



**Faculty of Information
School of Graduate Studies
University of Toronto – St. George
Semester: Fall 2019
INF2170H – Information Architecture**

Instructor: **Dr. Anthony Tang**

Office: **BL 615**

E-mail: **Please use Quercus to contact the instructor**

Office hours: **Tuesdays 1:00pm-2:00pm, or by appointment**

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Aditi Bhatia (aditi.bhatia@mail.utoronto.ca)

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CLASS TIME

Thursday 9:00am – 12:00pm (0101) Location: BL224/225

Thursday 6:30pm – 9:30pm (0102)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The term ‘information architecture’ (IA) generally refers to how online content is structured to support effective information use. Course lectures are divided into three rubrics: Information Design Fundamentals (design principles), Information Architecture Development Process (development methods), and Professional Practice (working as an information architect). An explicitly user-centred (‘bottom-up’) approach to the development process will be taken throughout. At the end of this course, students will be able to differentiate between the various disciplines implicated explicitly or implicitly in the development of information architecture. They will be able to understand and apply basic principles of cognitive psychology, industrial design, systems analysis and human-computer interaction to the practice of information architecture. Student will also learn to apply simple user-centred methods to address information architecture problems in the context of work places and practices. Finally, students will learn to apply information architecture principles and development methods to create and refine an information architecture schema to address an information design problem, and to create a rapid prototype to demonstrate information architecture schemata.

PREREQUISITES

Recommended: INF1002, INF1003.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Differentiate between the various disciplines involved explicitly or implicitly in the development of information architecture;
- Understand and apply basic principles of cognitive psychology, industrial design, and human-computer interaction to the practice of information architecture;
- Apply simple user-centred methods to address information architecture problems in the context of work places and practices;
- Understand and apply information architecture principles and development methods to create and refine an information architecture schema to address an information design problem; and
- Create prototypes to demonstrate an information architecture schema.

RELATIONSHIP TO MASTER OF INFORMATION (MI) PROGRAM-LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Master of Information Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes can be found [here](#).

This course helps students master fundamental knowledge and develop skills for doing real-world design work (**Outcome 1**). Practicing information architecture skills will equip students to understand how users' work is mediated by information, and to practice socially responsible design in their careers (**Outcomes 2 and 4**). Through learning theory and practice of information architecture in tandem, students will be equipped to continue building their knowledge through research and continuous learning (**Outcomes 3 and 6**).

CLASS FORMAT

The course will consist of lectures, class discussions, and studios. Students are expected to attend the classes and to actively participate in the discussions and studios. For each class, a series of topics are provided to guide students through the readings and activities, and to frame the lectures, discussions, and studios.

Teaching and learning is a shared responsibility, influenced by individual knowledge and experience, and achieved through expanding our awareness of the different issues and approaches involved in information architecture. Commitment, preparation, and active participation are important ingredients to realize this goal. Your preparation and participation are important to your learning and the learning of your colleagues.

All the course materials will be available on the University of Toronto learning management system (Quercus) together with assignments and announcements.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or a health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach Student Services and/or the Accessibility Services Office (<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>) as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let them know your needs, the quicker they can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Rosenfeld L., Morville P., & Arango J. (2015). [Information Architecture: for the Web and Beyond \(4th Ed.\)](#). O'Reilly Media. ISBN: 978-1-491-91168-6. (**Referred to as RMA**)

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTBOOK

Preece, J., Sharp, H., & Rogers, Y. (2015). [Interaction Design: Beyond Human-Computer Interaction](#) (4th Ed.). Wiley. ISBN: 978-1-119-02075-2. (**Course Reserve in Inforum**)

EVALUATION

Component	Weight
Assignment 1 (A1)	4%
Assignment 2 (A2)	8%
Project Component 1 (P1)	15%
Project Component 2 (P2)	20%
Project Component 3 (P3)	20%
Project Presentation	5%
Studios (five)	20%
Reflection Essays	8%

Component Weighting Policy. The course requirements and weights are final and will not be modified throughout the term.

Late Assignment Policy. The penalty for late assignments is set to **10% per day**, to a maximum of one week; submissions will not be accepted after one week. Exceptions will be made only when supported by appropriate documentation.

Component	Detail
Assignments (A1-A2)	Each assignment focuses on a topic discussed in class, and asks the student to identify, critique and create information architectures in the everyday environment. The purpose of these is to sensitize your understanding of the world and people's interaction with information and organizational structures that contain information. These are assignments that are to be completed individually.
A1: Assignment 1 (4%)	A1 explores the design of taxonomies for everyday objects, and their consequences.
A2: Assignment 2 (8%)	A2 asks you to perform a basic user study to find and understand a real-world example of an organizational scheme, capturing it, and explaining it so others can understand, too.
Project (P1-P3 + presentation)	The project is a major undertaking involving a six-person team. The overall goal of the project is to take a website's existing navigational structure, deconstruct it by developing an understanding of the website's users, the website's context and the website's content, and then redesign a new navigational structure. You will implement the navigational structure through various prototypes, and then test the structure to uncover ways of improving it. This project is comprised of four components.

