COURSE DESCRIPTION
Introduction to the interdisciplinary field of information architecture, with focus on designing user-centered organization, labeling, navigation, search, metadata, and knowledge organization systems for web sites.

This course deals with the "logical" rather than the "physical" design of web sites and intranets. It deals with how to organize the content of site by means of taxonomies, metadata, labels, and navigation structures in order to connect targeted users to the content that an organization makes available to them, be it a non-profit organization, and e-commerce website, etc. The course explores the principles of good information architecture and (IA) and user experience design as well as the process of doing IA, including research, strategy, and design, and using tools such as user testing, and developing and revising graphical diagrams such as site maps/blueprints, wireframes, and task flow diagrams. While the course includes creation of a diagrammatic prototype of a home page and one or two lower-level website pages, it does not involve any work with HTML and the creation of actual web pages or websites.

PREREQUISITES
Required:
- Successful completion of L&I SCI 511 Organization of Information.
- Basic computer literacy as outlined in the SOIS policy: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SOIS/academics/MLIS/mliscomplit.htm.

Recommended:
- Completion of L&I SCI 571 (Information Access and Retrieval).

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:
1. Articulate the parameters and principles of information architecture as an area of applied practice;
2. Become aware of and consult some of the major professional information architecture resources;
3. Identify, critically analyze, and design organization, labeling, navigation, and search systems for web-based user interfaces, with an emphasis on institutional, e-commerce, and business enterprise websites and intranets;
4. Identify, analyze, and design knowledge organization systems, such as controlled lists, synonym rings, taxonomies, thesauri, and faceted navigation, for integration into the information architecture systems and structures of websites and intranets;
5. Analyze and design metadata schemes for database-driven websites and intranets, or for database-driven applications within websites and intranets;
6. Articulate the basic principles of user-centered design, usability, and usability testing, and employ some of their tools;
7. Produce high-level, low-fidelity site maps and wireframes and an overall strategy for the information architecture of a website.

*Students with special needs should contact me as early as possible for accommodations.* See the policies at the end of this syllabus.

**COURSE READINGS**

**Three Required Textbooks for Spring 2012:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morville, Peter, and Louis Rosenfeld</td>
<td><em>Information Architecture for the World Wide Web</em></td>
<td>Third edition</td>
<td>O'Reilly</td>
<td>0596527349</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unger, Russ, and Carolyn Chandler</td>
<td><em>A Project Guide to UX Design: For user experience designers in the field or in the making</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>New Riders</td>
<td>0321607376</td>
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**Additional Required Readings:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Access Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leise, Fred, Karl Fast, Mike Steckel</td>
<td><em>Boxes and Arrows</em> series of online articles:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;What Is a Controlled Vocabulary?&quot;</td>
<td>16 December 2002: <a href="http://www.boxesandarrows.com/view/what_is_a_controlled_vocabulary">http://www.boxesandarrows.com/view/what_is_a_controlled_vocabulary</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Creating a Controlled Vocabulary&quot;</td>
<td>7 April 2003: <a href="http://www.boxesandarrows.com/view/creating_a_controlled_vocabulary">http://www.boxesandarrows.com/view/creating_a_controlled_vocabulary</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrogh, Earl</td>
<td>“Information Architecture: From Craft to Profession.”</td>
<td><em>Boxes and Arrows</em>, 2002/11/04. Online:</td>
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**Online Resources:**

- The Information Architecture Institute: http://iainstitute.org/
- Boxes and Arrows: http://www.boxesandarrows.com/
- Journal of Information Architecture: http://journalofia.org/
- American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T): Information Architecture Special Interest Group: http://www.asis.org/SIG/ia.html
- NKOS: Networked Knowledge Organization Systems/Services: http://nkos.slis.kent.edu/
- Usability.gov: http://www.usability.gov/
- UPA: Usability Professional’s Association: http://www.upassoc.org/

**Additional Useful Books of Potential Interest (Not Required):**


**COURSE TOPICS**

- Introduction to information architecture & user behavior
- Organization & labeling systems; taxonomies & metadata
- Navigation systems; page layout conventions
- Search systems.
- IA process; IA research: context, content, user; competitive / domain analysis; content analysis & inventory; user research; interviews, card sorting; user types, goals, tasks
- User-centered /user experience design; mental models; usability testing plans & reports
- IA strategy & deliverables; personas, scenarios, use cases
- IA design & documentation: blueprints/site maps; organization, labeling, taxonomy
- IA design & documentation: wireframes; web page design layout & conventions; navigation
- IA design & documentation: metadata schemes & interfaces for database-driven sites or applications;
- IA design & documentation: controlled vocabularies; lists, synonym rings, thesauri
• IA design & documentation: flow charts & wireframes depicting; integration of metadata, CVs, search, browse, and user experience
• IA design & documentation: creating and testing website prototypes
• IA in practice; ethics & diversity; software; education & careers

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

Diagramming. The course requires creating graphical diagrams of various types and creation of a simple graphical prototype. We will likely use Microsoft Visio for most of these. Visio is available to onsite students in the SOISA labs and to online students in the SOIS Virtual Lab. Instructional videos will guide you on how to use the software.

