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Stephanie Houde
RISD Collegiate Teaching Seminar
Spring 2015

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Teaching Philosophy

The purpose of education is to help students build knowledge, practical skills, community, and confidence in an environment that prepares them for an independent future. Higher education can provide a safe haven to grow and practice in before entering the professional world where the stakes are high, the time for learning new things can be limited, and the opportunity for building a community of peers may be more difficult.

My goals for teaching user experience design are to share extensive knowledge I have gained from many years working in the field as well as to achieve a richer and more reflective design practice for myself through interaction with new practitioners. Interaction design for software products (also known as user experience design, or user interface design) is still an emerging discipline. I had the opportunity to enter the field in its early stages, prior to the development of almost any academic programs. Now that formal programs have evolved, I see the need for leadership to articulate, guide, and grow the field as a valuable and dynamic academic discipline. I also look forward to learning from and gaining inspiration from interested students who will approach their designs with different backgrounds and ideas from my own.

One of the most impactful experiences of my college education was initiated by events outside the classroom. During my undergraduate architecture studies at Wellesley College, I took advantage of an exchange with MIT to take a summer research job at the Media Laboratory. The work, which involved computer graphics programming, forced me outside my usual areas of comfort which included liberal arts, fine arts and architecture, and their related student cultures. Taking on the job seemed like a ridiculous mistake as I painstakingly learned to write code largely through the help of engineering students and a few reference books. While the work I produced by the end of the summer was not extensive, it was a start, and the professor that I worked for encouraged me continue to work for him on other projects and to take formal courses in programming. His encouragement gave me the confidence to continue to work and study in this area that eventually lead to my career as a user experience designer of software products. The education that I derived from programming courses when I did take them seemed greater than any other courses I had ever taken before because I understood very concretely how the content being taught could be applied to a real world practice, and this was very motivating and exciting. I also benefitted greatly by combining engineering with my liberal arts studies base, because the ability to make as well as to analyze and articulate has proven to be a powerful creative combination.

That formative experience shaped my view of how I want to teach. I want to empower students by giving them the opportunity to learn new things outside of their existing areas of comfort and previous knowledge, have periods of learning where they can struggle, do poorly, or even fail without consequence. I will give them enough positive encouragement to be brave and go on trying even in a very challenging area, and to provide them with the chance to have a practical or applied experiences that make broader, more theoretical studies in an area of content more meaningful and valuable.

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I have three main goals for teaching interaction design. The first is to instill in students a clear understanding of the importance of empathizing with the prospective users of their designs. As user experience designers, we define artifacts that are to be used by people for productivity, creativity, and entertainment. To understand what people might want, like, and find easy to use we must come up with ideas, create prototype representations, and show them to prospective users to observe their reactions and find any difficulties they have. In my classes, all projects in which students are designing for people will involve real interactions and interviews with example users that I will help them to form a connection with. I will teach user research techniques through workshops and readings by practitioners.

My second goal is to teach students to understand the properties of the medium they are designing for in their work. Every design field has its medium: Apparel design has cloth, and print design has ink on paper. Interaction design, with applications such as smart phone apps, web sites, desktop applications, and software embedded physical products, has software as its medium. Students need a good basis for understanding the properties of software so that they can design appropriately for the medium and feel confident when collaborating with engineers who they will ultimately work with closely to produce software products. In my classes, students will be required to articulate their design rationale in the context of the properties of the medium that they will understand through examples and readings. In advanced work, I will require hands on implementation of some of the user visible parts of every design to insure that students have a concrete understanding of what crafting software is actually like.

My third goal is to teach students to create interactive experiences that are visually attractive and engaging. Clear, attractive, and inventive visual styling of interactive components as well as text, and imagery will form another key focus of my curriculum. My classes will emphasize use of layout and color and drawing skills for rendering emerging ideas clearly. We will study examples of visually successful prototypes and final products, and I will use methods of small group and individual studio critiques to draw out the subtleties of visual design in student work. Evaluation of the visual presentation of all work at all stages from rough ideas to final art will be part of assessment in my classes.

The most important aspect of my teaching is my depth of experience as an interaction designer, and my strong desire to share that experience with students. This is important because theory-based education alone is not the best means to prepare students to become practitioners themselves. If I can articulate the real-world practice of user experience design and provide interesting projects that are relevant to real world applications it will empower students with the skills, knowledge and confidence to become creative and successful practitioners in the field themselves.

