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# Course Outline — User-Centered Design

## General Information

Course #	GLIS 627
Term & Year	Winter 2021
Course schedule	Thursdays, 11:35–2:25
Number of credits	3 Credits
Course location	Online

## Instructor Information

Name and Title	Dr. Karyn Moffatt
E-mail	karyn.moffatt@mcgill.ca
Virtual office hours	By appointment

## Communication

Questions on the content or logistics of the course should be posted to the course discussion group so that the whole class can benefit. Email should be used for questions of a personal nature. To ensure that your emails are properly filed for prompt reading, include [GLIS 627] in the subject line. Expect a 24hr response time during the week and a 72hr response time over the weekend.

## Forms of Address

I grew up calling my father by his first name because he felt strongly that children should be treated as equals. While this may or may not have led to a greater sense of equality in my young self (it certainly led to complicated conversations on the playground), it has resulted in a certain discomfort with formality. **However, we unfortunately live in a society in which not everyone is equally granted respect based on their accomplishments and credentials.**<sup>1</sup> I further acknowledge that as a straight non-disabled white cis person, I am granted much more assumed respect than many of my equally qualified peers. Within SIS, I have witnessed honorifics used inconsistently (even within the same sentence), and have made blunders myself. **I strongly encourage you to address all faculty with appropriate honorifics, especially in group or public settings.** This acknowledges *and signals* respect for their accomplishments and expertise. It can be challenging. I myself struggle to remember to switch over (no, faculty do not address each other as “Prof. Such and Such” in private). Further, I ask that you reflect on your natural inclinations, and consider whether perceptions over for whom it feels more natural to use an honorific are perhaps rooted in bias over who deserves such respect.

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<sup>1</sup> As evidenced by the recent commentary on Dr. Jill Biden's use of 'Dr.': <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/12/us/jill-biden-doctor-wsj.html>

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## Course Overview

This course will provide an intensive project-based introduction to interaction design, oriented toward practical methods for designing interactive systems. The goal of this course is to prepare information professionals capable of participating in the design of information system interfaces, through hands-on experience with the techniques and methods used.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Identify the principles and concepts of user-centered design
- Critically discuss the appropriateness of potential design methodologies and their applicability to different problems and contexts
- Gather useful information about users and their activities through systematic observation
- Demonstrate effective skill in employing design and evaluation methods
- Prototype a small system, using an iterative, user-centered design process

## Instructional Method

The class will be taught in a flipped format. At the start of each week, pre-class content will be posted to MyCourses, including links to video recorded lectures and readings and other video content. As watching one person speak for long periods of time can be boring, I will aim to incorporate different points of view and to vary the content as much as possible. You are expect to review this content prior to class on Thursday.

On Thursdays, **the first half of class (11:35am–12:55pm)** is available to you for working on your group projects. You do not need to use this time (i.e., you can meet at other times, or work asynchronously with your group), but I have earmarked this time in the hopes that it will make project coordination somewhat easier. I will not lead this time. It is up to you and your group to decide how you wish to meet and work; however, I will be available during this time period if you need to call me in for a group meeting (Of course, you may have to wait if multiple groups request my attention at once).

In **the second half of class (1:05–2:35pm)**, we will meet over zoom. Here we will have class discussion and Q&A and use the breakout rooms to work on activities relevant to the techniques covered in the lecture. Students who are unable to make the synchronous sessions will not be penalized. Materials for completed the in-class activities will be posted to MyCourses for independent completion. Discussion and Q&A sessions will be recorded and posted.

## Required Course Materials

There is no textbook. Readings will be selected from a number of sources, available electronically through the McGill Library or freely on the web. A list of readings will be posted on MyCourses.

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## Course Content

Topics covered include

- Approaches to human centered design, including participatory and value-sensitive perspectives
- Methods for understanding users and their needs
- Techniques for conveying user needs and design ideas, including sketching, personas, scenarios, and storyboarding, and prototyping
- Methods for evaluation design outcomes

### Tentative outline

Week	Date	Topic
1	Jan 14	Design & the Design Process
2	Jan 21	Understanding People and Their Needs
3	Jan 28	Ideation & Design Problems
4	Feb 4	Conveying People and their Needs – Personas and Scenarios
5	Feb 11	Conveying Design Ideas – Sketching and Storyboarding
6	Feb 18	Turning Ideas into Designs – Video Prototyping
7	Feb 25	Evaluating Early Design Ideas
Mar 1–5		Study Break – No Class
8	Mar 11	Paper Prototypes
9	Mar 18	Interactive Prototypes
10	Mar 25	Careers in User Experience
11	Apr 1	Critiques to UCD
12	Apr 8	Course Wrap-Up

## Evaluation

The following provides a breakdown of the course deliverables and how they will be graded. More detailed instructions will be provided over the course of the term. You are expected to prepare for and participate in class. Due dates have been crafted to help distribute the workload throughout the term. There are also points in the term in which the class will engage in role playing (e.g., to test each other's prototypes) and so it will be important that group projects are ready for those activities. You will note that project management is in the grading rubric for the overall project assessment, and so persistent failure to meet project milestones will impact your grade. However, in light of the pandemic, there will be a two week grace period on all major deliverables as described in the table below.

### Weekly activities — 20% of the final grade (graded as complete/incomplete)

Every week will involve a hands on activity. If you attend the synchronous session you will complete this activity during the class time. If you cannot attend the synchronous session you can complete the activity on your own time. Following the session you will be asked to submit an output of the activity. This might involve uploading a worksheet that was part of the activity, submitting a photo of what you built during the activity, or answering a few short reflective questions. These outputs will be graded as complete (2 marks), partially complete (1 mark), or incomplete (0 marks). The total grade for these activities will be worth 20 marks.

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Thus, as there are 12 weeks in the term you can miss two weeks and still get full marks on this component of your grade.

**Design project — 80% of the final grade (40% individual work, 40% group work)**

A substantial component of this class will focus on a design project spanning the entire term. The project will be completed in teams of five (5), but will contain a mix of group and individual deliverables.

Throughout the term, a number of activities, including class critiques, mock-evaluation, status-update sessions will be used to provide you with feedback and help you stay on track. The timing and content of these activities will be described in more detail on MyCourses. Although you are not directly graded on these milestones, a portion of your final project grade is dedicated to your project management and incorporation of feedback received in-class. Accordingly, it is important that you remain on schedule with your project so that you can fully participate in the scheduled activities and do well on these criteria.

**Tentative timeline for project deliverables**

Deliverable	Type	Due Date		Weight
		Official	Final	
1. Understanding and Ideating	Individual	Feb 4	Feb 18	20%
2. Video Prototype	Group	Mar 11	Mar 25	20%
3. Evaluation of Video Prototype	Individual	Mar 25	Apr 8	20%
4. Final Prototype & Portfolio Report	Group	Apr 8	Apr 22	20%

**McGill Policy Statements**

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives. *Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).*

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures" (see McGill's guide to academic honesty for more information). *L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill).*

**Additional Statements**

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009.

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Mobile computing and communications devices are permitted in class insofar as their use does not disrupt the teaching and learning process. No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Instructor generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available on Mercury, the online course evaluation system. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Additional policies governing academic issues, which affect students, can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights (The Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities is available at [www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/Handbook-on-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities-2010.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/Handbook-on-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities-2010.pdf)).