

In-class Assignment: Heuristic Evaluation

0. Review Nielsen's 10 usability heuristics and notes on severity evaluation (see handout, and last week's slides).

1. Pick **one** of the following websites / applications to evaluate:

- Blackboard (Please focus on just one or two aspects of Blackboard, for example the main course screen and maybe one more specific component, such as viewing your grades in a course).
- SCORE (Similarly, please just focus on one or two significant aspects of SCORE, for example overall navigation and transcripts or grades)
- Craigslist
- The "New" iTunes (iTunes 11, released in late 2012, running on Mac or PC)
- MTA site for public transit in New York City: <http://www.mta.info/mnr/>
- TransLoc transit visualization app (on Android or iOS)

2. Spend 35 minutes working **alone** to apply heuristic evaluation to the app/site. (If you don't have a laptop/smartphone with you in class, you may work with a partner.)

As you work, make a list of each usability problem you find. For each one, record the following:

- i. **Which** of Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics is violated. (If a problem seems like it could belong to one of several categories, don't worry too much about picking the "right" one. Finding the violation is the most important part.)
- ii. Argue (in a few sentences) **why** the heuristic is violated.
- iii. Rate the **severity** of the violation.
- iv. If possible, take a screenshot of the violation and save it to your computer.¹

Record this information into a digital document of some convenient format (e.g., Word, Google Docs, PowerPoint, etc.), including both text and images. (You'll save this to PDF and submit it later.)

3. We will make an announcement after 35 minutes. At that time, find 2–3 other people who worked on the same interface as you. (These people need not be in your "official" project group for the course.) Spend 30 minutes sharing your evaluations with each other. You do NOT need to compile your individual violations into a single list, but if you want to add things to your list or correct your list during the group discussion, you may do so. Then discuss the following questions together (perhaps simultaneously as step 4, below):

¹ For screen shots: Use the Grab tool or Cmd+Ctrl+Shift+4 on OS X; Print Screen key or Snipping Tool on Windows; <http://graphicssoft.about.com/od/screencapture/qt/screen-shot-ipod-iphone.htm> for iPhone and <http://www.addictivetips.com/mobile/how-to-take-screenshots-of-android-device/> for Android. If nothing else, try taking a photo with a phone camera.

- i. What were the most severe problems with the app/site? How do these problems fit into Nielsen's heuristic categories? What are some suggestions to fix the UI, and how do your proposed changes relate to the heuristic categories?
- ii. Which problems, if any, were made easier to find (or potentially easier to correct) by the list of Nielsen's heuristics? (That is, if we had asked you to perform a usability evaluation of the app/site without first discussing heuristics, what might you have overlooked?)
- iii. Did anyone encounter usability problems that seemed to not be included under any of Nielsen's heuristics? If so, what additional heuristics might you propose for this type of application or site?
- iv. What might be some useful class discussion questions—or final exam questions—related to heuristic evaluation?

4. Nominate one person in your discussion group to create a new blog post on the course blog (<https://blogs.princeton.edu/humancomputerinterface/>)

Then do the following:

- i. Add your post to the Assignment3 category.
- ii. Add the first names of each person in your group.
- iii. Write a short summary of your discussion on each of the four discussion questions above.
- iv. Add links to PDFs of each person's individual heuristic evaluation, from the first part of class. (We recommend that each student use WebSpace², Dropbox, or a similar service to upload the file, then provide the URL to the scribe for inclusion in the blog post.)

5. Finally, fill out the Google form at **<http://tinyurl.com/cos436A3>** with the netIDs of people in your group and the URL of your blog post. We expect it to be possible to finish this assignment during class time and obtain an A grade. Please submit no later than 11:59PM on ~~Tuesday 3/11~~ **Thursday 3/14**.

Grading

Your work will be coarsely graded by the AIs on the following scale:

0 – Did not participate, or did not attend class and did not have valid excuse (medical appointment or illness with doctor's note, job interview with documentation, grad school visit with documentation).

1 – Participated, but minimal effort, portions missing.

2 – Participated, assignment is complete. But some problems: either only superficial discussion, not related to Nielsen's heuristics, or clearly inappropriate application of heuristics.

3 – Participated, assignment is complete, blog post and PDFs include more than just superficial insight, and evaluation and discussion are clearly related to Nielsen's heuristics.

² <https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/comm/WebSpace+-+Make+a+file+Public>