
**Department of Information Systems
University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)
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**HCC 729 (7229)
Human-Centered Design
Spring 2011**

Professor: Dr. Ravi Kuber

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Office hours: Thursdays 3.00 - 4.00 pm and by appointment

Lectures: Thursdays 4.30-7.00 pm (ITE Building, Room 469)

Description: This course is a project-based course. It explores the main factors, methods and processes that underlie the user-centered design of information systems. The course focuses on conceptualizing and understanding the fundamental human-computer interaction issues, as well as user testing and interaction design processes. The course also provides students with the opportunity to apply these concepts through the design, evaluation and implementation of interface prototypes in real-world environments.

Pre-requisites: **HCC629** and **HCC636**. If you are interested in registering for HCC 729 and have not already taken the pre-requisite courses, contact me in advance. Prior knowledge of programming is not expected.

Objectives: The course builds upon the fundamental human-factors concepts introduced in IS629, enabling students to apply these in a practical context. By the end of the course, students are expected to have an understanding of:

- The goals of human-centered design and how they relate to usability
- The techniques for understanding user cognition within the context of interaction design
- The techniques for determining interface user needs and requirements
- The approaches for solving interaction design-related problems
- The methods and guidelines in user centered design
- The collection and analysis of data for the user

Online Resources: A site relating to the course will be maintained on Blackboard. It can be accessed through myUMBC or at <http://blackboard.umbc.edu>. The site contains lecture slides, details of assignments, and announcements pertinent to the course. It will be updated throughout the semester. **Each student is responsible for checking the web page regularly, and for being aware of any information posted there.**

Reading Materials: This class requires students to read from a variety of books. Chapters which have been selected to supplement lectures are available in downloadable format from the UMBC library (<http://aok.lib.umbc.edu/reserves/access.php>). User names and passwords to access these materials will be assigned in class. These materials along with the lecture slides and assignments, must not be disseminated to anyone outside the course, or uploaded to any external web sites. The books themselves are on reserve, available from the Issue Desk at the UMBC library:

- Cairns, P.A. and Cox, A.L. (eds) (2008) Research Methods for Human-Computer Interaction. Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 9780521690317
- Carroll, J.M. (2000) Making Use: Scenario Based Design of Human-Computer Interactions. MIT Press.
- Dix, A., Finlay, J., Abowd, G.A. and Beale, R. (2004) Human-Computer Interaction (3rd Edition). Prentice-Hall. ISBN: 0130461091
- Sharp, Y., Rodgers, H. and Preece, J. (2007) Interaction design: Beyond human-computer interaction (2nd Edition). Wiley. ISBN: 0470018666
- Sears, A. and Jacko, J. (eds) The Human-Computer Interaction Handbook (2nd Edition). Taylor and Francis. ISBN: 0805858709

Grading: The final grade will reflect the student’s achievement of the learning objectives. This will be measured through two individual assignments, two exams and class participation. The distribution of percentages among these components is given below:

Assignment 1 (Individual/Group)	30%
Assignment 2 (Group)	35%
Exam	25%
Summarizing literature	5%
Attendance and participation	5%

Grading Standards: IS instructors are expected to have exams and evaluations which result in a reasonable distribution of grades. With respect to the final letter grades, the University’s Undergraduate Catalogue states that, “A indicates superior achievement; B, good performance; C, adequate performance; D, minimal performance; F, failure”. There is specifically no mention of any numerical scores associated with these letter grades. Final letter grades in this course conform to the University’s officially published definitions of the respective letter grades. In accordance with the published University grading policy, it is important to understand that final letter grades reflect academic achievement and not effort. While mistakes in the arithmetic computation of grades and grade recording errors will always be corrected, it is important to understand that in all other situations final letter grades are not negotiable and challenges to final letter grades are not entertained. Historical data suggests an “A” may be in the 91-100 range, a “B” may be from 81-89 and “C” grades range from 70-80. All points from assignments and exams are additive for the semester. Each student starts at zero points which is an “F”, any other grade must be earned.

