

SYLLABUS for DTX 495: Design Thinking & Immersive Experiences

Discover the intersection of human-centered design and immersive environments in this comprehensive 8-week, project-based course. Students will use design thinking to develop innovative solutions tailored to the challenges of immersive experiences spanning diverse industries.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course is a project-based adventure, exploring design thinking and immersive experiences, with learning objectives across a mix of several learning approaches:

- **Feedback-Based Learning** - Apply critical thinking while giving and receiving productive and kind feedback within a classroom setting
- **Communication-Based Learning** - Effectively present and communicate design concepts to different audiences
- **Theory-Based Learning** - Understand the various mindsets and approaches utilized as part of the design process and the Siebel Center for Design taxonomy
- **Project-Based Learning** - Apply design thinking strategies to gain empathy and understand the scope in which immersive experience design may be applicable
- **Team-Based Learning** - Work collaboratively to ideate, prototype and iterate design solutions for immersive experiences
- **Reality-Based Learning** - Address real-world challenges and opportunities by using design thinking to conceptualize, design, and create immersive experiences that captivate and engage users
- **Practice-Based Learning** - Practice ambiguity and iteration in the human-centered design process
- **Reflective-Based Learning** - Describe at an advanced level what Human-Centered Design is and how to apply it to immersive experiences
- **Research-Based Learning** - Actively engage with various stakeholders and audience members in the pursuit of understanding, empathy and compassion, facts, motivations, desires, contextualized problem-finding
- **Definition-Based Learning** - Explain the definition of an immersive experience and explore the evolution and current technologies available
- **Experience-Based Learning** - Reflect on previous experiences in immersive environments
- **Story-Based Learning** - Explore storytelling and narrative design strategies in immersive experiences

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MECHANICS / DYNAMICS

Schedule:

A detailed schedule is provided elsewhere, but here are some key dates throughout the course:

03/18 - First class

04/08 - Mid-point presentation

04/29 - Last class & final presentation

05/06 - Report due

05/08 - Grade review

Virtual Workspace - This is a highly collaborative and interactive class. We will meet in a video conference Zoom meeting for most classes, using the same Zoom link. We will also be utilizing a Mural workspace, which is a digital whiteboard collaboration tool similar to Miro.

Physical Workspace - Please attend class in an environment that is conducive to active participation. This includes minimal distractions in your surroundings, a solid internet connection, and video/audio should be on during class as much as possible.

Class Type - Most classes will consist of delivery of brief lecture content, accompanied by group activities that drive the team-based project, which is the core element of this course. There will be occasional student / group presentations during class as well. We will also try to engage industry professionals throughout the course.

Commitment - It is expected that class attendance includes active participation. If you cannot be fully engaged please reach out to the instructor to explain why. Chronic disengagement will be counted as absent. Typical professional workplace behavior is expected. Showing respect for each member of the class is a top priority.

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EVALUATION

Performance assessments are intended to be a feedback mechanism to assist in your learning. Please feel free to reach out and discuss any evaluations or comments provided. Specific assignments and project details will be communicated throughout the course. The three main parts of the course are; Group Project (50%), Assignments (25%), Reflection (25%), Here are some details on how you can expect to be evaluated on each of these areas:

Group Project - 500pts (50%)

As a team, you will pick a domain to explore, utilizing a design thinking approach to creatively proposing a new immersive experience solution in that space.

Your individual project grade will be based on the following:

- **Collaboration** - Based on your individual efforts to work as a team toward producing quality work together. All team members are expected to practice active listening and engage as a supportive

member in all team tasks. It is highly recommended that your team establishes a weekly out-of-class meeting time, as there will be continual group work that will need your ongoing attention.

