

Principles of UX/Usability Testing & Research

UX/Usability research & testing plays a critical role in developing all types of products, from programmable TV remotes to intuitive apps for your phone and is even utilized in pacemakers and insulin pumps. Usability testing leverages many of the skills qualitative researchers already have [e.g., designing and managing qualitative research projects, building rapport, probing for clarity, getting below top-of-mind responses].

Students will gain an understanding of the best practices in usability testing as well as when and how to apply this method in their own work. While the focus of this course is on usability testing, students will learn about other UX research techniques such as **personas, task analysis**, remote and in-person card sorting, the System Usability Scale, affinity diagramming and tree testing and how to integrate these methods into a usability study.

Students will gain skill in:

- Running a usability study from start to finish: how to plan, moderate, collect data, analyze and report on a usability study
- Being able to analyze an interactive product to identify usability issues
- Techniques for measuring usability
- Methods to produce usability insights that drive business decisions
- Recruiting for a usability study, using personas to identify key participant characteristics
- Approaches for running studies at different points in a product's development (e.g., concept, early prototype, released product)
- When to do in-person, remote, or automated usability testing
- Methods for gathering feedback on interactive digital, mobile, and physical products
- How to integrate usability into other forms of qualitative research
- Managing observers and running debrief discussions

Students will receive a comprehensive work book, an example test plan, test script, recruiting screener, and usability report that they can use as a template to adapt for use in their own practice. **They will learn methods for usability testing digital and physical products.** The course material includes a detailed bibliography with information on where to learn more about usability testing user experience research so that they can incorporate these techniques into their own qualitative practice. The class will include an overview of the Morae recording software which is designed to capture video, participant and observer interaction during usability studies and UX research.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Day 1

Definition of usability, usability testing, and types of products and services that can be usability tested, where usability fits into “Design Thinking”, good reasons to run a study, exploration of how usability testing fits into other forms of qualitative research, frameworks for evaluating interactive products, setting usability study objectives, gauging your overall testing approach to the product development phase, developing criteria to measure usability, using personas to clarify recruiting requirements, recruiting for a usability study, developing the task list and discussion guide, moderating the usability study – how it is similar and different from other forms of qualitative moderating, ethics around running studies, basic data collection, dealing with observers, In-class exercise: each student will have the opportunity to moderate and to observe a usability study

Day 1, Evening:

About 2 hours of homework developing your own task list against an interactive product of your choice

Day 2

More detailed discussion on data collection: defining task success/failure, time-on-task, user ratings, video recording sessions, role of Morae, System Usability Scale (SUS) and Product Reaction Cards, affinity diagramming for synthesizing data collected during a usability study. Using the task list they have developed students will moderate a usability session with an outside participant, creating reports that drive decisions and satisfy stakeholders who have different information needs, variations on a theme: considerations for remote and mobile sessions, how to usability test physical products, card sorting, overview of key UX learning resources and organizations