INLS 690: Design for Accessibility

In this course, students will learn how to design interventions that can be used by people with diverse sensory, motor, and cognitive abilities. Students will encounter models of disability, accessible design frameworks, and common assistive technologies through readings and hands-on activities. Students will form teams and work to address a real-world need.

- Instructor: William Payne (william.payne@unc.edu)
- Meeting: Wednesdays at 5:45–8:30pm, Manning 303 and Zoom (link in Canvas)
- Walk-in Open Lab: Wednesdays at 2:30–3:30pm, Manning 213a
- Office hours: Monday–Thursday, Manning 022 (sign up using the link in Canvas)

Course Overview

Goals

The course is organized into three modules, each with its own set of content and skill goals

Module 1: Introduction to Disability and Accessibility

Content Goals. You should be able to:

- Define common models of disability and distinct perspectives on what it means for a system to be "accessible."
- List principles of Disability Justice and apply those principles to your design thinking.
- Discuss a variety of Accessibility Technologies (AT) and who uses them.

Skill Goals. You should be able to:

- Create and carry out an accessible presentation.
- Write using understandable plain language.
- Make image and video media accessible through alt text, captions, and audio descriptions.

Module 2: Inclusive Design Methods

Content Goals. You should be able to:
- Describe Inclusive Design and how it differs from other User-Centered Design methods.
- Justify and describe important Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- List important considerations for recruiting and working with participants with disabilities in UX research.

Skill Goals. You should be able to:

- Evaluate the accessibility of a website using a combination of automated and manual testing techniques.
- Optionally for students with web development experience: Implement an accessible website that follows WCAG.

Module 3: Special Topics in Accessibility

Content Goals (subject to change). You should be able to:

- Discuss the challenges and opportunities of pushing for accessibility in a corporate environment.
- Identify both exciting possibilities and major fears for accessibility brought on by new AI systems.
- List important considerations for effective data visualizations that support viewers with disabilities.

Skill Goals. Depending on your Group Project, you should be able to:

- Identify important considerations for mobile interface accessibility.
- Leverage generative AI for accessible web development.
- Design accessible learning materials, e.g. tactile graphics.
- Evaluate the accessibility of the lived environment.

Materials

All readings will be available online or included in Canvas as PDFs. For presentations, we will be working on shared Google slide decks, so students will need a Google account to access and edit.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation: 20%

Individual/Pair Assignments: 40%

- AT Around Us: 5%
- Disability Justice Analysis: 5%
- Disability Visibility: 5%
• Audio Description: 5%
• Design Meets Disability: 10%
• Website Accessibility Evaluation / Redesign: 10%

Group Project: 40%

• Deliverable 1 (Project Check-In): 15%
• Deliverable 2 (Presentation/Deliverable): 25%
• Peer Evaluations: Ungraded

Stance on High-Pass/Pass/Low-Pass/Fail

For SILS MS students, classes are P/F, but there are also HP and LP. I am new to this system and find it a bit perplexing. Each professor treats this policy differently. To me, a High Pass means exceptional work throughout the semester and should be given out sparingly. To receive a High Pass for the class, you will need to:

• Receive an A+ on every individual assignment.
  ○ A+ is determined by both quality and accessibility. I will allow students to resubmit once per assignment.
• Be an active participant in class. In particular, engage with your peers.
• Make significant progress on your Group Project, as determined by me, and if relevant your stakeholder.
• Receive positive evaluations from your peers indicating that you went above and beyond in your teams.

I hope I will not be in the position of needing to give a student a Low Pass or Fail grade. If you are in danger of receiving one of these grades, I will do my best to communicate well in advance of the end of the semester.

Typical Class Structure

This semester, INLS 690 meets in the evening when Chapel Hill Busses stop running. As a result we will be experimenting with a mostly-synchronous, hybrid course structure.

In-Person (5:45–7:00)

The beginning of class will include one or more of the following: hands-on activities, group project work, student presentations, small group discussions, large class discussions, and short lecture content.

Break / Commute Home (7:00–7:30)

We will then adjourn for students to leave campus and return home. We may adjust this time as necessary based on bus schedules and individual needs.
**Zoom (7:30–8:45)**

The end of class will include one or more of the following: lectures, guest presentations, discussions in breakout rooms, discussions in the full room.