UXDE 101 Intro to Interaction Design: Diving Into Design for Real Users

6 Credits Department: Interaction Design
1 Semester Instructor: Stephanie Houde

COURSE DESCRIPTION

These days, consumers expect desktop, phone, and web applications and services to be more fun, useful, and easy to use than ever before. Companies like Apple and Google have shown us what easy-to-use, beautiful, and highly functional user experiences are like, and everyone wants more like that. Designing software applications that people love to use requires commitment to understanding what people need and want and incorporating their feedback throughout a rapid, iterative, and collaborative design process.

This course provides an introduction to the basics of designing interactive software products and services that offer positive experiences to users as they work and play. Through a series of skill building workshops and one main studio project, students will explore interaction design practices including investigative research, collaborative brainstorming, rapid prototyping, and user research. Emphasis is placed on techniques such as interactive storyboarding that enable designers to simulate future products quickly for purposes of progressive refinement in response to feedback from prospective users. Projects will be evaluated based on the quality of insights gained from user research, iterative design decision-making, and final product simulations. Presentation of the design story and a demonstration of simulations to group will be required throughout the semester.

This is an introductory level course with no prerequisites that is required for all UX MA students. Programming and final screen art skills are not required. Students are encouraged to take this as a means for understanding what generally involved in designing successful software user experiences at a high level. Those interested in further mastery of skills and concepts introduced may wish to pursue further studies in UXDE 102 Drawing for Rapid Visualization, UXDE 103 Visual User Interface Design, UXDE 202 UX Prototyping, PSYC 201 User Research Methods, UXDE 203 Programming for Designers, and BUSD 202 Designing for Product Innovation, and UXDE 205 Advanced User Experience Design.

UXDES 305 Advanced Interaction Design: Making it Real

12 Credits Department: Interaction Design
2 Semesters Instructor: Stephanie Houde

Real-world software products and services are developed in fast paced environments where user experience design is created and refined quickly in close collaboration with software developers and business leaders. The most successful products address a compelling user need through an engaging visual interface that performs well on the software platform.

This course provides the opportunity for students to gain experience working in a cross-disciplinary team to design and build a simple working software product using methods that will help prepare them to join real product teams in the future. User-centered methods, including user observation, rapid visualization, prototyping, and agile development will be used to design and build a web-based software solution that can be tested within the college community. Project teams that balance design, business, user research, and development skills will be put together. Team members will collaborate to identify a compelling but tractable user need to address and will design and build a working web application to address that need. Projects will be evaluated based on the quality of insights gained from user research, design revisions based on user input, overall visual and interactive appeal, and final presentation of a working software product or service. Individual contributions will be evaluated based on project sketchbooks, personal contributions to projects, collaboration, communication, and peer evaluations.

This is an advanced course for students who have completed UXDES 101 and who have advanced knowledge gained in courses or equivalent experience in an area relevant to user experience design including design thinking, rapid visualization, visual interaction design, user studies, programming, or product innovation from a business standpoint. It provides a two semester long capstone project for all UX MA students.

UXDES 102 Design Thinking: Teaming Up to Understand and Innovate

6 Credits Department: Interaction Design
1 Semester Instructor: Stephanie Houde

Designers use methods of informal research, visualization, critique and iteration to develop their plans. The type of practical thinking that occurs when various design solutions are evaluated in the context of input from research, critique and collaboration has become known as "design thinking." This approach to evaluating ideas and generating new ones has recently been recognized as a practice that has broad value and appeal for a wide variety of applications outside traditional design domains. Several medical device solutions as well as improved information services in public spaces like hospitals and museums have been achieved with the aid of design thinking.

This course provides a fast-paced introduction to design thinking and practical skills to empower participants to lead group design thinking sessions to solve real problems. Class time will be divided between lectures and interactive workshops on alternate weeks. Lecture weeks will include presentation of design thinking methods and case studies. In addition, guest speakers will share stories of successful uses of design thinking in both visual and non-visual problem solving domains. On workshop weeks, we will divide into teams to conduct dynamic brainstorming and visualization sessions. Methods of user empathy mapping, group collaboration, and rapid sketching/visualization will be used to identify novel solutions for real-world problems. Solutions developed by teams will be conceptual in nature – represented only by collaboration walls covered in notes and images that teams will use as props to present results to the larger group at the end of the class. Active class participation, an essay, and a final presentation will be required. Workshop day attendance is mandatory.

