CMNS 390  Communications  3

Designing User-friendly Guides, Manuals, and Instructions

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:

Effective end-user documentation, both print and online, requires consideration of several key factors. The focus of this course is on gathering information and on structuring and designing documentation for the needs of the end-users. Students will apply the process for effective documentation to a number of exercises and as part of a collaborative team, design a user-friendly document for a specific group as the term project.

PREREQUISITES:  45 university-level credits including CMNS 251. For CIS program students, CIS 285 is recommended.

TOTAL HOURS PER TERM: 45

STRUCTURE OF HOURS:

Lectures:  15 Hrs
Seminar:  15 Hrs
Laboratory:  15 Hrs
Field experience:  Hrs
Student directed learning:  Hrs
Other (specify):  Hrs

SERVICE COURSE TO: (department/program)

SYNONYMOUS COURSE(S):
(a) Replaces: 
(b) Cross-listed with: 
(c) Cannot take: for further credit.

TRANSFER CREDIT EXISTS IN BCCAT TRANSFER GUIDE: ☑ Yes ☑ No

WILL TRANSFER CREDIT BE REQUESTED? (lower-level courses only) ☑ Yes ☑ No
WILL TRANSFER CREDIT BE REQUESTED? (upper-level requested by department) ☑ Yes ☑ No

Course designer(s): Lynn Kirkland Harvey, Marcella LaFever
Department Head: Samantha Pattridge
Campus-Wide Consultation (CWC)
Curriculum Committee chair: Amanda McCormick
Dean/Associate VP: Jacqueline Nolte
Undergraduate Education Committee (UEC) approval

Date approved: January 11, 2013
Date of meeting: n/a
Date approved: September 13, 2013
Date approved: September 13, 2013
Date of meeting: September 27, 2013
LEARNING OUTCOMES:
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Create effective technical documentation for a specific audience.
- Determine end-users’ needs.
- Apply end-users’ needs to selection of content and design.
- Apply citation procedures.
- Apply the principles of structured documentation and design for online and print documents.
- Design, apply, and evaluate usability testing.
- Demonstrate the principles of and considerations required for document production.
- Function effectively as a member of a collaborative project team.

METHODS: (Guest lecturers, presentations, online instruction, field trips, etc.)
Lectures, seminars, group work.

METHODS OF OBTAINING PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT RECOGNITION (PLAR):

- Examination(s)
- Portfolio assessment
- Interview(s)

Other (specify):

PLAR cannot be awarded for this course for the following reason(s):

TEXTBOOKS, REFERENCES, MATERIALS:
[Textbook selection varies by instructor. An example of texts for this course might be:]

SUPPLIES / MATERIALS:

STUDENT EVALUATION:
[An example of student evaluation for this course might be:]
Term project proposal including audience analysis, time line, information requirements and research plan, outline of content 20%
Draft of materials 5%
Design considerations and plan 10%
Analysis of production considerations 10%
Analysis reports of team members' work (4–5) 5%
Summary report on term project 5%
Presentation of summary report and term project 10%
Term project (online or print) 35%

COURSE CONTENT:
[Course content varies by instructor. An example of course content might be:]
Unit 1 (week 1)
Course content continued:

Unit 2 (week 2)
Function and purpose of technical/end-user documentation. The importance of research. Project planning. Term project selection. Standards of professionalism and working with/reporting to clients. Guidelines for working in groups: teamwork and problem solving.

Unit 3 (weeks 3–4)
Document systems and design process; Defining end user needs; audience analysis; determining knowledge base.

Unit 4 (week 5)
Gathering information; documenting procedures.

Unit 5 (weeks 6–8)
Structured documentation; selection and construction of content. Giving directions; writing instructions.

Unit 6 (weeks 9–10)
Format and design principles and considerations. The use of graphics and text. Designing dynamic online documentation. Form design. Usability testing.

Unit 7 (weeks 11–12)
Documentation production considerations. Working on large documents and document sets. Documentation management (revision control and determining when revisions need to be done; maintaining documentation; the organizational environment). Establishing online/context sensitive help. The emerging context: writing for mobile devices and other interfaces.

Unit 8 (week 13)
Presentation of projects and summary reports.