Note: From Fall 2010, instructors have the option of assigning grades including a plus or minus (e.g. B+) to graduate students enrolled in graduate classes. It is up to each individual instructor’s discretion as to whether this form of grading will be used during the semester.

Assignments: The assignments will result in a total of 65% of your semester grade. A maximum of 65 points can be awarded for Assignments 1 and 2. When submitting an assignment, be aware that numerous delays can occur. For example, computer failures, system performance issues, printing problems and other commitments. It is essential that students are able to organize their time effectively, to ensure that deliverables are handed-in on time. If an assignment is not in on time, it may possibly be accepted following the due date with an accompanying reduction of the 50% of the earned grade. If you do not hand-in an assignment, you will receive a zero grade.

Writing Reports and Deliverables

- Page limits have been specified for each assignment (excluding cover page, table of contents and references). These should be adhered to, as the instructor will not read further than the page limits specified.
- Staple the report together, rather than using a folder.
- On a cover page, clearly present your name or names of those in the group, email address and title of the assignment.
- Use appropriate formatting (text size 10 point), 1.5 spacing, and always number pages.
- Ensure that work is proof-read.
- When citing or quoting existing work, always include appropriate references.

All students are required to research into an area of Human-Computer Interaction. A list of topics will be presented in the first class. Students are expected to use the UMBC library, digital libraries and various databases to obtain research papers from respected conferences and journals for the Assignment.

All students working in groups are required to participate equally in project work. If one or more student(s) are not performing their fair share of work, their marks will be reflected accordingly.

Exam: There will be one exam, which will result in a total of 25% of your semester grade. You may not use calculators, computers or other electronic devices for exams. You must bring picture ID. The exams will cover material from the lectures, readings and assignments. If you miss an exam, you will receive a zero grade.

Summarizing Literature: The ability to summarize literature is a vital skill for all graduate students to develop. The schedule outlines the material which should be read in advance of each class. At the beginning of the semester, students will be asked to sign-up to summarize readings for prescribed topics. The designated student(s) are to upload summaries to the class Blackboard site, **by the day of the class** where these topics will be discussed. The summaries will highlight key points discussed by each chapter, and assist all students with their revision for exams. This component will result in a total of 5% of your semester grade.

Attendance and Participation: For most classes, class participation is listed as a factor that contributes to a students' overall grade for a class. Performing assigned reading, attending class, and participating in classroom discussions, presentations and activities are considered normal and expected contributions to the class. To receive an above average grade a student must participate beyond this norm in a noteworthy way. This participation may occur in the classroom or outside of class. One example of this could be active participation in discussions on the class Blackboard site. Failure to contribute sufficiently in or outside class will result in a lower than average grade. Lateness to class may affect this grade. If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting the relevant notes and hand outs to help you prepare for the exams. This component will result in a total of 5% of your semester grade.

Course Policies:

- **Assignments:** Submissions are due in class on the specified dates.
- **Communication:** Feel free to contact me by coming to my office (either during my office hours, or by making an appointment). You are also encouraged to send me email (rkuber@umbc.edu). Make sure you add “HCC729” in the subject of the email and you use your UMBC email account. Emails sent to me from non-UMBC providers (e.g. verizon.net, gmail.com, comcast.net, etc.) may be filtered out and never arrive in my mailbox.
- **Make-up Exams:** There will be NO make-up exams unless an emergency occurs and an official document is submitted, verified, and pre-approved by the instructor. Notify the instructor immediately and before the class exam takes place. Important Note: Having multiple exams in the same day does not constitute a valid reason for a make-up exam.
- **Re-grading:** I will review any graded exam or assignment if you believe the grade you received was not appropriate. You have one week after the graded assignment is delivered to the class, to return it to me with a written statement discussing why you believe the item in question deserved a different grade. Please note that the entire assignment will be reviewed and your final assignment grade may be raised or lowered as a result of the review.
- **Extra Credit:** Simply stated, it does not exist, especially on an individual basis.
- **Absence:** In the case of absence due to emergency (e.g. illness), religious holiday, or participation in an official UMBC function, it is the student’s responsibility to confer with the instructor regarding the absence and missed work.
- **Readings:** Students are expected to read the materials that will be discussed in the class before the class meeting.
- **Cell phones and beepers:** All cell phones and beepers must either be turned off or set to a silent method of operation (e.g., vibrating rather than beeping). If you must answer a call, please leave the classroom. As with arriving late, if you disrupt the class you will be asked to leave the classroom.