Non-Graded Case Study Exercises. This course includes weekly non-graded exercises based on shared, class-wide information architecture application scenarios that will model what you will need to produce for your individual graded assignments. These will be posted at the start of each weekly unit. Each student is expected to work through these exercises on your own, just as you work through the readings on your own. You are not required to submit anything, although I strongly encourage you to post a few discussion messages on some aspect of the exercises as part of the discussions portion of your course grade.

DRAFT: Graded Assignments and IA Design Report. There will be three or four formal graded assignments covering the topics and deliverables listed below, exact specifics to be re-determined for the Spring 2012 semester. The assignments build on concepts and practices covered in the preceding readings, course content, and case study exercises. Specific, detailed instructions for each assignment will be posted two weeks prior to the due date. The assignments will be submitted to the appropriate folder in the D2L Dropbox module. Each student must do his or her own work on these assignments.

• For these assignments, each of you will work on an imaginary website design scenario, that is, a scenario in which you are designing or redesigning a hypothetical website for an imaginary organization or your own invention. Your site may be based on an actual existing website that has significant information architectural design flaws that could be improved through redesign.
• For the first assignment you will evaluate the information architecture of an existing website that would be in the same domain as, or a competitor of, your imaginary organization and website. The remaining three assignments are all about the original design of your own site. If you are working on a real-world website redesign project and would like to coordinate your work in this course with your work in real life, please contact me and we will make it work.
• There are two constraints on the type of imaginary website you need to envision for your IA: it needs to have content that is amenable, in whole or in part, to being structured by both a rich top-down taxonomy and a bottom-up metadata scheme. More specifically, (1) it must have content that can be categorized by a taxonomy that has at least two levels of depth, and preferably three or more levels for some or all categories, and (2) it must be either a database-driven site or be able to contain a metadata/database-driven sub-site or internal site application. The meaning of these two aspects should be clearer by the end of Week 2; if not, please ask. Important note: the existing website you evaluate for Assignment 1 does not necessarily need to have these two constraints, but your imaginary envisioned website for Assignments 2-4 must have them.
• The final design report will largely incorporate pieces from your previous assignments, revised as needed for the report format and to address any issues I have pointed out in my assignment feedback, plus a few additional pieces.

Assignments 1-4 will include:
1) Overview of your original IA design scenario: context, content, and users.
2) Competitive/domain analysis of an existing web site: organization, labeling, navigation, search, and page conventions.
3) List of user types and goals.
4) Personas and use case/scenarios for two user types.
5) IA design strategy overview: organization, labeling, navigation, search, and page conventions.
6) High-level, low-fidelity blueprint/sitemap diagram of site organization and content, with legend and explanatory notes.
7) Two high-level, low-fidelity wireframes: coordinated main page and lower-level content page, with explanatory notes.
8) Controlled vocabulary examples: (a) simple flat list of controlled terms; (b) synonym ring; (c) representative reciprocal thesaurus records and example of coordination with browse navigation.
9) Advanced search page diagram, depicting use of metadata fields and controlled vocabulary terms.
10) Navigation flow diagram, coordinated with one user scenario, the metadata scheme, and a controlled vocabulary.
11) Prototype of website based on wireframes.
12) Usability test plan and usability test report.
13) Revision of prototype based on results of usability testing.

**IA Design Report**

*Final formal design report for your original, invented website. The specifics might differ somewhat from what is listed below, but it will be very much along these lines:*

1) Cover page, table of contents, and executive summary.
2) Overview of research results: context, content, users.
3) Competitive or domain analysis overview summary.
4) List of user types/groups and goals, with two sample personas and scenarios.
5) Usability test results overview summary and ranked areas needed to be addressed.
6) Strategy for addressing user needs, usability problems, and competitive benchmarks.
7) Overview of new design and how it accomplishes the strategy, illustrated by the same deliverables submitted for previous Assignments, revised if needed.