will change as you research efforts continue. Submit this information via a Google Doc or OneDrive document.

Example: <https://goo.gl/NwgzM9>

Sitemap:

Group Project -

Create a sitemap for your project using Axure RP. Start by creating a sitemap of the current website. create sitemap of the current site or future site. The sitemap should include the major sections of your website. Your sitemap will likely change as your new site is created, keep your sitemap updated. An updated sitemap will help you create your wireframe model. Publish your sitemap and send the url of your Axure RP public page to the instructor via Slack.

[Example Sitemap](#)

User Persona Report:

Each student must interview at least one target audience user and ask them key questions about their interactions with the client website. Use this template: <https://goo.gl/Sj5CPe> . Feel free to modify the questions on this template. Send the instructor a link to your user persona via Slack.

Usability Test Video:

Each student must conduct a short usability test with a target audience user. Usability testing helps us identify where people struggle and get confused with a website. If your client does not have a website, find a website that is similar to test. The point of this activity is to show you how labeling, content organization, search and navigation systems can confuse the user if not setup correctly.

Use a video recording tool ([ZOOM](#)) to record someone using the website. Have a list of important tasks that the user has to complete. Ask the participant to think out loud when they are trying to find specific information or complete a task. The recording should be about 15 minutes. After the test, go to DU VideoManager (<http://videomanager.du.edu>) and upload your video in our class group called "Information Architecture 2017".

Examples:

- <https://videomanager.du.edu/private/59de4880a78e0> (DU Human Resource)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thNZIZmMDQo>

Instructions on conducting this activity:

<https://goo.gl/TNbcBJ>

Risk Factors

Group Project - List 5-10 risk factors that your team has discovered during the research phase. Risk factors can hinder a website's effectiveness. Some common risk factors include:

- Funding - Not enough funding for technology and/or staff to maintain website.

- Expertise - Organization does not have team members with skills IA, UX, content management, content strategy and usability testing.
- Content Management Systems (CMS) - The current CMS does not scale up to support large amounts of structured content. CMS does not offer content organization features like tagging, content taxonomy structures, controlled vocabularies, keyword search terms. CMS does not easily support new visual and architecture design themes.
- Time & Low Priority - Organization lacks the time to maintain the website content and architecture to ensure that the people are satisfied with their experience with the website.

Wireframe:

Group Project - Create one homepage and six second-level wireframe pages for your project. The wireframe should include your proposed recommendations for your client's website. Use Axure RP for your wireframe.

Examples:

- <http://w2d1bw.axshare.com/>
- [Educating Lawyers](#)

IA Executive Summary Report

Group Project - This is a summary report for your client. Your team will have to determine the most valuable and relevant research data for your client. Please ensure your document is "CEO friendly" - not too wordy and straight to the point. This is not an academic paper, it's a business presentation document.

At minimum, this document should include:

- Define Information Architecture
- Describe the value and benefits of having good IA
- Explain the consequences of a poorly architected website
- Outline the research methods your team conducted
- Summarize your major research findings. IA recommendations for content organization, labeling, navigation, and search
- Risk factors facing the project. Ideas for dealing with risk factors
- Links to all your diagrams and research documents.

Word count range: 1000-1500 words

Type: Google Document/Slides

Client Presentation

This group activity will allow you to present your research findings and recommendations to your client. You can present face to face or via ZOOM. Your presentation should include the items in your IA Executive Summary report. Schedule 45 minutes for your presentation and discussion time.

Heuristic Evaluation Video

Each student - will create a 15-20 minute heuristic evaluation video on your project. Heuristic evaluation is when someone evaluates a project using industry standards, best practices, or guidelines. As an IA consultant, give a professional overview of the IA issues and recommendation that emerge from work on this website. Address the content organization, navigation, labeling, and search issues with the current website and provide clear recommendations for improvement. You will be graded based on your analysis, recommendations, professionalism and creativity.

