

ID 2325 Syllabus

User-Centered Design Methods

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

Description

Catalog description: This course introduces students to current user-centric design methods used to identify, understand, assess, and prioritize the factors that contribute to more effective design solutions.

User-Centered Design Methods introduces concepts from the behavioral and social sciences, examined through a design lens, to understand user experiences. The course explores the design process and the tools, theories, and methods designers use to understand interactions with products, services, systems, and experiences. It emphasizes design research methods, including interviews, focus groups, observations, ethnography, and surveys, as well as the fundamentals of qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Students analyze existing products, conduct primary research, and generate design criteria and concepts.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Describe and apply the design process and tools commonly used to develop user-centered solutions.
- Apply user-centered design research methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data, including identifying both explicit and latent user needs.
- Synthesize research insights into design criteria and develop user-centered concepts that respond to identified needs.

- Communicate design processes and outcomes effectively through written, visual, and oral formats, including the use of scenarios, sketches, and other media.
- Collaborate effectively in team-based design contexts to conduct research and develop design solutions.

Required Course Materials

Course Text

ID 2325 uses articles and books available via the Georgia Tech Library. All course materials (e.g., slides and readings) will be provided on Canvas.

Course Website and Other Classroom Management Tools

Canvas is the portal for disseminating course information, providing resources, and submitting assignments. Students are expected to check it weekly.

Grading Policy

Final grades in this course are based on a combination of individual and group assignments that assess your ability to apply user-centered design research methods, develop design concepts, and communicate your work effectively. Each assignment contributes to your final grade.

Grades reflect both the quality of submitted work and adherence to assignment requirements. Because the course is project-based, consistent engagement, timely submission of work, and active participation in group assignments are essential to success.

Assignments

1. Logbook / Field Diary (Individual) – 15% towards grade
 - 1.1 Personal statement (initial log) – 5% towards grade
 - 1.2 Periodic reflections as shown on Canvas – 10% towards grade
2. Analysis of an Existing Product (Group) – 5% towards grade
3. Mini Challenge: Qualitative Design Research (Group) – 40% towards grade
4. Final Project (Group) – 40% towards grade
 - 4.1 Survey Study – 20% towards grade
 - 4.2 Design Criteria and Design Concept – 20% towards grade

Total – 100%

Each assignment includes specific criteria for success, as outlined in this syllabus. These criteria define expectations for research quality, depth of analysis, creativity, and clarity of communication.

Grades for each assignment will be posted on Canvas, allowing students to track their cumulative performance and estimate their final course grade throughout the semester. Grades are assigned based on predefined criteria and standards, not on relative performance compared to other students.

Description of Graded Components

Logbook / Field Diary (Called simply 'Logbook' hereafter)

Purpose	This assignment helps you reflect on your growth as a designer and your evolving approach to human-centered design. By documenting your learning, decisions, and influences, you will develop self-awareness, critical thinking skills, and a personal design identity.
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain a logbook (See prompts on Canvas: Assignments > Logbook).• Record your reflections using text, sketches, images, or other forms of representation. Write in the first person.• Submit the logbook as a single PDF on each due date, including all prior entries and your personal statement.
Criteria for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All entries are complete, thoughtful, and clearly connected to course concepts.• Personal statement demonstrates self-reflection and a clear connection between your identity and your design practice.• The final PDF is well-organized, with all previous and current entries included.

Analysis of an Existing Product

Purpose	This assignment builds your ability to critically analyze products using both material qualities (functionality, usability) and immaterial qualities (emotions, meaning).
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze a product of interest using concepts covered in the “Framework of Product Experience” classes.• Address both material and immaterial aspects, using visual references such as advertisements, packaging images, and product photos.• Prepare a PDF with your analysis and visual evidence.• Present your findings in class on the assigned date.

- Criteria for Success
- Analysis is grounded in course concepts and readings.
 - Both material and immaterial aspects are examined in depth.
 - Visuals are clear, relevant, and well-integrated into the analysis.
 - The presentation is clear, concise, and visually engaging.

Mini Challenge

Purpose This assignment develops your skills in qualitative research, including interviews and/or observations and data analysis. You will explore user experiences relevant to your sophomore studio projects¹ to learn how to collect, analyze, and present user research data.

- Tasks**
- Work in groups to plan and conduct interviews and observations as described on Canvas, documenting through audio, photo, and video.
 - Begin thematic analysis outside of class, then complete it in class.
 - Edit videos and photos (primarily outside class) to illustrate key findings of your observations.
 - Prepare a PDF presentation summarizing interviews, observations, and analysis, supported by media files.
 - Upload all deliverables to Canvas and present your work in class.

- Criteria for Success**
- Research activities follow ethical and methodological guidelines discussed in class.
 - Interviews and observations are well-documented and generate clear insights.
 - Visual and audio materials are relevant, well-edited, and enhance understanding of the findings.
 - Thematic analysis is conducted according to standards set in class.
 - The final presentation communicates the research process and results clearly and engagingly.

Final project

Purpose This assignment develops your skills in survey studies. You will explore user experiences relevant to your sophomore studio projects¹ to learn survey design, sampling, data collection, and basic quantitative analysis. It also focuses on translating research results into design criteria and exploring research-driven ideation.

¹ If you are not enrolled in a studio, you may still take this course, and we will define the topic together.