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**Course Expectations**

On the first day of class we will collaboratively create together a list of shared expectations for:

**Yourself**

- [To be Updated]

**Your Peers**

- [To be Updated]

**Instructor**

- [To be Updated]

**Project Groups**

There will be four groups working on projects. I will update this section to list projects by the fifth week of the semester.

Students will possess unique skill sets and will likely work on distinct tasks, but all are expected to contribute "equally." This includes actively participating in group discussions, sharing ideas, and dividing work fairly. They should respect the opinions and ideas of their peers, and be open to constructive criticism. Communication is key, so students should ensure they are keeping everyone in the loop about their progress and any challenges they might be facing. Additionally, they should meet deadlines set by the group. Ultimately, the goal of a group project is not only to produce a high-quality output, but also to learn from each other and develop teamwork and collaboration skills.

This semester, I will be implementing peer evaluations. Peer evaluations are not graded and instead will be used in the following manner:

- Students who receive low evaluations: I will do my best to intervene and determine an optimal path forward.
- Students who receive very high evaluations: Assuming you meet the criteria described above, you may be able to receive a high pass.
Use of Generative AI to Complete Assignments

TLDR - You may use generative AI, but cite it! Preferably include a link to the source conversation and a short description of the edits you made. We will be experimenting with a range of AI systems in class, including generative AI systems.

UNC has created a set of guidelines for the use of generative AI in class (https://sph.unc.edu/iis/syllabus-guidelines-for-generative-ai/). We will adhere to UNC’s Usage Philosophy. You may use generative AI for many activities, e.g. to complete assignments, to create study protocols, and to facilitate small group discussions in class. Disclaimer: Generative AI can provide inaccurate or misleading information. You are responsible for what you turn in. AI should help you think, not think for you.

Accessibility

As this is a course literally on accessibility, I will make every effort possible to accommodate student needs and feedback. Currently, I have implemented / plan to implement the following course procedures:

- Slides will be made accessible (e.g. with alt text, standard layouts, plain language) and posted in advance of class.
- The course is designed to be hybrid to allow students who rely on public transportation to make it home.
- I cannot always change due dates, given that students will present their work in class, but students may resubmit each assignment.
- Some assignments have alternative options.
- I have identified unique group project topics that will support students with diverse backgrounds and technical skills.
- There will be no additional assignments due during the final third of the semester to allow students to focus solely on group work.

General UNC Expectations

UNC Policies on Accessibility

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable
state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: https://ars.unc.edu or email ars@unc.edu.

Student Support and Inclusion

I understand that this semester there may be experiences outside of your control that impact your learning or your class performance. You have lives outside of this course, and this class takes place in challenging times. Please reach out to me if you are having a difficult time with this class.

My intention as an educator is to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all learners. I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. It is my intent that the diversity that you all bring to our class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit.

SILS Commitment to Diversity

In support of the University’s diversity goals and the mission of the UNC School of Information and Library Science, SILS embraces and promotes diversity and inclusion in all their forms. We broadly define diversity to include ability, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, immigration status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. SILS is committed to preparing our graduates to be leaders in an increasingly multicultural and global society.

To this end, we strive to:

- Ensure that our leadership, policies, and practices are inclusive.
- Integrate diversity into our curriculum and research.
- Promote and nurture an environment in which diverse perspectives and experiences are respected and valued.
- Recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff from traditionally underrepresented groups.
- Participate in outreach to underserved communicates in North Carolina and beyond.

We are committed to cultivating an academic environment that is open, representative, and equitable to all.

~The Faculty and Staff of the UNC School of Information and Library Science

Mental Health

If you are experiencing distress or concerned about the well-being of another student, please let someone know. SILS Student Services (https://sils.unc.edu/student-services) and the UNC Dean of Students (https://dos.unc.edu/) are good resources.
CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

**Title IX**

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Please contact the Director of Title IX Compliance (Adrienne Allison – Adrienne.allison@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (https://caps.unc.edu, confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at http://safe.unc.edu.

**UNC Honor Code**

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC honor code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from “lying, cheating, or stealing” in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please see me or consult http://honor.unc.edu.

Individual assignments must be completed individually – without collaboration with informed others (e.g., classmates, people who have taken the class in the past, friends or family members with UX expertise). Group projects, of course, require working together.

Be careful about plagiarism. Whenever you use the words or ideas of others, either as direct quotes or paraphrased text, they should be properly attributed through quotations and/or citations. APA citation format is required for assignments in this class. A handout on plagiarism developed by the Writing Center provides an overview of plagiarism and offers suggestions for avoiding it.