Design Research
Fall 2015

Course Description
The future of news will be defined by leaders who are conversant in the core concepts of digital product development. Whether you're designing a news app, reporting a story, or coordinating breaking news coverage, the ability to develop a deep understanding of your audience and experiment with solutions is key to having impact.

In this class we'll go through actual examples of newsroom teams that have done this. You'll also have a chance to develop a news product that creates real value for a particular audience, at the New School Free Press or elsewhere. Prerequisite: News, Narrative & Design I.

Learning Outcomes
This fall, students will:

● Learn how to best employ user experience design and evaluation;
● Understand product development, qualitative research, design strategy and ethnography, insights and strategy, and storytelling;
● Practice team collaboration;
● Work towards accurate note and artifact capture, strategic prioritization, and delivery of an impactful final presentation.

Course Outline
● Understand core concepts of digital product development
  ○ What is a product?
  ○ What is product development?
  ○ Why does it matter to me? Why does it matter to journalism?
● Develop a deep understanding of your audience (Explore)
● Experimenting with solutions (Prototype)
● Measuring those solutions in the real world to see if they work (Optimize + Assess)
● Project workshop
● Project presentations
September 15: Kickoff class
● Introductions
● Goals and syllabus review
● Design thinking exercise

*Homework: Audit of Free Press. Prepare critical observations for September 29.*

September 22: No class (Yom Kippur observation)

September 29: Core concepts of digital product development
● Product, product development, and process lecture and conversation

*Homework: Article reading and reflection*

October 6: Explore audiences
● Interview and usability test best practices

*Homework: Student and faculty interviews. Prepare to share artifacts on October 13.*

October 13: Prototype!
● Rough sketching and iteration
● Measuring those solutions in the real world to see if they work

*Homework: User testing with your prototypes. Prepare to share findings on October 20.*

October 20: Optimize and Assess
● Iteration, iteration, iteration

October 27: Design project #2 kickoff

November 3: Design project #2 interviews

November 10: Design project #2 solution design, testing and iteration

November 17: Presentation story development
November 24: Final in class presentations

December 1: Reflection on course
  ● Discussion of the state of product development

Reading list

Introduction to Usability | Nielsen Norman Group
UX Project Checklist | Sovesove
Designing journalism to be used | Jonathan Stray
An Introduction to User Research Techniques | UK Service Design Manual
When to Use Which User Experience Methods | Nielsen Norman Group
What’s Your Problem? Putting Purpose Back into Your Projects | Whitney Hess
Vital Elements of the Product Design Process | Ryan Singer, 37 Signals*
What do Prototypes Prototype? | Houde + Hill, Apple Computer
Turn User Goals into Task Scenarios for Usability Testing | Nielsen Norman Group
Upworthy Editorial Vision | Amy O’Leary
Thinking Aloud: The #1 Usability Tool | Nielsen Norman Group
A Mile Wide, An Inch Deep | Ev Williams for Medium
Ophan: Key metrics informing editorial at the Guardian | Abigail Edge
Talking with Participants During a Usability Test | Nielsen Norman Group
How to find great participants for your user study | Michael Margolis, Google Ventures
Remote Usability and UX Research Tools | Nate Bolt, Facebook

See also: Remote Research

Don't be a 'slave to metrics', warns WaPo editor Martin Baron | Abigail Age
Questions are the new comments | Jennifer Brandel for Medium
The Rise of the Engagement Editor and What It Means | Elia Powers

Additional resources

User Interface Engineering All You Can Learn Library
Just Enough Research | Erika Hall
Design Research | CFC Medialab
Digital tools for design research | IDEO
Grading Participation & in-class exercises: 30% Effective collaboration: 20% Presentations and deliverables: 50%