This is an elective course with no prerequisites. Students from all departments in the college community are encouraged to join the course to see how design thinking methods can be applied to projects in their domains.

UXDE 101 Intro to Interaction Design: Diving Into Design for Real Users

Department: Interaction Design
Instructor: Stephanie Houde
Fall 2015

COURSE DESCRIPTION

These days, consumers expect desktop, phone, and web applications and services to be more fun, useful, and easy to use than ever before. Companies like Apple and Google have shown us what easy-to-use, beautiful, and highly functional user experiences are like, and everyone wants more like that. Designing software applications that people love to use requires commitment to understanding what people need and want and incorporating their feedback throughout a rapid, iterative, and collaborative design process.

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GOALS

In this course, students will:

- Practice the basics of conducting informal user studies to collect user stories that drive the design process and ultimately, the end-user experience of a product.
- Employ techniques for developing product and user interface ideas with quick design prototypes.
- Practice balancing user needs, with product goals, functional constraints, and visual design goals in a design process.
- Evaluate prototype designs with feedback from users and fellow designers that drives further design iteration.

OBJECTIVES

- Participation in critiques and discussion 20%
- Demonstrate understanding in Interim class assignments 25%
- Illustrate a clear concept in prototype version 1 25%
- Innovate with feedback from users in prototype version 2 30%

ASSESSMENT

Student work will be evaluated based on the quality of insights gained from user research, platform evaluation, visual design, and articulation of iterative design decision-making, and quality final product simulation. Points are taken off for work turned in late.

Students will be graded on an A, B, C, Re-Do and F scale. Feedback will be given for all work. The opportunity to do one further iteration to improve grade will be provided.

A: Indicates that the final product prototype is well designed and well crafted. Its features are motivated by real user observations and interfaces, platform decisions, and visual design choices are complete and embody good decision making.

B: Indicates good quality of work that shows a grasp of decision making motivated by user observations and good effort to understand the platform and visual deign issues. The final prototype is reasonably well crafted and presented.

C: Indicates satisfactory quality work that shows a minimum understanding of user needs. Although the final project may not be well crafted, the ideas behind feature, platform, and visual choices are articulated.

Re-do: indicates the work does not meet basic requirements and must be redone and submitted the following week.

F: For Re-do assignments that are either not turned in or are not acceptable

TIMETABLE

Week 1: Introduction to user experience design for software

- Class 1: Introduction to each other, and the subject, with design thinking sketching exercises.
  Assignment: Collect your favorite apps to show next time

- Class 2: Share favorite apps, discussion.
  Assignment: User studies preparatory reading [Reading TBD]

- Outcomes: Understand and articulate the user experience of some common applications, while getting to know your fellow classmates.

Week 2 Introduction to user studies

- Class 1: Presentation on how to conduct informal, qualitative, user studies. Try it out on each other in class.
  Assignment: Prepare questions for user interviews

- Class 2: Break into groups to Interview guest users for theme related product idea generation (theme TBD).
  Assignment: 3-5 Product idea sketches motivated by interviews

- Outcomes: Understand the basics of working with users and apply that knowledge to actual user interview situations.

Week 3: Introduction to brainstorming for product idea generation

- Class 1: Brainstorming techniques lesson. Break into groups who interviewed the same users to conduct brainstorming idea generating session.
  Assignment: Sketch your favorite idea; be prepared to share it next time

- Class 2: Idea presentations. Group critique.
  Assignment: Revise your idea based on feedback.

- Outcomes: Analyze the results of user interviews individually and in groups. Apply brainstorming techniques of rapid visualizing and sharing. Summarize your best product idea gleaned from observations and discussions both visually and with words for the group.

Week 4: Drawing and Storyboarding techniques

- Class 1: Drawing Workshop. Focus on quick ways of drawing on paper and using computer tools to represent software interfaces.
  Assignment: Cartoon 3 favorite apps

- Class 2: Storyboarding Workshop. Focus on ways of telling the story of the users journey through the application that you are imagining.
  Assignment: Storyboard a critical workflow through your product concept.

- Outcomes: Apply new drawing and storyboarding techniques to the evolving product concept. Evaluate and summarize the most important user workflow in the product.

Week 5: Considering the platform

- Class 1: Overview of phone, tablet, desktop and web platform attributes and interactive properties.
  Assignment: Consider which platform suits your product best, be prepared to discuss.

