GAME 3899: Game User Research Syllabus

GAME 3899: Game Topics
Game User Research
324 Ryder
Fall 2013
Tuesdays and Fridays 9:50-11:30
Website: http://www.northeastern.edu/magy/courses/GUR/gur.html
Piazza: https://piazza.com/northeastern/fall2013/game3899/home

Instructor:
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Description:
The development cycle of any game relies on the understanding of the players or target market. This course discusses players' psychology, including cognition, memory, emotions, attention. It will also review game-focused theory such as engagement theory, fun, user experience, play experience, play heuristics, and flow models. The course will also delve in depth in topics including user testing, behavior analysis methods, usability engineering. In-group projects, student will be able to use evaluation methods for lab- and field-based work, examples include playtesting, RITE testing, play heuristics, and ethnography. The course is designed to equip designers and developers with tools to test their games and well-rounded understanding of their players.

Teaching Method:
The course will be taught in a combination of lecture and in-class and out-of-class assignments that demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subject through applying the concepts.

Text Book:
- No assigned Textbook, but we will use materials from a number of sources, all resources will be available through Piazza.

Evaluation:
Assignments 1-7 (70%)
Quizzes & Class Assignments (30%)

Software Required:
- SPSS
- Excel
- Deduce
- Recommended: R, Python, or Matlab for analysis
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**Class Conduct:**

*Cell phones and Texts:* No use or cell phones, texting is permitted.

*Social Networking:* social networking is not allowed unless specified by the instructor.

*Late:* Don’t be late (more than 7 minutes is considered late). Every class you are late without permission will result in deduction of 2% from your grade.

*Attendance:* attendance is required. Absence without a pressing and convincing excuse will result in 5% deduction from your grade.

*Use of 3D party assets or code:* you are encouraged to use resources from the Internet. All arts and code used from other resources should be acknowledged and the sources/author should be credited. Failure to do so will be considered plagiarism, which has severe repercussion to your grade and your academic standing in the University. As a student in the University you are expected to be familiar with and abide by Northeastern University rules of academic honesty and integrity, including plagiarism. Full text of Northeastern’s Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy can be found online on the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (www.osccr.neu.edu) at http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academicichonesty.html.

**Disability:**

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Additionally, if you have a documented disability you are protected from discrimination and have the right to a reasonable accommodation. Additional information can be found at the Northeastern University Disability Resource Center (www.access-disability-deaf.neu.edu).

**Participation in TRACE:**

TRACE (Teacher Rating and Course Evaluation) is a required part of every course. Your participation is needed and encouraged as it is one way to enhance the quality of the course. Your voice matters.

**Tentative Outline:**

**Week 1 (Sept 6, 10):**
- Introductions and go over syllabus
- Psychology of Play

**Materials:**

**Assignment #1:**
Brainhex Questionnaire and qualitative analysis of your motivations for play (due Sept 10)

**Week 2 (Sept 13, 17):**
- Psychology of Play – Media Psychology, individual differences
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- Play styles. What makes Games fun?

Materials:

Assignment #2:
Psychology of Players – A Survey Paper (due Sept 20)

Week 3 (Sept 20, 24):
- Games User Research
- Research Design
- Human Subjects and Ethics

Materials:

Assignment #3:
Ethics Certification (due Sept 24)

Week 4 (Sept 27, Oct 1):
- Usability testing
- Experiment Design
- Usability Lab 1 (class Assignment)

Materials:

Assignment #4:
Usability testing (due Oct 15th beginning of class)

Week 5 (Oct 4, 8):
- Quantitative data collection and analysis
- Parametric and Non-Parametric tests, ANOVAs
- Reporting results
- Usability Lab 2 (class assignment)

Materials:

Assignment #4:
Usability testing (due Oct 15th beginning of class)
Week 6 (Oct 11, 15):
- Correlation and Regression analysis
- Usability analysis Lab 2 (class assignment)

Materials:

Assignment #4:
Usability testing (due Oct 15th beginning of class)

Week 7 (Oct 18, 22):
- Heuristics
- Heuristics Lab (class assignment)

Materials:

Assignment #5:
Heuristic Evaluation (due Oct 22nd)

Week 8 (Oct 25, 29):
- Playtesting
- Instruments: Survey, Interviews, Video, Think Aloud
- Methods: Focus Groups, RITE, Retrospective methods
- Playtesting Lab 1 (class assignment)

Materials:
Example surveys, and instruments

Assignment #6:
Playtesting (due Nov 12th)

Week 9 (Nov 1, 5):
- Data collection and cleaning
- Descriptive Statistics
- Qualitative Data coding and analysis
- Playtesting Lab 2 (class assignment)

Materials:

Assignment #6:
Playtesting (due Nov 12th)

Week 10 (Nov 8, 12):
- Triangulation
- Presentation of assignment

Materials:
Assignment #6:  
Playtesting (due Nov 12th)

Week 11 (Nov 15, 19):  
- Game Analytics and Introduction  
- Instrumentation  
- Data cleaning  
- Analysis and reporting

Materials:  
Magy Seif El-Nasr, Anders Drachen, and Alessandro Canossa. (2013). Game Analytics: Maximizing Value of Player Data. Springer [Chapters: 1, 2, and 3]

Assignment #7:  
- Analytics (due Dec 3rd)

Week 12 (Nov 22, 26):  
- Triangulation Methods  
- Lab on analytics and triangulation methods

Materials:  

Assignment #7:  
- Analytics (due Dec 3rd)

Week 13 (Dec 3):  
- Discussion of advanced methods: eye tracking, physiology, FMRI, and others  
- Assignment Presentation

Assignment #7:  
- Analytics (due Dec 3rd)