

Objective

The exercises and discussion questions serve two purposes:

1. They are intended to prompt you to read very carefully, to reflect upon the readings, to develop questions, and to take a position on what the readings say. You may agree with everything in a reading. But, more typically, you may question or disagree with parts of the reading.
2. The instructor will use your statements to structure classroom discussions and to adjust the classroom lectures and exercises.

The writing exercises, in summary, should help you learn the material more thoroughly and help make the classroom discussions more relevant, engaging, and exciting.

Format

Your responses should consist of a single page of writing, approximately 300-500 words (4–7 paragraphs). Please submit a ONE page pdf file. (If you are unable to produce pdfs, you may submit a MS Word file.)

Please do not include a cover sheet – simply put your name, date, assignment ID, and class ID on the footer, header, or some other appropriate place on your one page submission.

Your responses should be concise, interesting, and free of spelling and grammatical errors. Most of all, your writing should fairly characterize the authors' views and clarify or challenge the important points. It is usually best to be highly selective and focus on a small number of ideas.

Your work should be submitted at the e-submit link on the website.

Your work must be submitted by 6:00 AM on the day that it is due. I will print your work, make comments and grade it, and return it to you at the start of class.

Finally, please be sure to include your name, date, and exercise name on your work.

Grading

Your writing will be graded on a five point scale:

- ✓-- Unsatisfactory (needs to be redone)
- ✓- Needs improvement
- ✓ Satisfactory
- ✓+ Very Good
- ✓++ Outstanding (very hard to obtain – typically, 5–8/quarter)

Responses that are late will not be graded. You can submit up to 8 writing exercises. The top 6 scores will count in the calculation of your grade and are worth 40% of your final grade.

IMT-540: Design methods for Interaction and Systems

Autumn 2009

Writing Exercises (4 pages; revised 08/21/09)

Worth: 40%

Writing Exercises

X2: Wicked Problems (Due: Oct 9 @ 6AM)

Rittle & Webber (1973) present the concept of **wicked problem** and draw upon examples from urban planning. Do the examples ring true for information system design? Why or why not? What ideas, if any, from Mountford (1990) can be used to engage wicked problems?

X3: Empathy and Studying Context (Due: Oct 16 @ 6AM)

What is empathy? How do this week's authors propose to use empathy as an orientation in design? What advantages – or problems – do you see with their views? If you see problems or limitations, how might they be overcome?

X4: Artifacts and Studying Use (Due: Oct 23 @ 6AM)

Suppose you could ask Jakob Nielsen a question about heuristic evaluations or Donald Norman a question about the psychopathology of everyday things. What would your question be? In your writing, ask the question. Then, by drawing carefully from the readings, answer the question, pretending to be either Nielsen or Norman.

X5: Design Representations (Due: Oct 30 @ 6AM)

Design representations must serve various roles. What roles do the authors of this week's papers emphasize? Take a design representation – a graphic, table, written story, blueprint, video – from our own practice and describe how the representation serves design – in your judgment, what roles are well served and not so well served. Explain.

FORMAT CHANGE – Please submit two documents 1) As usual, submit this exercise as a one page pdf document; AND 2) Please submit an image of the design representation as TIFF or JPEG image so that I can easily project your representations in class.

X6: Paper Prototyping (Due: Nov 6 @ 6AM)

How might paper prototyping be used in your work? Are you as enthusiastic about paper prototyping as Rettig – why or why not? Propose a strategy for introducing paper prototyping into your workplace.

X7: Usability Evaluations (Due: Nov 13 @ 6AM)

Task analysis and usability evaluations serve different purposes but they can complement each other. How are they different? How are they the same? Drawing this week's papers please discuss how these two methods might be used together in an overall process.

X8: Human-Centered Design and Organizations (Due: Nov 20 @ 6AM)

Drawing on your own experience, please describe a situation in an organizational setting where a design/development process failed to robustly engage users' needs. Describe the case and, drawing on this week's authors ideas, please suggest how the design/development process could have been improved to better focus on users.