- Class 2: Guest Speaker: Designer from software company to speak about real world design story of designing for real technical constraints.
  Assignment: Readings related to real product development.

- Outcomes: Recognize the properties of the platform that the software application would be implemented in. Identify and appraise features that work best in that medium.

Week 6: Introduction to prototyping. Learn the wire-framing technique.

- Class 1: Lecture on Prototyping
  Assignment: Read What do Prototypes Prototype?

- Class 2: Wire-frame technique workshop
  Assignment: Wireframe your critical workflow.

- Outcomes: Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of prototyping and apply the wire-frame technique to further visualize the details of the most important user workflow in the product.

Week 7: Visual design for interactive screens

- Class 1: Lecture on visual design, using many examples. Introduction to mood boarding.
  Assignment: Work on mood boards to show visual direction for product.

- Class 2: Share mood boards and discuss
  Assignment: Choose a visual direction for your product.

- Outcomes: Recognize the impact of different visual design styles on the user experience. Compose your own mood boards as a means for choosing a high level visual design direction for the product. Selection of a direction for your product.

Week 8: Bringing it all together, getting ready to show to users

- Class 1: In class time to work on prototype 1. Informal critique.
  Assignment: Prep current prototype to show users

- Class 2: Review of tips for interviewing users to get feedback. On-going work on prototypes and questions for user interviews next week
  Assignment: Finalize prototypes and questions for user interviews.

- Outcomes: Creation of a prototype that is ready to show users for meaningful feedback. Recall methods for talking with users, and make a specific plan for how to get the best feedback from users when you show them your prototype.

Week 9: Getting feedback from users

- Class 1: Conduct User Interviews in Class (1/2 Group). Show users your prototypes to get feedback.
  Assignment: Be prepared to share what you learned in next class

- Class 2: Conduct User Interviews in Class (other half). Show users your prototypes to get feedback.
  Assignment: Be prepared to share what you learned in next class

- Outcomes: Apply your test plan to a real user interview situation. Summarize findings.

Week 10: Show what you learned

- Class 1: Present what you learned from user feedback in small groups. Brainstorm revision ideas.
  Assignment: Work on revision ideas

- Class 2: Guest Speaker: User research in a real product development environment.
  Assignment: Storyboard a critical workflow through your product concept.

- Outcomes: Summarize findings. Experiment with ideas for revisions or changes in direction. Revise your original product design plan and storyboard to incorporate changes based on findings.

Week 11: Revision based on Feedback

- Class 1: Class time to make final revisions to prototypes.
  Assignment: Continue to work on final revisions

- Class 2: Class time to make final revisions to prototypes.
  Assignment: Continue to work on final revisions

- Outcomes: Create a final prototype that incorporates revisions planned based on changes identified through user interviews.

Week 12: Final Presentations

- Class 1: First of class presents final product prototypes. Include user motivated design rationale, choice of platform, visual choices, and revision story.

- Class 2: Second half of class presents.

- Outcomes: Summarize your final product design for the class, supporting your design decisions with user, platform, and visual/interactive design related choices. Be prepared to defend your choices in a question and answer period following the presentation.

CRITIQUES
Presenting your ideas is critical to being a designer and eventually working in a team.

MATERIALS
Students will need a laptop or tablet computer for this class.

VISITING PROFESSIONALS
Throughout the semester several guest speakers will tell what

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY
TBD

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Storyboarding A User Journey

UXDE 101 Week 4 Homework
DUE: Mon. 5/11/15 In Class

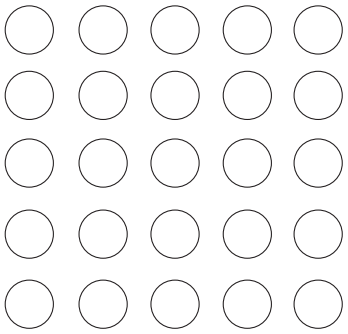
ASSIGNMENT

Create a story sequence using images and text in storyboard form to depict one user's journey through the application you are designing to accomplish a particular goal.