Tasks

- Survey Design and Data Collection
 - Use secondary data to identify key constructs for the survey.
 - Design a survey.
 - Pilot the survey with 3 to 5 people to refine wording and flow.
 - Recruit approximately 30 participants and collect responses.
 - Clean the dataset and document your decisions, including exclusion rules and how you handled missing data.
- Data Analysis
 - Report sample characteristics.
 - Analyze items with appropriate descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations.
 - Synthesize findings into clear insights.
- Design
 - Translate insights into design criteria.
 - Generate ideas and develop one detailed design concept in response to the design criteria you generated.
 - Prepare a PDF presentation and a poster that tell a coherent story from the research question to the design.

Criteria for Success

- Survey Design and Data Collection
 - The survey aligns with the defined constructs.
 - Questions are clear, unbiased, and varied where appropriate.
 - Pilot feedback is clearly implemented.
 - Target sample is reached, with transparent reporting of recruitment and inclusion criteria.
- Data Analysis
 - The dataset is cleaned with choices documented.
 - Results include appropriate descriptive statistics and meaningful comparisons.
 - Findings are interpreted accurately.
 - Key insights are specific, actionable, and directly connected to the analysis.
- Design
 - Design criteria clearly trace back to insights.
 - The final design concept responds to the design criteria.
 - Presentation and poster are clear, visually organized, and professional.

Final letter grades are assigned based on overall percentage performance, according to Georgia Tech grading standards:

Grade		Description	
A	90-100%	Excellent	<i>Consistently exceeds expectations in all criteria.</i> Demonstrates outstanding quality, creativity, technical execution, and clarity of communication. Work is thorough, well-documented, and engaging.
B	80-89%	Good	<i>Meets all expectations and occasionally exceeds them.</i> Shows solid and thoughtful work and clear communication. Minor weaknesses may appear in execution or depth, but overall work is strong.
C	70-79%	Satisfactory	<i>Meets some expectations but lacks consistency.</i> Work may be incomplete, surface-level, or unclear. Execution may contain gaps in clarity or polish.
D	60-69%	Passing	<i>Minimally meets expectations.</i> Work shows limited understanding of methods or insufficient development of ideas. Documentation, analysis, and presentation need significant improvement.
F	0-59%	Failure	<i>Does not meet expectations for assignments or course participation.</i> Work is incomplete, missing, or shows a lack of engagement with course materials.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

Review the course materials before the classes. You are expected to attend all classes in person, as the lectures will not be recorded or broadcast online unless Georgia Tech formally informs us of ‘modified campus operations’ and requires ‘digital learning’ days.

Please contact the instructors in advance if illness or an unexpected event prevents you from attending a class. You are responsible for reviewing the course content if you do not attend a class, and ask for the instructors’ assistance if needed.

Unjustified absences that were not previously discussed are allowed twice. For 3-5 absences, the student’s final grade automatically drops by one letter grade. Five or more absences will result in a two-letter reduction. Grades can be lowered to a D, but you will not fail solely by skipping classes.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

CORE IMPACTS

Not applicable.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgment, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to Georgia Tech's ideals in this class.

Collaboration and Group Work

Final grades are based on a combination of individual and group assignments. We will monitor group work to ensure an equal workload for all individuals. You must notify the instructors immediately if group relationships and workload distributions seem unfair.

Use of Generative AI

You are encouraged to use AI tools to enhance your work, such as revising your text and summarizing class notes. However, the use of AI to generate research data (e.g., interviews, observations, or surveys) or to analyze data is not permitted. This is a research course, so you are required to understand how to collect and analyze data. We recognize that in your future work, once you understand how research works, you may use these tools for data analysis, as you will then know how to audit the results. It is also not permitted to use AI to generate creative outcomes.

You must disclose AI use in all assignments where it is applied. Any violation of these guidelines will result in an F grade for the specific assignment.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Observe the class schedule and respect assignment due dates. Late submissions up to 48 hours without prior discussion with the instructors will incur a 25% grade deduction. Between 48 hours and 7 days, the deduction will be 50%. After seven days, assignments will be graded zero. Extensions are limited to documented health reasons and should be discussed with the instructors in advance.

Out-of-class assignments should be submitted through Canvas. Assignments delivered via e-mail will not be accepted unless specified by the instructors. You are responsible for ensuring that file uploads are completed on time, so plan ahead in case of known network performance issues. You are also responsible for ensuring that files are not corrupted.

In-class assignments should be completed and posted on Canvas by the end of the class. Only one group member should deliver group assignments as a PDF file containing all group members' names.

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

With developments and improvements to digital instruction over the past few years, the Institute has developed policies to leverage digital learning as much as reasonably possible. The policy sets forth requirements, procedures, and responsibilities related to the scheduling of digital instruction and/or make-up classes due to the modification of campus operations, closing of campus, or the necessary closing of instructional spaces for any reason (including but not limited to emergencies, such as inclement weather, power outages, or other infrastructure failures).

Students should await communications from their instructors regarding delivery of their classes during that period based upon the 'Digital Learning Days for Modified Campus Operations Policy' (<https://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/academic-affairs/digital-learning-days-modified-campus-operations>). Students should follow guidance and/or directions provided by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-Being regarding student activities, events, programs, and services.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

Mobile devices and personal computers can be used to take notes and work on class assignments. These devices should not be used for other purposes in class.

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources

A list of resources for undergraduate students' academic success and information about advising can be found at [Success at Tech](#).

Academic Support: Academic Success and Advising (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free support for your courses. Students can attend scheduled supplemental review (PLUS) sessions, stop by Drop-In Tutoring, or schedule a one-on-one appointment through Knack. To explore what options work best for you, please visit us online at success.gatech.edu/tutoring, email us at tutoring@gatech.edu, or come see us at Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, Suite 283.

Student Well-Being

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A [comprehensive list](#) of wellness-related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](#)).