X10: Human-Centered Design and Organizations (Due: Dec 4 @ 6AM)

If you could ask Erickson one question about using design patterns in your organization, what would the question be? In writing, ask the question. Then, as best you can discuss the question, drawing on Erickson's ideas.

Oct 2 (week 1), Nov 27 (week #9) and Dec 11 (week #11) do not have writing assignments.

How to read well?

1. Orient yourself to the paper

Who is the writer? What is his or her background? Who is she writing for? When did she write? What papers are cited?

2. Scan the paper

Read the abstract; Uncover how the paper is structured; What are the main themes? What is the order of the themes?

3. Read the paper

- a. Read the paper slowly
- b. Highlight key terms and vocabulary
- c. Seek to understand how the concepts are related
- d. If something is confusing, note it and ask yourself "what would I ask the author" then try to answer your own question
- e. Ask yourself – Does the author give backing to his or her claims? Does the author ask the right questions (or does she ask easy questions)? How do the questions she asks apply to you if at all?

4. Consolidate

Select a small number of themes in the paper; then extend or clarify them or show why they are problematic; back your analysis with "facts" or "concepts" that are found in other papers; place the author's ideas in the best possible light and then challenge them or extend them.

How can I write an outstanding position paper?

The honest answer is that I do not know. But, I know an outstanding paper when I read it. Some approaches that may be helpful to you:

1. Read the paper carefully. Then, reading it again even more carefully. Writing an outstanding position paper is usually a matter of reading very carefully.
2. The concepts from the readings are accurately represented – they are used with care. Your views are not overstated. Your arguments do not employ straw horses unless done so explicitly.
3. Key problems from the papers are uncovered. They are articulated clearly and then solutions or directions towards solutions are given.
4. An example from your experience – or from another paper – is brought into the paper. It is described clearly. Then, it is used to clarify some key aspect of the readings.
5. The readings are synthesized (i.e., they are entwined) in some interesting, creative way, especially one that helps to teach us about the conceptual underpinnings of the readings.

An outstanding position paper, is gripping, concise, and creative. It puts the reader in a kind of trance – you want to keep reading because you want to see how it turns out. A paper that simply describes the concepts of the readings fairly and concisely doesn't usually pass the outstanding threshold. (Typically, 4-6 papers/quarter reach the outstanding threshold.)

Citations: How to format them?

NOTE: For the writing exercises, please cite papers that are in the syllabus but do not include them in a reference list – I will know what the citations refer to. If you cite a paper or work that is not in the syllabus, please show its full citation in a section called references.

Use any standard citation format that you like but please be consistent and don't make it up. Citation standards are often discipline-specific. In Information Science we often use guidelines from the American Psychological Association. For more, see:

<http://apastyle.apa.org/>

Example:

Introduction

In a recent study, Jones (2000) reports that bees fly. But, a recent study has shown that they also drink water (Walker, Doe & Born, 1996). Other studies have shown that bees can swim (Drey, 1998; Newhouse, 2004). Yates (2008) also has something to say ...

References

Drey, D. (1998). *Bees of the World*. New York: Insect Publishers.

This is a reference to a book by Drey. The book was published in 1998 by "Insect Publishers", which are located in New York.

Jones, J. E. (2000). How bees fly. *International Journal of Bees*, 10(4), 411 – 420.

A reference to a paper ("How bees fly") in a journal ("International ..."). The volume is 10, the number is 4, and the paper begins on page 411 and ends at page 420.

Newhouse, A. A. Insects that drink water. Retrieved October 17, 2006 from

<http://www.source.org>

A reference to a webpage. In this case the author is known. However, if you don't know the author, begin with the title the page, like this:

Insects that drink water. Retrieved October 17, 2006 from

<http://www.source.org>

Walker, D., Doe, E., & Born (1996). Bees drink water everyday. In A. Allister & B. C. Green (Eds.), *All About Bees* (pp. 11 – 22). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

A reference to chapter in an edited book. The editors are Allister and Green. The chapter (or paper) is written by three authors.

Yates, D. (2008). Bees use computers. In *Proceedings of the 25th Annual Conference on Bees* (pp. 233-135). New York: ACM Press.

A reference to a paper in a proceedings – the proceedings' editors need not be shown.