P1 (15%)	P1 is the first project component. Here, you will prepare a document outlining an Information Architecture (IA) problem they want to undertake. This will consist of a problem description, analyses of Context, Content, and Users, a summary of results, and a summary of how the data collected will inform the IA of the user interface.
P2 (20%)	P2 is the second project component. Here, you will use all data collected from P1 to conduct a mental model elicitation (card sorting; including elicitation methodology and results), and generate an IA schematic diagram and preliminary sketches of the proposed IA solution.
P3 (20%)	P3 is the third project component. You will build a clickable medium fidelity prototype (wireframe) focusing on the IA of the user interface. You will provide a rationale about how you used IA principles (e.g., navigation, labelling, organization, search, etc.) when designing and implementing your solution.
Presentation (5%)	You will provide a short five minute presentation to show the project that you worked on through the term.
Studios (20%)	There will be five (5) studios on selected topics throughout the semester. These studios will be done in groups of four (4) to six (6) students. Each studio will have a small deliverable by the next day. Each studio is worth 4%.
Reflection Essays (8%)	Short reflection essays that ask you to think about and understand the material in class

GRADING

Please consult the iSchool's Grade Interpretation Guidelines (<https://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/grade-interpretation.pdf>) and the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>). These documents form the basis for grading in the course.

WRITING SUPPORT

As stated in the iSchool's Grade Interpretation Guidelines, "work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be considered eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects." With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the SGS Graduate Centre for Academic Communication (<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/English-Language-and-Writing-Support.aspx>). The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers and all programs are free. Please consult the current workshop schedule

(<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Current-Terms-Courses.aspx>) for more information.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please consult the University's site on Academic Integrity (<http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca>). The iSchool has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I.1.(d) of the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf>). You should acquaint yourself with the Code. Please review the material in Cite it Right and if you require further clarification, consult the site How Not to Plagiarize (<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/>).

Cite it Right covers relevant parts of the UofT [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters \(1995\)](#). It is expected that all iSchool students take the Cite it Right workshop and the online quiz. Completion of the online Cite it Right quiz should be made prior to the second week of classes. To review and complete the workshop, visit the orientation portion of the iSkills site: <https://inforum.library.utoronto.ca/workshops/orientation>

RE-GRADING POLICY

A student (group) who believes that term work has been improperly graded may submit a re-evaluation request. Students seven days from the date an item was returned to submit a request. For example, should the work be returned, or the mark be made available on October 3rd, the student has until October 10th to inquire *in writing* and start the re-evaluation process. Instructor/TAs will acknowledge receipt of a student request for re-evaluation within 3 working days, and decisions should be provided in a timely fashion. Re-evaluation requests may be submitted in writing *to the person who marked the work*. The student must submit (1) the original piece of work and (2) a written explanation detailing why he or she believes the work was unfairly/incorrectly graded. **The course instructor must be CCed on all communications.**

Following a re-evaluation decision, if the student is still not satisfied with the result, he or she may appeal to the instructor in charge of the course if the work was not marked by the instructor (e.g., marked by a TA). In this instance (i.e., the instructor was not the one who marked the work), the student must now submit to the instructor (1) the original piece of work, (2) the written reasons as to why he or she believes the work was unfairly/incorrectly marked, and (3) communications from the original marker. Re-evaluation appeals are at the discretion of the instructor. If a re-evaluation is granted by the instructor, the student must accept the resulting mark as the new mark, *whether it goes up or down or remains the same*. When appealing a re-evaluation decision, the student accepts this condition. Instructors and TAs should ensure all communications with the student is in writing (e.g. follow-up e-mail) and keep a copy for later reference.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

If you have a question, there is a high chance that other students in the course have the same question or, at least, will benefit from the answer. Please post all the questions to the INF2170 Quercus Discussion Board so everyone in the course can benefit from your questions and our answers. Students are encouraged to post answers to the questions of other students where appropriate.

Please avoid sending emails directly to the instructor and TAs unless it is a serious situation. If you do, please ensure that the subject that starts with “INF2170” **and that it is sent from your *mail.utoronto.ca* student account.**

IMPORTANT DATES

First class:	September 21, 2019
Last day to add or substitute F (Fall) courses:	September 23, 2019
Last day to drop F (Fall) courses without grade:	October 28, 2019
Reading week:	November 4 – 8, 2018
Last class:	December 5, 2018

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Date (Thu)	Topic	Readings	Notes
9/12 (1)	What is information architecture?	RMA: Ch 1, 2, 5	A1 out
9/19 (2)	Impact of design on finding behavior	RMA: Ch 3, 4	A1: 9/18 noon A2 out P0 out
9/26 (3)	S1: Content audits		A2: 9/25 noon S1: 9/26 11:59pm P0-draft due in class
10/3 (4)	User research, organization and labeling	RMA: Ch 6, 7, 11	P0: 10/2 noon P1 out
10/10 (5)	S2: Developing IA strategies		S2: 10/10 11:59pm
10/17 (6)	User research, navigation and search systems	RMA: Ch 12	
10/24 (7)	S3: Mental models and card sorts		P1: 10/23 noon S3: 10/24 11:59pm P2 out
10/31 (8)	User research, controlled vocabularies and metadata	RMA: Ch 10	
11/7	Reading Week, yo!		
11/14 (9)	S4: Tree tests		P2: 11/13 noon S4: 11/14 11:59pm
11/21 (10)	Cognitive Aspects and Gestalt Theory + Conceptualizing Interaction + Design and Documentation	RMA: Ch 12-13	
11/28 (11)	S5: Developing wireframes		S5: 11/28 11:59pm P3 out
12/5 (12)	Mini-Presentations + The Last Lecture		P3: 12/13 noon