- **Participation** - Based on your individual, sustained effort and attitude toward the work, both in class and on assignments. This includes; a growth mindset, taking risks, thinking divergently, asking thoughtful questions, challenging assumptions, being open to critique, seeking feedback to iterate quickly, perspective taking, embracing ambiguity, and other design thinking traits.
- **Presentations** - Based on your individual contribution and preparation. You should work with your team to find a balance of responsibilities. There will be micro-presentations all throughout the course, sharing out individual and team activities. There will also be at least 2 more comprehensive project presentations, one at the mid-point of the course, and the other at the end.
- **Report** - Based on your team's collective quality and comprehensiveness of telling a compelling project story. This report will consist of telling the end to end story of your project experience. It will entail two main parts; an executive summary detailing your proposed solution, and a more detailed step-by-step explanation of your project journey, ensuring to highlight the value of taking a human-centered approach to the project..
- **Group Evaluation** - There will be opportunities to give and receive feedback from your peers. These evaluations will be considered into your overall project grade.

Exercises - 250pts (25%)

Based on your individual effort and quality on both team and individual assignments. Exercises will be a mix of direct and indirect activities driving your project forward through the design process. You can expect to be assigned an exercise after each class that will typically be due at the beginning of the following class. Details of the exercises, deliverables, and due dates will be communicated at the time of assignment.

Reflections - 250pts (25%)

Based on your ongoing completion of the weekly reflection prompts and demonstrates that you are being intentional about what you are learning, making connections across exercises, readings, lectures, and peer conversations. Additionally, you are expected to critically reflect on your own positionally, acknowledging biases/assumptions.

Before final grades are submitted to the University there will be a window of open discussion between each student and the instructor to align on your evaluation.

Grades

Letter grades will be assigned based on the total points earned for the course:

970-1000 = A+

930-969 = A

900-929 = A-

870-899 = B+

830-869 = B

800-829 = B-

770-799 = C+

730-769 = C

700-729 = C-

670-699 = D+

630-669 = D

600-629 = D-
000-599 = F

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TIMELINESS

Being on time, present and prepared for each class is necessary to doing your best work in the course. This class depends on the experiences provided by in-class work. Missing more than two classes without presenting an excused absence letter will result in a failing grade.

An absence is defined as: Missing class entirely, arriving 15 min late—past the official class start time (arriving within 15 min of class start time is a tardy), or not being in class for more than 15 min—stepping out or leaving early. Three (3) tardies are equal to one absence.

If a class is missed, it is the student's responsibility to contact their classmates first for the material and information covered that day. Students are expected to come to the next class prepared for the work that is to be covered. Office hours should be used for individual discussion and catch-up opportunities.

The student is responsible for contacting the instructor right away in order to coordinate and make arrangements for making up missed work. Students should notify the instructor in advance of missing any class or as soon as possible thereafter. An absence letter may be requested for documented absences resulting from: prolonged illness or injury of three days or more, life threatening, serious illness, injury or death of an immediate family member, a student's religious beliefs, observances, and practices.

For an absence to be excused and make up work to be accepted, the student must provide an explanation to the instructor and supply supporting evidence as required by the instructor.

Points for any type of submissions that are turned in late drops by half. If one week has passed, no points are available for submission. The only exceptions for this are illness requiring hospitalization, death in the family, and/or notification from the emergency dean.

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ASSISTANCE

Equal Opportunity and Access

To obtain disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the course instructor and the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) as soon as possible. To contact DRES you may visit 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign, call 333-4603 (V/TDD), or e-mail a message to disability@uiuc.edu.

To ensure that disability-related concerns are properly addressed from the beginning, students with disabilities who require assistance to participate in this class are asked to see the instructor as soon as possible.

If you need accommodations for any sort of disability, please contact me.

Academic Integrity

The Illinois Student Code should also be considered as a part of this syllabus. You should pay particular attention to Article 1, Part 4: Academic Integrity. Read the Code at the following URL:
<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/>.

Academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade. Every student is expected to review and abide by the Academic Integrity Policy: <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/>. Please note, you are responsible for reading this policy. Ignorance is not an excuse for any academic dishonesty.