

Spring 2021

PTC 610-852: Research Methods for Information Design

John Starrick

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PTC 610: Research Methods for Information Design

Spring 2021

Instructor Information

Instructor

John Starrick, MSPTC

Email

John.j.starrick@njit.edu

Course Dates & Location

Online, Asynchronous
01/19/2021-05/13/2021
Office hours by appointment only

General Information

Description

(From the NJIT Catalog): Introduces user research methods such as contextual inquiry, ethnographic field studies, card sorting, affinity diagramming, and usability testing that provide the foundation for user-centered interaction design.

Prerequisite: Admission into either the MSPTC or certificate program, or consent of the program director

Expectations and Goals

By the end of this course, students should be able to demonstrate the following:

- Gather data, organize into groups, and draw connections using diagramming techniques
- Organize topics into specific categories by employing Card Sorting techniques
- Ability to conduct an ethnographic field study
- Design and revise a WebQuest based on initial data gathering and feedback from qualitative interviewing exercises
- Conduct a qualitative interview
- Perform qualitative coding for interview transcripts

Since we operate in an asynchronous online community, students are expected to demonstrate courtesy, etiquette and respect for their fellow students within the discussion forums. A heavy emphasis (27% of the overall grade) is placed on the discussion posts and replies as this type of information exchange greatly enhances our mutual learning experiences.

Course Materials

Required Materials

There are no required materials to purchase. Links and copies of reading assignments and/or research materials will be posted on the Canvas course site.

Course Schedule

| Week | Topic | Exercises |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Week 1: 01/19 - 01/24 | Introduction to Research Methods for Information Design | 1. Post your Introduction to the forum |
| Week 2: 01/25 - 01/31 | Introduction to Affinity Diagrams | 1. Weekly readings |

| Week | Topic | Exercises |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| | | 2. Discussion exercises |
| Week 3: 02/01 - 02/07 | Affinity Diagrams (cont.) | 1. Create affinity diagram |
| Week 4: 02/08 - 02/14 | Introduction to Card Sorting | 1. Weekly readings 2. Discussion exercises |
| Week 5: 02/15 - 02/21 | Card Sorting (cont.) | 1. Card sorting exercise |
| Week 6: 02/22 - 02/28 | Introduction to Ethnographic Field Studies | 1. Weekly readings 2. Discussion exercises |
| Week 7: 03/01 - 03/07 | Ethnographic Field Studies (cont.) | 1. Complete an ethnographic field study |
| Week 8: 03/08 - 03/14 | Introduction to Contextual Inquiry | 1. Weekly readings 2. Discussion exercises |
| Week 9: 03/15 - 03/21 | Spring Recess | • No assignments are due this week |
| Week 10: 03/22 - 03/28 | WebQuest | 1. Design draft WebQuest |
| Week 11: 03/29 - 04/04 | Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods | 1. Weekly readings 2. Discussion exercises |
| Week 12: 04/05 - 04/11 | Introduction to Qualitative Interviews | 1. Weekly readings 2. Discussion exercises 3. Begin qualitative interview process with partnered student |
| Week 13: 04/12 - 04/18 | Qualitative Interviews (cont.) | 1. Complete interview and submit transcript |
| Week 14: 04/19 - 04/25 | Introduction to Qualitative Coding | 1. Weekly readings 2. Discussion exercises |
| Week 15: 04/26 - 05/02 | Qualitative Coding (cont.) | 1. Submit coded transcript of qualitative interview |
| Week 16: 05/03 - 05/09 | Revise WebQuest | 1. Submit revised WebQuest |
| Week 17: 05/10 - 05/13 | Course Reflection | 1. Submit course reflection |

Additional Information and Resources

Grading Policy

Assignments, discussion activities and other exercises will be graded using a points system. The maximum number of points that can be attained in this class is 1000.

The tables below outline how your grades will be calculated:

| Final Grades | Range | Significance |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| A | 900-1000 | Excellent |
| B+ | 870-899 | Good |

| | | |
|-----------|---------|----------------------|
| B | 800-869 | Acceptable |
| C+ | 750-799 | Marginal Performance |
| C | 700-749 | Minimum Performance |
| F | 0-699 | Failure |

Assignments:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Introduction Post | 25 pts |
| Affinity Diagram Exercise | 100 pts |
| Card Sorting Exercise | 100 pts |
| Ethnographic Field Study | 100 pts |
| WebQuest Draft | 75 pts |
| Qualitative Interview Transcript | 100 pts |
| Coded Interview Transcript | 100 pts |
| WebQuest Final | 100 pts |
| Course Reflection | 30 pts |
| Weekly Initial Discussion Posts (6 weeks @ 25 pts each) | 150 pts |
| Discussion Peer Responses (6 weeks @ 20 pts each) | 120 pts |
| Total Points | 1000 |

Discussion Posts:

For the discussion posts, students are expected to provide valuable insight and demonstrate critical thinking for each week's topic(s). The same applies to the student responses. Please offer a substantive reply to your peers; a "simple I agree," or "great point," will surely not suffice. Replies should be a minimum 3-5 sentences that complement the author's original post.

All initial discussion posts are due by **Thursday 11:59pm** of the assigned week, and students must reply to at least **two** of their peers by **Sunday, 11:59pm**.

Assignment Due Dates:

Our course week will run from Monday to Sunday. All assignments are due on **Sundays by 11:59pm**, unless otherwise specified. Please see specific assignment instructions on the Canvas course site.

Should any serious circumstance arise that would prohibit an on-time assignment submission, please reach out to me as soon as possible so alternate arrangements may be made.

Late assignments will have point deductions of **10 pts per day**. After the third day, assignments will not be accepted and will receive a grade of **0** unless previous arrangements have been agreed upon.

NJIT's statement on academic integrity:

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu".

Communication:

All course related announcements and other information will be posted in the Canvas site and/or sent via NJIT's official student email system, as necessary. Please be sure to check the course announcements forum and your student email regularly. Also, please send any course related correspondence to this instructor via the NJIT email system.

I will be available to all students via phone or skype, WebEx, etc. by appointment only.

****Please note: This syllabus, the assignments, due dates, and other information may be revised by this instructor at any time during the semester. All changes will be reasonable, made according to class needs and in consultation with the program director.***