Course Objective & Description

This course is intended to provide students with the opportunity to gain practical experience on a real applied research project in information systems design and specifically inclusive design, working alongside professionals in the field. The course is a lab course: Students will gain hands-on experience with information systems design methodologies and tools, and will work to balance and overcome practical issues that arise from the myriad constraints – including material, physical, social, political, economic, etc. – that converge within a real project. These projects are multi-sector and, in addition to the University of Toronto, involve other academic institutions, community organizations, private companies and public institutions; many will be drawn from the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre (ATRC). Collectively the projects offer practical applications of all areas of study in the Faculty of Information; there are a variety of projects that partner with museums, galleries, libraries and the public sector. Examples of potential project experiences include the analysis and critique of the accessibility existing architectures or standards, the design of infrastructure and tools to support inclusive online communities, design and development of customizable software components to support accessible web development, or the design of alternative interface devices to integrate with various inaccessible information systems (both online and offline). Projects will be open source and open access so that all work is available to students.

Format & Assessment

The course will be structured as an experiential laboratory. Students will form small groups that will each join a (pre-existing) professional project team. They will work with the team to develop a proposal for a short-term project component that will be reviewed and approved by the course instructor. (More information will be provided about the available projects separately.)

All projects have a project coordinator or technical lead who will help to co-supervise the student engagement. All projects also employ collaborative tools such as wikis, blogs, forums and mailing lists that provide a record of the work. These will be evaluated as a record of collaborative work twice during the semester (included in the interim and final reviews).

In addition to the independent project work undertaken by each team, the class will meet for 30 minutes each week for status updates, reflection and to share experiences. Participation will be evaluated (and feedback given during the interim and final reviews). Unlike a traditional lecture-based class, it is assumed that most of the learning that students derive from the course will come from the practical experiences they gain in working on their projects as well as from comparing these experiences to those of others in the class. The purpose of the weekly meetings is to encourage reflection on these
experiences. Less time is spent in a classroom setting because students are expected to put in more time out of the classroom on their projects.

Course activities will be given the following weights:

- Written proposal and development plan 15% (individual)
- Interim progress report (presentation to class) 10% (team)
- Interim review (participation, wikis, short progress report) 25% (individual)
- Final written report 15% (team)
- Poster presentation of project to FIS community 10% (team)
- Final review (participation, wikis, short progress report) 25% (individual)

The standard grading scale found in the graduate student handbook will be used. (For example, to receive an ‘A’, a student must earn at least 85% credit.) All work will only be assessed by the primary course instructor(s), who will first consult with the project team lead for each project, but who will be solely responsible for the ultimate decision and grade assignment.

**Project**

Through this course it is hoped that not only will you gain a deeper insight into the diverse issues involved with inclusive design, but that you will also gain an appreciation of the ambiguities, nuances and myriad details that come with an actual project as opposed to an academic exercise. Some of the deliverables are described below.

**Interim Progress Report**

The interim report is a professional presentation to the rest of the class. It should (at a minimum) give an overview of your project goals, identify your plans and milestones, describe the breakdown of tasks among team members, describe your progress, and indicate any preliminary findings or results. It should be presented in a professional style (as if it were a report for senior management in an organization), but include technical details and academic rigor and citations. This will be graded for both presentation quality and content.

**Presentation to the rest of the Faculty**

The class will host a poster session about our projects for the rest of the faculty during the last week of the semester. The purposes are to share interesting findings, discuss difficult issues, obtain useful feedback (for the preparation of the final report), gain practice in making presentations, and most importantly, learn from one another’s experiences. Each student team will be responsible for preparing a professional-looking poster to highlight the key features of their project, focusing especially on the inclusive design components. Students must be prepared to field questions about their work from a general audience of fellow Faculty of Information students and faculty members. (Members of other faculties and programs, such as KMDI or OISE, may also be invited.) Students may also choose to demonstrate any technology that they created if applicable. Posters will be graded on content, effectiveness, relevance and appearance.

**Final Written Report**

The final report should be 20-40 pages in length (plus appendices) and meet usual academic standards (e.g. writing, presentation, citation, etc.). This will be graded for both presentation/form and content. Please include a title page, brief summary or abstract, a table of contents, and a bibliography. The final report should also be
submitted with the project log (described below) and a 1-2 page cover memo written in a professional style. This memo should give clear indications as to which portions of the final report have been drawn from the interim report and where these have been revised. Highlight any aspects of the report that you wish to draw to my attention. The memo should also contain your own team’s assessment of the report’s strengths and weaknesses, and the main contributions or roles of each team member. Finally, the cover memo should also address any issues not appropriate for the formal report that you wish me to consider in my assessment.

**Group Work**

Each student team will elect a coordinator, responsible for coordinating the team efforts, and a secretary, who maintains a group project log of team activities. The log will record chronologically all meetings of the team and results achieved. Up-to-date logs should be appended to both the interim and final reports. They are intended primarily to help in your project management and so may be in the form that each team finds most suitable, although I would suggest a tabular format with a row for each meeting that includes info such as: date/time, duration, team members involved, location, topic, accomplishments, and further details. I will not mark their content, but look to them for indications of the team efforts, progress made and difficulties encountered.

While there should be some clear divisions of labour within the group, *the final product will be viewed as a joint effort and marked accordingly*; i.e. while different team members could be responsible for writing up different parts of your report, each member of the group should share in proof-reading and editing the whole document before it is handed in. It is important that team members feel that there is an equitable sharing of effort and contribution. It is useful to clarify expectations about workloads, deadlines and means of coordination early in the term, before problems and resentments arise. If this proves problematic, you may contact the instructor for help.

**Sakai**

We will be using the online LMS, Sakai ([http://sakai.aturc.utoronto.ca](http://sakai.aturc.utoronto.ca)) for course communication. All course materials will be made available there. Students are expected to log into Sakai to check for Announcements on a weekly basis (and/or configure their accounts such that they can be informed via email). The course worksite is “FIS2??_01_01_W09”. Students are also encouraged to make use of the Wiki, Forum, and Chat Room areas within our Sakai workspace to communicate with one another about course-related topics. More instructions on Sakai will be given in class.

**Disclaimer**

This syllabus is not fixed. Course policies, assignment dates, weighting of assignments and all other aspects of this course are subject to change. You will be notified of any changes in advance either in class or via SAKAI.