Academic integrity: By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC’s scholarly community in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the UMBC Student Handbook, the Faculty Handbook, or the UMBC Policies section of the UMBC Directory. Acts of Academic Misconduct are defined as the following:

- **Cheating:** Knowingly using or attempting to use unauthorized material, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- **Fabrication:** Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- **Facilitating Academic Dishonesty:** Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty.
- **Plagiarism:** Knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise, including works of art and computer-generated information/images.

Available Support Services: Utilize the resources that are provided to you by the University. Besides, you pay for them through your tuition, so why not to use them?

- The UMBC Writing Center is a resource I highly recommend to all students who need some help in writing.

- Blackboard. Various types of information will be posted on Blackboard, ranging from external links to a specific article relevant to the course, to internships available for IS students. Check the “Information” area in the course Blackboard site.

Inclement Weather

In case of inclement weather, check the main UMBC Webpage (<http://www.umbc.edu>) to see whether UMBC is closed and classes are cancelled. Any work due on a class date that has been cancelled due to inclement weather will be due the next class meeting.

Using Lab Computers

During lab times, it is essential that computers are used for activities relating to class activities, and not for personal or entertainment purposes. This includes using the computer for email, instant messaging, chatting, surfing the Web, and other activities which are not relevant during the class. Students who indulge in any of the above will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the session and a record will be made of the incident.

Class Evaluations

Information Systems Department Class evaluations will be filled out online. You are strongly encouraged to fill out the evaluations online at the end of the semester and will be notified accordingly.

Tentative Schedule: Below is a tentative schedule of lecture topics and exams. I reserve the right to adjust this schedule for any reason, but I will make every effort to advise you of any changes well in advance. Please note that for some sessions, I may be unavailable due to a scheduling clash (marked with an asterisk *). Another instructor may take the class, or alternatively students will be expected to perform the work set for the session independently. The work will be then discussed either on the Blackboard messageboard or in the next class. Some classes may be conducted within an alternative classroom (marked with a plus +). I will inform you in advance of the room via the Blackboard site.

Lecture	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
1	1/27	Introduction to Syllabus Library Tour	Dix et al. – Chapter 5	Assignment 1 set
2	2/3	Data Gathering Contextual Design & Ethnography	Cairns and Cox – Chapter 2 Sears and Jacko – Chapter 49	
3	2/10	Information Architecture		
4	2/17	Scenario Based Design Data Gathering through Eye-tracking Web-based design + Usability Lab Tour +	Carroll – Chapter 3 Cairns and Cox – Chapter 3	Assignment 2 set
5	2/24	Prototyping using Visual Basic +	Preece et al. Chapter 11 Visual Basic handouts provided in advance	Discussion of your progress on Assignment 1 in class
6	3/3	Evaluation Techniques +	Dix et al. - Chapter 9	Discussion of your progress on Assignment 1 in class
7	3/10	Review Class Group work (Assignment 2)		Assignment 1 collected
*	3/17	Exam		
	3/24	Spring Break – No Class		
8	3/31	Evaluation Techniques Continued * Formulating a Usability Study Group work (Assignment 2)	Sears and Jacko – Chapters 57 and 58	
9	4/7	Experiment Design Basic Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis Group work (Assignment 2)	Cairns and Cox – Chapters 1, 6 and 7	One page synopsis of progress on Assignment 2
10	4/14	Participatory Design Group work (Assignment 2)	Sears and Jacko – Chapter 54	Discussion of your progress on Assignment 2 in class
11	4/21	Design & Testing with Diverse Populations Group work (Assignment 2)	Sears and Jacko – Chapter 44	Discussion of your progress on Assignment 2 in class
12	4/28	Final Presentations for Assignment 2		Assignment 2 collected
13	5/5	Future Directions in HCC	Readings on Blackboard site for discussion	
14	5/12	No class		