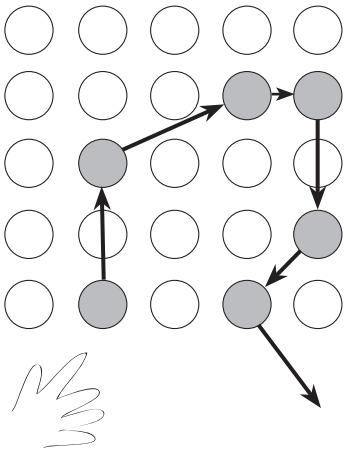
DESCRIPTION

The application that you are designing does not exist yet. But, by now, you have ideas about what features it needs to satisfy your users' needs, and what the user interface might be like to support those features. At this point it is tempting to begin to flesh out those features and interfaces in greater detail. But, before investing more effort in the details implementing your initial design direction, we need to understand what the *experience* of using you current vision of the product will be like from a users' perspective so that you can continue to improve your design based on how it will be used interactively. As we have seen in the drawing and storyboarding workshops conducted in class this week, one method for bringing user experience issues to the surface quickly is to depict what the user will see and do at key points as they use the application to meet their goals, in storyboard form. By doing this, we can visualize what the user's experience will be like at a level of detail that is high enough to bring out important points to consider in the design, but not so high that it makes us prematurely committed to the current design. In this assignment you will apply the techniques that you have learned to the application that you are designing for this class to create a storyboard that you will share in small group discussions at our next class meeting.

As you work, remember that when a user interacts with an application they have a goals and a context that exist independent of your application. Look back at your notes from your user interviews to identify comments and goals that can motivate a compelling user story. Consider the user's context: Will they be working alone or in a group, doing other things at the same time, or using a personal desktop or handheld computer? Imagery can be hand drawn, with an application or even modified from photographs. Use a technique that allows you to represent ideas quickly but neatly and in a style that suits you and the story.



Imagine that each circle in this diagram represents a feature in the application you are designing. It's tempting to organize them by function in the user interface and to treat all features as equally important.



If you consider a real goal that a user has in using the application, you are likely to find that the sequence in which the features would actually be used on their journey through the application suggests that a different organization based on making the most important features and sets of features the easiest to find and use.

GOALS

1. Identify a story that represents a primary user goal and the key steps they take to use to achieve it.
2. Define what the user will see as they take those steps in a succinct and simple but still visually compelling manner.
3. Share your storyboard with a group of fellow students so as to generate critique and discussion that will improve your design.

FINAL OUTCOMES

1. Apply new drawing and storyboarding techniques to the evolving product concept. Evaluate and summarize the most important user workflow in the product.
2. Submit a PDF document to our shared Google drive with filename in the format Lastname_Firstname_Storyboard.pdf. Bring a printed copy to class to pin on the wall for sharing and discussion in small working groups.

ASSESSMENT

Criteria for Evaluation:

- Selection and text description of an important user story 40%
- Visual quality and efficiency of sketches to depict the story 40%
- Ability to lead an effective discussion of the story in class 20%

Basic Attainment:

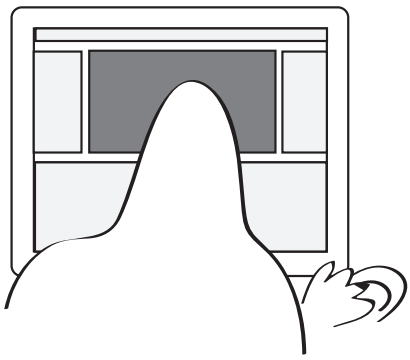
- Student completes the basic criteria for evaluation outlined above.

Advanced Attainment:

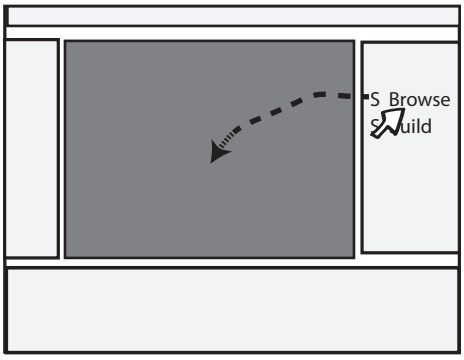
- Student completes the basic criteria for evaluation outlined above.
- Student is inventive in the narrative and visual presentation of the story
- Student's presentation evokes focused feedback on open design questions.