The outline for the video:

- Define IA and the value of it
- Share the most important research findings
- Clearly present your solutions and recommendations
- Provide persuasive arguments to improve particular features
- Demonstrate creativity in your presentation
- Be respectful and professional
- Advocate for your clients end-users experience

Examples: [Denver Medical Library](#) | <http://vimeo.com/24558892> | [Other student projects](#)

Upload your video to: <http://videomanager.du.edu> for me to grade. If you want to make your video public, upload it to YouTube or Vimeo.

Critique Tips - From IA Summit Conference session: [SlideShare](#)

Recommended Software:

- Zoom
- Camtasia Studio Studio (30 day free trial)

Resources for your project:

- [Axure RP](#): to create wireframe or workflow diagrams
- <http://iainstitute.org/en/learn/>
- http://www.gdoss.com/web_info/information_architecture_deliverables.php

Class Participation

Students are highly encouraged to actively participate in class. Active participation includes class discussions, asking and/or answering questions, and challenging and debating on issues and topics raised in the content of the course.

Presentation and Evaluation

The format and presentation of this course involves teamwork, demonstrations, guest speakers, class activities, exercise drills, and student presentations. Evaluation of student performance is primarily based on your active participation in the class, your ability to professionally interact with clients, and performance on group assignments. Description of assignments, course calendar and grading policy, and other announcements are defined in this document.

Instructor Responsibilities

It is my role to create an authentic environment where students take an active role as information architects by working with real clients. I will share my professional experiences related to IA and web development and present wide-ranging perspectives on the topics of the course. As much as I shoulder the responsibility for the creation of a learning environment, I also recognize it is the collective effort between students and myself that brings the desired classroom dynamics so as to fulfill the stated course outcomes. I will strive to do my best to generate motivation by promoting authentic course activities and creative thinking in order to achieve the objectives of the course. Finally, I will judge students' performance fairly and in accordance with the grading policy of the school.

Student Responsibilities

Before coming to class, I expect that students have reviewed the assigned readings and have completed the homework activities according to the course schedule. Active class participation is highly encouraged. This course involves class activities and demonstrations. Students are advised to attend class regularly in order to achieve the highest degree of benefit. I highly value students' attendance so that they contribute positively to the classroom dynamics. Students are also expected to complete assignments and projects in the manner and format stated in the description of the assignments and by the due dates. Assignments NOT turned in on the due date will be subject to an automatic 15% point deduction. If personal or professional responsibilities will prevent you from completing tasks by the due date, please let me know in advance so we can work out a flexible deadline.

[University of Denver Honor Code:](#)

All members of the university community are expected to assume the responsibility of observing certain ethical goals and values as they relate to academic integrity. Essential to the fundamental purpose of the University is the commitment to the principles of truth and honesty. This *Honor Code* is designed so that responsibility for upholding these principles lies with the individual as well as the entire community.

The purpose of this *Honor Code* is to foster and advance an environment of ethical conduct in the academic community of the University, the foundation of which includes the pursuit of academic honesty and integrity. Through an atmosphere of mutual respect we enhance the value of our education and bring forth a higher standard of academic excellence. No member of the University community, including students, faculty, staff and administrators, shall act in any way that could reasonably be construed as an intentional misrepresentation or deception in academic or professional matters.

Students should refer to the *Morgridge College of Education Bulletin* and the University web site for further information on the rationale, authority, and enforcement of the University's Honor Code. <http://www.du.edu/ccs/honorcode.html>

NOTE: Students who have a disability or require accommodations are encouraged to contact me as well as DU [University Disability Services](#).

Disability Services

If you have a disability protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and need to request accommodations, please make an appointment with the Disability Services Program (DSP); 303.871.2455 / 2278 / 7432; located in The Center below the bookstore in Driscoll South.

Incomplete Grades

Only extraordinary circumstances qualify for discussion of an Incomplete (IN) grade. It is up to you as the student to make me aware of these circumstances as soon as they occur and well before the last week of classes. It is up to me, as the instructor, to grant an IN grade. Medical emergencies will need validation by a health professional.

