

## **SI 658 WINTER 2012**

### Information Architecture

Instructor: Dan Klyn // dan@understandinggroup.com

Schedule: Fridays 8:30 – 11:30am // NQ 2185

Workplan: <http://goo.gl/2AVTO>

### **Course background**

In 1998, two graduates of the University of Michigan's School of Information and Library Studies were awarded best "computer" book of the year by a relatively unknown online bookstore called Amazon.com. Their book was (and still is) called Information Architecture for the World Wide Web, and its authors are widely regarded as the "founding fathers" of IA. Rosenfeld and Morville became world-reknown as authors of "the polar bear book," and the venerable "bible of IA" is now in its 3rd edition. We will read their book in this class.

But there's more to the story of information architecture than polar bears.

With the dawn of the Web 2.0 era and a rising tide of web design practitioners embracing a more broadly-shared identity under the banner of "UX" , perspectives on the value, role and definition of IA continue to evolve. Work is being done academically and in the field to both understand more deeply what IA is and where it came from, and to use the lens of IA to see into a future of ubiquitous networked information systems and use of information products and services across channels, devices and modalities.

My intention in this course is for students to become conversant with the core principles and ideas of information architecture, and develop -- as much as we can in a single term -- a broad understanding of the theory and practice of information architecture.

### **Questions We'll Ask**

- Where did the idea of information architecture come from?
- Who were the first information architects? What did they do, and why?
- How is IA differentiated from adjacent and related disciplines and communities of practice?
- Does IA matter today? Did it matter differently in the past from how it matters today?
- How do you think like an IA?
- How to you get a job doing IA work?

## Learning Information Architecture in Context

Most class sessions will include time for students to meet in small groups and conduct activities that contextualize the concepts presented in lectures and readings. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> class session, students will form teams for the term. Each team will choose an online product or service as the focus for their work in the course for the term. Going forward, each class session's activity will be team-based and set in the context of each team's product or service.

## Skills We'll Develop

- Process flow diagramming
- Representing organization schemes and structures
- User experience assessment
- Heuristic assessment of information architectures
- Credibility assessment of websites/services
- Techniques for getting at the "why" of an effort
- Techniques for understanding users of an information architecture
- Techniques for representing design ideas for making and improving information architecture

## Weekly Deliverables, Term Project and Working In Class

Most weeks there'll be a deliverable of some sort for your team to post at the conclusion of the class session. And during the final third of the term, a generous portion of each class session will be a workshop format. *All of the group work you do in this class takes place during class.* This is a new approach for Winter 2012.

## Grading

Your grade will be based on a 100 point scale

Assignments	Points	Total
Weekly Postings	7 (5 total)	35
Term Project - Presentation	20	20
Term Project - Report	45	45
		<b>100</b>

Translation of points to letters for your final grade:

Total	Grade Point	Letter Grade
≥ 98 points	4.0	A
95 pts	3.8	A-
90 pts	3.5	B+
85 pts	3.0	B
80 pts	2.5	B-
75 pts	2.0	C

## Readings

**The Timeless Way of Building**, Christopher Alexander (1979)

**Information Anxiety**, Richard Saul Wurman (1989)

**Information Architecture for the WWW, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition**, Morville and Rosenfeld (2006)

**Linkosophy**, Andrew Hinton (2008)

**The Elements of User Experience, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition**, Jesse James Garrett (2010)

**Pervasive Information Architecture**, Resmini and Rosati (2010)

## Assignments

### Weekly Postings – 7 points maximum per posting

**DUE DATES:** January 13, 20, 27, February 3, 10, 17 and 24

Summary: At the end of each class session, your team will post artifacts from the session

Grading Rubric

- 5 points – You posted something.
- 2 points – You exhibited degree or two of awesome beyond just posting something.

### Term Project Presentation: 20 points maximum

**DUE DATES:** April 6 or 13

Summary: Your team will give a presentation to highlight the work you did throughout the term.

Grading Rubric

- 10 points – You presented something.
- 5 points – The work is or seems strong.
- 5 points – The presentational aesthetics/experience was strong

### Term Project Report - 45 points maximum

**DUE DATES:** April 13

Summary: Your team will turn in a report that explains and depicts the work you did throughout the term.

Grading Rubric

- 20 points – You reported on something.
- 10 points – The work is or seems strong.
- 5 points – Document craftsmanship was strong.
- 10 points – Observations and solutions are mapped back to readings or sources of backgrounding.