Assignment 1

CAP 4104, Fall 2013

Due by 11:59 p.m. on September 4th

* Expert evaluations: You will evaluate the user interface of your choice using the principles of good design and usability attributes presented in the text(s).
* **You will prepare a 6 to 8 page paper that discusses the good and poor design aspects of the interface.**
* Discuss **your** reactions (don’t quote other people’s opinions) to the interface based on the principles of good design and make recommendations for improving the product.

**Choosing an Interface**

* The student may evaluate any software or hardware interface (e.g., a Web site, a word processor or spreadsheet software, touch screen interface, PDA, or phone).
* The interface selected should be complex enough to support detailed analysis of the design and usability of the interface.
* The interface should have both good and bad design aspects.

**Evaluation**

* The evaluation will involve the preparation of a discussion paper (**6 to 8 pages**) that discusses the good and poor design and usability aspects of the interface.
* The usability principles and attributes discussed in the texts will be used as a basis for the student’s **subjective evaluation** of the interface.
* The discussion paper is a critique, a scholarly synthesis of the HCI principles, strategies, and guidelines that pertain to the design and usability of user interfaces.
* Need a clear description of the whole system and each aspect to be evaluated.
* The paper should contain a discussion of a relevant usability principle and some sort of rating as to the extent the principle was met or not.
* Additionally, you should discuss your recommendations for improving the design and usability of the user interface.
* Your discussions and recommendations must be substantiated by the literature.
* Even though this is a subjective evaluation (you are the evaluator), write the paper in third person narrative and rely on the literature to substantiate and synthesize your critique.
* **(Do not use other users as evaluators for this assignment.)**

**Scope**

* Keep the choice manageable!
* Many programs or interfaces are quite large, so you may have to decide to limit your evaluation to certain aspects of the program, e.g., the contact management system in iPhone instead of ios of iPhone.
* Example of evaluation principles: ease for the task, error tolerance, ease for learning, controllability, suitability for engagement, suitability for the widest range of users, understandability, or other evaluation standards.
* Evaluation matrices: very good / good / mildly good / mildly bad / bad / very bad.

**References**

* A note about your recommendations and substantiation of literature – you are analyzing an interface of your choice.
* Here you have an opportunity to integrate into your paper pertinent information that you have gained from the required readings and from your own literature search.
* The literature integration will serve as a conceptual bridge between what you believe should be improved with the interface and what the experts say. Guidelines: **at least 5-10 current academic references (use the formal format paper’s references, like the author, paper / book name, and publisher information).**
* Follow APA style guidelines for making proper literature citations in the body of the text. If you are not familiar with APA style, buy the manual, or Search for the format online. It is a requirement for this course. Follow APA guidelines for preparation of text, references, and appendices (if appropriate).
* Some “example” usability attributes mentioned in the texts (there are more -- study hard and don’t forget to review the principles of good design also).

**Grading matrices:**

* 10: submitted with the right format
* 10: images of the system (good quality to see the detail of the interface)
* 20: description of the system (layout, size, color, label, and so on)
* 20: good aspects of the system
* 20: bad aspects of the system
* 10: conclusion and improvements
* 10: references (unpublished articles from Internet cannot be accepted)

**Tips on Assignment 1 Format**

* Title page – your full name, course #, title of your evaluation
* Table of Contents
* Introduction – about the issues and about the interface being evaluated
* Description of the system
* HCI issues or Usability Attributes/Principles Used to Evaluate the Interface (again, you have to be creative as to how you want to organize the issues or categories of the evaluation).
* In depth discussion of the above relative to the interface
* Recommendations for Improving the Interface Design
* Conclusion
* Reference List