Late Assignments

Failure to turn in an assignment by or on the due date at the beginning of class will result in the automatic deduction of the assignment points by 15%. Each additional 24-hour period will result in another 10% deduction. Exceptions to this rule will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Under no circumstances is poor time management a reasonable excuse for a late assignment. Medical emergencies will need validation by a health professional.

Weather Policy

During the seasons when severe weather can occur, please listen to the radio for closing announcements. The University of Denver maintains a WEATHER LINE at 303-871-3747 that will be updated by 3 p.m. if cancellations are necessary. Cancelled classes must be rescheduled.

Course Grades

The points awarded for each activity are based on the student's successful completion of the required course work. High expectations have been set for this course. Please notice that outstanding achievement will require careful attention to course criteria and exceptional quality in course assignments. Course grades are computed according to the following weights assigned to each category of assignments:

Letter/Grade Point Equivalents; Grading Policy/ Final grades are based on the following range within the total 1000 points possible:

A (4.0)	950 -1000	Superior attainment. Assignments/exams must go beyond the minimum expectations in terms of quality, including but not limited to aspects such as insight, creativity, analysis, thoroughness, accuracy, mechanics and synthesis. Work at this level demonstrates profound and progressive achievement in the expressed understanding of the principles and practices addressed in the assignment/exam. The work is clear, precise and extremely
A- (3.7)	900-940	

		well reasoned. Assumptions, inferences and intellectual processes are used effectively and creatively. The relevant is distinguished from the irrelevant, key concepts are clarified, opposing points of view are considered, and usage of language is astute. Sensitivity to important implications and consequences is present and expressed. Intellectual empathy and courage as well as fair-mindedness should also be evident.
B+ (3.3)	870-890	Average attainment. Assignments/exams fulfill the requirements and are generally error free in writing and formatting. The reasoning used in the assignment/exam is sound and consistently supported by evidence. Work at this level demonstrates achievement in the expressed understanding of the principles and practices addressed in the assignment/exam. The work is, on the whole, clear, precise, and well-reasoned, though with occasional lapses into weak reasoning. On average, assumptions, inferences and intellectual processes are used effectively. The work demonstrates a fairly consistent ability to distinguish the relevant from the irrelevant, clarification of key concepts, consideration of opposing points of view, and average use of language.
B (3.0)	830-860	
B- (2.7)	800-820	
C+ (2.3)	770-790	Below average attainment. Assignments/exams may fulfill some of the requirements. Inconsistency or errors in writing and formatting may qualify for a grade in the C range. Inconsistent or weak
C (2.0)	730-760	
C- (1.7)	700-720	

		reasoning, use of language, consideration of assumptions, inferences, and implications, and a lack of precision may also qualify work for a grade in the C range. The C-range work displays only occasional use of analysis and creativity.
D+ (1.3)	670-690	Far below average attainment.
D (1.0)	600-660	D-level work shows only a minimal level of understanding. D-range work shows only occasional critical thinking but frequent uncritical thinking. The assignments/exam are, for the most part, poorly done. There is little evidence of reasoning and/or the use of analysis or creativity. D-range work lacks clarity, precision, and distinction between the relevant and the irrelevant. Opposing points of view may not be identified nor are consequences or implications.
F (0)	590 or lower	Failure. F-level work does not display critical thinking skills. The work is vague, unreasoned, and imprecise. There are many errors in writing, formatting, mechanics, language usage and/or reasoning. There is a lack of distinction between the relevant and the irrelevant. Opposing points of view are not identified nor are consequences or implications.

*Any core course with a final grade below B will need to be retaken

*Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 in LIS coursework

A final grade of "I" or "Incomplete" will NOT be given except in extreme situations. Please let me know if you're having difficulty completing the requirements of the course

A satisfactory quality of achievement with a grade point average of B (3.0) or better is required in graduate course work accepted for the degree. The average is determined on the basis of the University's grading system. Credits carrying below a "B-" will not be accepted by the LIS program as meeting degree requirements. A grade lower than "B"

renders the credit unacceptable for meeting degree requirements.