EXAMPLE

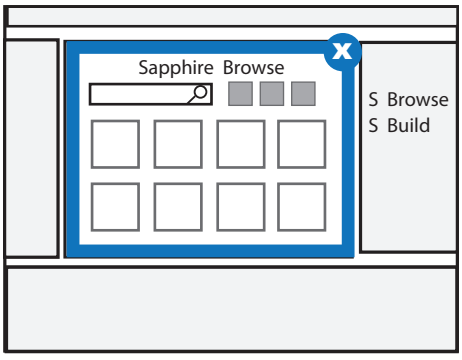
The story frames below are taken from a much longer storyboard that was used during the early stages of the product development process for a special video effects application. This representation helped the designer to think about how the user would could move through the system, and promoted focussed team discussion.



1. Brian is the lead production designer at a broadcast video studio. He has a project that needs to be completed today. All the raw footage has been shot and imported into his post production tool (like AE or Avid). He reviews the footage and starts thinking about different effects that can give the piece more "pop" or excitement.



2. He wants to experiment with different Sapphire looks so he drags out the new Sapphire Browse plug-in...



3. ...This causes the Sapphire Browse overlay to appear right over his main image area. This comes up very quickly (no perceived waiting time).

You have completed approximately one half of this semester course. This is a good time to stop and review the goals of the course and to consider how we are progressing to meet them.

GOALS (as stated in the course syllabus):

- Practice the basics of conducting informal user studies to collect user stories that drive the design process and ultimately, the end-user experience of a product.
- Employ techniques for developing product and user interface ideas with quick design prototypes.
- Practice balancing user needs, with product goals, functional constraints, and visual design goals in a design process.
- Evaluate prototype designs with feedback from users and fellow designers that drives further design iteration.

Please complete and hand in the following evaluation so that I can make any changes possible to address your concerns or suggestions during the remaining weeks of the class. Circle the number that best indicates how well are reaching our goals so far:

- Learn the basics of how to conduct informal user studies:

1 Not at all	2 Poorly	3 OK	4 Good	5 Excellent!

- Conduct user interviews that drive your own class project:

1 Not at all	2 Poorly	3 OK	4 Good	5 Excellent!

- Learn techniques for quickly making rough (low fidelity) design prototypes:

1 Not at all	2 Poorly	3 OK	4 Good	5 Excellent!

- Make rough prototypes to explore designs for your own class project:

1 Not at all	2 Poorly	3 OK	4 Good	5 Excellent!

- Learn to balance user needs with product goals, technical constraints, and visual design goals within the design process.

1 Not at all	2 Poorly	3 OK	4 Good	5 Excellent!

- Show prototypes to users to get feedback that drives design iteration

1 Not at all	2 Poorly	3 OK	4 Good	5 Excellent!

- Present prototypes to classmates to gain productive feedback:

1 Not at all	2 Poorly	3 OK	4 Good	5 Excellent!

The course is structured so that you are working on one large project throughout the semester with smaller workshops incorporated to introduce new skills and techniques as you progress toward the final design. Is this process legible to you? How do you feel it is working? Do you have any insights as to how it would work better? Please use the space provided here to comment:

Please use the back of this sheet to make any additional comments about these questions or any other aspect of the course you have experienced so far.

USER EMPATHY	DESIGN ITERATION	PROBLEM SOLVING	VISUAL DESIGN	PRESENTATION
3 Analyzes user needs accurately and drives core design goals and solutions to match these in an insightful manner.	**3** Responds to user, classmate, and expert feedback with progressively improved design prototypes that are inventive.	**3** Evaluates user, technology, visual/interactive goals to find an inventive solution that balances all of these creatively.	**3** Presents attractive visual representations of designs at all stages of the process from rough sketches to final screens.	**3** Articulates and presents clear design rationale and questions to classmates, experts, and users exceptionally well.
2 Understands some user needs and incorporates those needs as drivers of some aspects of the final design.	**2** Shows ability to respond to some team and user feedback by making some changes in response to their comments.	**2** Shows ability to incorporate some design rationale motivated by technology constraints and user needs.	**2** Employs some standard visual strategies to create clear imagery that shows promise but has room for improvement.	**2** Is able to convey some of the basic design story with reasons for choices but has room for improvement.
1 Shows ability to understand user needs but is not able to use these to motivate specific design features.	**1** Listens to feedback from users and team members but is not able to translate this information into design changes.	**1** Identifies user, technology and visual issues but is not able to balance these issues in the final design.	**1** Becomes familiar with some visual design issues but is not able to employ techniques learned to their work.	**1** Presents final design without adequately telling the story of how and why design choices were made.