

## SI 350: UX Field Research in the Public Sector

### **Course Description**

In this course, we will explore the application of user experience research methods to understanding the citizen perspective of community issues. Students work with local government staff to conduct user experience research around civic information issues. We learn through practice, facilitated by direct interaction with government staff and citizens.

Students will work in teams to collect user data, using multiple UX research methods. They will apply UX research analytical methods to find insights from that data, and communicate their findings and recommendations in a written report and formal presentation to our partners in local government.

### **Topic: discovery and exploration of Ann Arbor city parks**

The City of Ann Arbor has 161 parks. Fifteen of these parks are attended and 70 of them are natural areas with volunteer programs. The remaining parks are un-staffed, manicured public spaces and playgrounds intended for the public to enjoy. City staff hope to improve online resources and create new information tools that help residents and visitors find and enjoy the many parks in Ann Arbor. They have begun to collect user feedback through the Visit Every Park Challenge, but they need a deeper understanding of the information needs of park visitors in order to design appropriate resources.

Our user research team will apply UX research methods to better understand the experience, needs, motivation, and context of park visitors. Our research questions will include:

- What do visitors want to know about parks?
- When and how do they want to know it?
- What are their expectations of a park experience, and how can information tools match and improve that?
- Are there general categories of park visitors, and do they have different information needs? How is their information-seeking similar?
- How are visitors information needs currently met?
- What do their motivations and concerns tell us about potential improvements?

### **Learning Objectives**

- Literacy in practical challenges that affect user research.
- Literacy in UX research methods appropriate for user discovery.
- Awareness of current topics in civic technology.
- Competence in communicating professionally with an external client.

- Competence in working in a fast-paced team context.

**Instructor**

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**Instructional Aides**

TBD

**Office hours:** Monday 10am - 12pm

**Join via persistent Zoom meeting:** <https://umich.zoom.us/j/4429523194>

**Format**

This is a four-week, intensive course (12 contact hours/week) offered to undergraduates during the Spring term. The course involves extensive group work sessions and regular interaction with the Ann Arbor community, including city staff and residents. The class will meet four times a week for 4 hours/day (1pm - 4:50pm) on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

**Daily Schedule**

The class schedule will vary. This is a general outline, but students should not plan other activities or obligations based on this schedule.

- **Hour 1: (Asynch) Preparation-** Get ready to engage in class through readings, recorded lecture, podcasts, and individual assignments. This work can be done any time prior to hour 2. Instructor will be available for office hours and project support.
- **Hour 2: (Synch) Practice-** Develop the skills introduced in the first hour through guests, workshops, Miro activities, rehearsals, discussion, etc.
- **BREAK**
- **Hour 3: (Synch) Synthesis-** Bring individual work products together through feedback, cross-team activities, Miro board activities, students presentations, guests, etc.
- **Hour 4: (Semi-synch) Integration-** Apply class learning to the final project by reviewing assignments, discussing strategies and plans, team work time and instructor consulting.

Students should plan for individual and collaborative work, both during and outside of class hours. Because this is an intensive experience, you should plan for time outside of class each day to coordinate and complete UX research assignments in the community (virtually/remotely). Plan for flexibility in your schedule outside of class.

**Remote Learning Tools**

The “classroom” experience will require the use of five main online tools:

- [Canvas](#), for assignments, resources, grading, and official course announcements, and communication with the teaching team
- [Zoom](#), for video meetings and workshops
- Miro, for collaborative workshop activities
- [Slack](#), for persistent chat and communication during scheduled course hours, and collaborative student efforts

Students will also use a variety of common online media and tools (youtube, podcasts, Google docs, etc.) for learning and assignments.

### **Remote Attendance**

- Participation will be measured in two ways:
  - **Class meetings**  
Completing short polls during large group meetings each day
  - **Workshops and Break-out sessions**  
Contribute content to Miro activities
- Make-up assignments will be available for up to two missed class days (or any part of that day). The assignments will be designed to address the topics and activities in the missed class, and sufficient to ensure that the student is prepared for activities in the next class meeting. These make-up assignments are only available for emergencies and absence with prior notice. They require more effort than attending class, and it is always better to attend class than to do make-up assignments.
- It is always in your best interest to notify the instructor as soon as you know you will miss any part of a class meeting.
- Assignment deadlines will not be extended as a result of absence from class.

### **Work Process**

Students will be working with a community client who will present them with a User Experience challenge. Examples of these problems could include:

- “Our organization makes datasets available, but we feel they are underutilized by the public.”
- “We are planning a new initiative and we want community input. How do we get a younger audience to participate?”

### **Outline of Topics/Schedule**

A detailed schedule for each day, including required events, will be posted and updated on the Canvas site. Most days will follow the daily schedule described above.

- Week One- Introductions, preparations, and foundation
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- Week Two- UX research collection
  - Day 1 Introduction
  - Day 2 Secondary Research
  - Day 3 Interviews
  - Day 4 Surveys
  - Synthesis: Research Plan
  
- Week Two- UX research analysis
  - Day 1 Frameworks
  - Day 2 Empathy Map
  - Day 3 Journey Map
  - Day 4 Synthesis: Research Analysis
  
- Week Three- UX research presentation
  - Day 1 Visualizing data
  - Day 2 Applying a narrative
  - Day 3 Report preparation
  - Day 4 Synthesis: Presentation & reflection

The finalized report is due to the client by the end of week 4.

### **Resources & Readings**

Resources and readings will be posted to the Canvas site.

### **Assignments**

Students have a mix of individual and team assignments. Many assignments require considerable work, and will require significant time outside class.

- 20% Attendance and active participation
- 40% Daily homework (individual assignment)
- 40% UX recommendation report & presentation (team assignment)

The finalized report will be sent to the client by the end of week 3.

### **Resources & Readings**

[Sample readings. The plan is to focus on Civic Tech and IxD methods with an emphasis on organizations.]

Preece, Sharp and Rogers (2015) "Interaction Design: Beyond Human-Computer Interaction".

DiSalvo and LeDantec (2017) "Civic Design".

Allied Media Project (2014) Detroit Future Media Guide to Digital Literacy”,  
[https://www.alliedmedia.org/files/dfm\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://www.alliedmedia.org/files/dfm_final_web.pdf).  
<http://interactions.acm.org/archive/view/november-december-2017/civic-design>